Brand Ambassador, E-WOM, and Purchase Interest of Beauty Products Circulating in Indonesia (Study of Korean EXO Fans)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the effect of brand ambassador Korean boy group EXO and e-WOM (electronic word of mouth) on purchase interest of beauty products circulating in Indonesia. The research was conducted among Korean EXO fans in the Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi areas. This study uses a quantitative approach with multiple linear regression analysis, with 160 samples for the survey. The results of this study indicate that brand ambassadors and e-WOM have a significant impact on purchase interest. This is shown by the F-test with the significance of brand ambassadors and e-WOM on purchase interest F = 80.182, sig. = 0.000 < 0.05. While the t-test shows the results of brand ambassador t = -8.091, sig = 0.000 <0.05 and e-WOM t = 12.546, sig = 0.000 <0.05, which means a significant effect. The coefficient of determination (R2) shows that the influence of brand ambassadors and e-WOM on purchase interest for beauty products is 50%. The remaining 50% is influenced by other factors.

Keywords: *brand ambassador; e-WOM; purchase interest; beauty products*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh brand ambassador boy group Korea EXO dan e-WOM (electronic word of mouth) terhadap minat beli produk kecantikan yang beredar di Indonesia. Penelitian ini dilakukan terhadap penggemar EXO di wilayah Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, dan Bekasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan analisis regresi linier berganda, dengan jumlah sampel sebanyak 160 responden. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa brand ambassador dan e-WOM memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap minat beli. Hal ini ditunjukkan dengan uji F dengan signifikansi brand ambassador dan e-WOM terhadap minat beli F = 80,182, sig. = 0,000 < 0,05. Sedangkan uji-t menunjukkan hasil brand ambassador t = -8,091, sig = 0,000 < 0,05 dan e-WOM t = 12,546, sig = 0,000 < 0,05 yang berarti berpengaruh signifikan. Nilai koefisien determinasi (R2) menunjukkan bahwa proporsi pengaruh brand ambassador dan e-WOM terhadap minat beli produk kecantikan sebesar 50%. Sisanya sebesar 50% dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor lain.

Kata kunci: brand ambassador; e-WOM; minat beli; produk kecantikan

INTRODUCTION

Beauty products today are used by almost all levels of Indonesian society, in this case not limited to age or gender. This is due to technological advances that bring massive and comprehensive changes which then affect people's lifestyles, one of which is the desire to always look attractive using beauty products.

With the increasing use of beauty products, it has an impact on increasing the amount of competition in this industry, business actors must implement the right marketing strategy to be able to compete. The use of brand ambassadors is one of the strategies in the implementation of integrated marketing communications. According to Shimp in Kosasi (2023) by taking into account the above elements, the use of brand ambassadors becomes the application of advertising, sales promotion, and public relations elements. Andrews & Shimp in Kosasi (2023) consider that marketing communication strategies

through the use of brand ambassadors are important, because these figures can influence consumer interest in a brand. A brand ambassador is usually a symbol to be able to represent the wants, desires, or needs of consumers (which in turn can be easily accepted by consumers). Brand ambassadors themselves are usually represented by mascots, professional figures, or religious figures. In the context of beauty products, the chosen brand ambassador is of course someone or a group of people who are interested in the field of beauty or beauty industry activists.

The use of brand ambassadors supported by promotional delivery channels through social media can reach a wider audience and shape innovation in product marketing. There is a growing form of communication, in line with the extensive growth of social media management and user-generated content, known as e-WOM (electronic word of mouth). With the advent of online social media, e-WOM has become a widespread means of information and has a great influence on the information circulating within the social network. Thus, interpersonally connected audiences can more easily influence each other.

Quoting Arsitowati (2017) from generation to generation women often pay attention to their physical appearance, including those who live in Indonesia. Coupled with the times, culture from outside countries also adds to the intention of the Indonesian people on the importance of having beautiful skin. One culture that is increasingly developing in the country, namely South Korean culture which is very aware of skin beauty. In Indonesia, there are many beauty brands, ranging from imported international brands to local products that are growing. The development of local beauty products is oriented towards international products that have been successful and have a wider market reach, for example products from South Korea. According to Yanthi et al. (2020) this happened because of the spread of the Korean Wave or Hallyu, one of which is in the country. Korean Wave is a separate phenomenon in the form of the spread of culture, living habits, and other fields from South Korea, spreading through K-Pop artists and trending things. This phenomenon is used as a platform by beauty product activists, through the use of South Korean celebrities as brand ambassadors for their brands.

Research by Arsitowati (2017) states that the selected brand ambassador can represent the inferiority of the Indonesian audience to have beautiful skin like the beauty of Korean skin. In addition, the process of sharing information related to products that is rampant among Indonesians is in line with the marketing communication implemented by the company. So, based on the background described, the researcher raises research on the influence of EXO boy group brand ambassadors and e-WOM (electronic word of mouth) on buying interest in beauty products circulating in Indonesia, which is focused on EXO fans in the Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi areas. Here is a list of some beauty products promoted by Korean Boy Band EXO or its members.

Table 1. Beauty Products Promoted by EXO

EXO Members	Beauty Products Brands
EXO	Nature Republic
Oh Sehun	Dr. Jart+
Kim Jongin	Bobbi Brown
Byun Baekhyun	Tirtir
Oh Sehun	Some by Mi
Park Chanyeol	Nacific
Oh Sehun	Whitelab
Kim Junmyeon	Anua
EXO	Scarlett
Park Chanyeol	Ever Bilena

Resource: Researcher Processed Data, 2023

LITERATURE

Brand Ambassador

According to Shimp in Noviyanti et al. (2017) brand ambassadors are used to attract consumers to products or brands, in this case as an intermediary for a brand's marketing activities. A brand ambassador is tasked with building emotional closeness between the company or brand and consumers. According to Yusiana & Maulida (2015) a brand ambassador must be someone who has good credibility, because then consumers will believe in the truth of the product or service being promoted. The audience's trust that arises from choosing the right brand ambassador can allow messages to be received more quickly, then encourage purchasing actions in the audience. Brand ambassadors are those who actively use social media and have many followers. Brand ambassadors as the face of a brand can expand audience reach, precisely capturing followers of the brand ambassador through the use of social media. In its use for integrated marketing communication strategies, brand ambassadors can portray brands and convey brand messages to their markets.

Marketing Communication

Communication channels are of two types, personal and non-personal. Personal communication is characterised by two or more people communicating directly or indirectly (by phone, letter, or e-mail). Focusing on word of mouth communication, audiences commonly use it to discuss brands. Word of mouth is effective (in small businesses, for instance) because consumers feel a more personalised connection with the communication process. Nowadays, the process is carried out on various social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and e-commerce. Meanwhile, non-personal communication channels are carried out in the form of advertisements, sales promotions, events and experiences, or public relations, which are then intended for public consumption. Nowadays, many message delivery activities develop through event and experience channels.

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) electronic word of mouth or communication through electronic media is defined as positive or negative statements formed by former customers, actual customers, or potential customers regarding products or brands. This information is provided through electronic media aimed at individuals and institutions. According to Gruen et al. (2006) e-WOM is a medium of communication between consumers, in this case information related to products or services that have been used before. This interaction process can occur between those who have not known or met each other before. In this case, e-WOM is a communication process through electronic channels (social media) involving former customers or potential customers, where in the process they exchange information related to products or services.

Quoting Lin et al. (2013), there are three indicators as a measure of e-WOM, namely (a) E-WOM quality, regarding the quality of the reviews read by the audience, whether they are easy to understand and convince the audience; (b) E-WOM quantity, regarding the amount of information circulating regarding the product; (c) Sender's expertise, refers to the ability of the sender or sender of information to then be able to attract other audiences to the product. Meanwhile, according to Goyette et al. in Sukoco (2018) several indicators to measure the influence given by e-WOM, namely (a) Intensity, regarding how much information or opinions circulate on a site; (b) Content, regarding the content of product or service information circulating on online sites; (c) Opinion valence,

indicating the positive or negative opinions given by consumers during the e-WOM process.

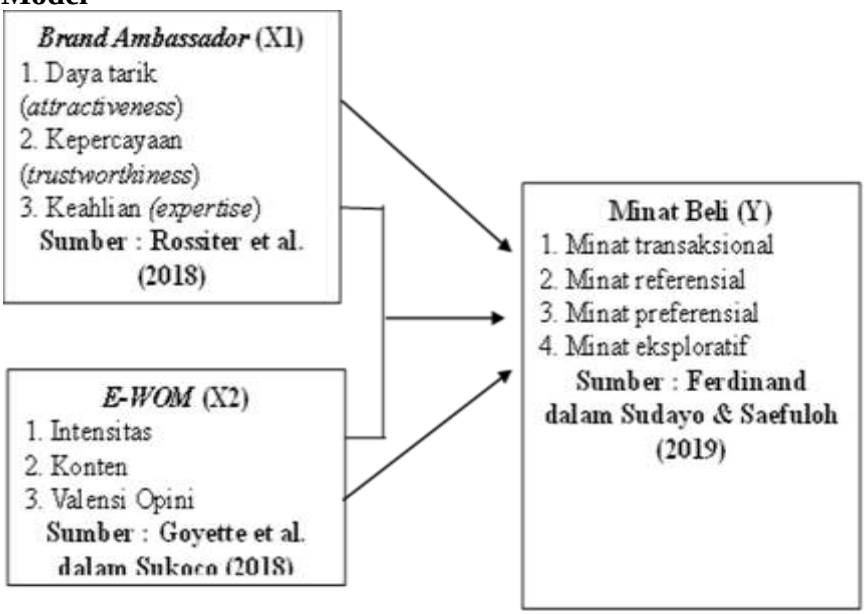
Purchase Interest

According to Kitchen in Utami et al. (2020) purchase interest is considered a cautious behaviour until finally the audience is willing to do something. Furthermore, this attitude is a combination of attitudes, reactions, responses, simple actions, and the audience's desire to take an action. Meanwhile, according to Assael in Sari (2012) purchase interest is seen as a behaviour arising from a response to an object, which is also the last stage of the purchasing decision process that is built.

Furthermore, purchase interest can be measured through several components which include (a) Interest in reviewing information about the product. Furthermore, there are two levels of stimulation that audiences feel about a product. First, trying to find information simply, that is, just being more sensitive about product information. Second, the level of actively seeking information; (b) Consideration to buy. From the information gathered, consumers learn the features of the brand and other alternatives. After that, evaluate the existing choices and start making considerations to buy the product; (c) Interested in trying. After studying and searching for product information and evaluating, it is possible that consumer attitudes and desires to try the product arise; (d) Want to know the product. With consumer interest in trying the product, there may be interest in knowing more about the product; (e) Want to own the product. After knowing more about the product, consumers pay greater attention to product attributes that provide the benefits they are looking for. At this stage, consumers determine their attitude towards the product, through evaluating the attributes that will form the purchase interest of the preferred product.

Quoting Ferdinand in Sudayo & Saefuloh (2019) purchase interest can also be measured through (a) Transactional interest, which shows a person's tendency to consume products; (b) Referential interest, which describes an individual's tendency to refer or recommend products to others; (c) Preferential interest, an interest that shows the behaviour of individuals who make products their main preference; (d) Exploratory interest, which describes the attitude of digging up information on products of interest and looking for positive information that supports these products.

Research Model



Picture 1. Research Model
Resource: Researcher Processed Data, 2023

Hypothesis

In this study, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

H_1 : EXO brand ambassador has a significant effect on buying interest in beauty products circulating in Indonesia.

H_2 : E-WOM has a significant effect on buying interest in beauty products circulating in Indonesia.

H_3 : EXO brand ambassadors and e-WOM together have a significant effect on buying interest in beauty products circulating in Indonesia.

METHODS

The population in this study is EXO fans in the Jabodetabek area, in this case the exact number is unknown. Thus, the population of this study is included in the type of population that is not limited. The sample criteria to be used in this study are those who are EXO fans, users of beauty products in Indonesia promoted by EXO, interested in using or buying beauty products in Indonesia promoted by EXO, and domiciled in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. The sample technique in this research is purposive sampling or consideration sample. This sampling technique is based on consideration of population members and research objectives. The number of samples taken was 160 respondents. This study used a questionnaire as a data collection instrument. Namely with the type of closed questionnaire with the following question items. The questionnaire was distributed online through social media (Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp) which contained the respondent's profile, the section related to the use of social media by respondents, and the questionnaire statement items.

Table 2. Questionnaire Items

Variable	Indicators	Items
Brand Ambassador (X_1)	1. Popularity of selected brand ambassadors	1, 2, 3
	2. The ability of brand ambassadors to deliver product promotional messages	4, 5, 6
	3. Audience interest in promotional efforts by brand ambassadors	7, 8, 9
E-WOM (X_2)	1. Frequency of outstanding online reviews	1, 2, 3
	2. Contents of information received through online reviews	4, 5, 6
	3. Consumer's ability to attract audience interest through spreading positive/negative online reviews	7, 8, 9, 10
Purchase Interest (Y)	1. The tendency of the audience to consume the product	1, 2
	2. The tendency of the audience to recommend the product	3
	3. Audience behaviour that makes the product a top preference	4
	4. Audience behaviour to gather information about the product	5

Resource: Researcher Processed Data, 2023

The questionnaire in this study will be measured using five Likert scales from strongly agree to strongly disagree in the calculation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Validity and Reliability

The validity test was carried out on a questionnaire given to 30 respondents as a pre-test, with an r table of 0.361 (at a significance level of 5%). From the results of the validity testing that has been carried out, it is found that all statement items (with a total of 24) are valid. This is because all statement items have r count > r table (0.361), the value of r table is determined based on a significance value of 5% with a two-sided test and total respondents (n = 30).

Reliability testing is carried out to measure the extent to which the results obtained by the research instrument remain reliable and free from measurement error. The results of the pre-test conducted previously show that this research instrument is suitable for actual research. This is because the validity and reliability test results show good results from the questionnaire. In other words, all statements on the questionnaire are easily understood by respondents and the statement items do not require changes. Thus, the data on the questionnaire has represented the material to be researched (valid) and can be trusted (reliable).

Respondent Description

Based on the calculation results, most of the respondents as many as 121 respondents aged 21 - 30 years, female consumers aged 21 - 30 years tend to be interested in caring for their skin health, because of self-awareness to take care of the skin. It is quite astonishing that out of 160 respondents, all are female. Emotionally, women tend to be more sensitive than men. Thus, they more actively seek self-fulfilment through the use of beauty products.

When viewed from the profession of the respondents involved in this study, it appears that the frequency of students is the highest, this is because at their age the level of self-awareness and knowledge of beauty products begins to develop. In addition, private employees, who come in second place, are often associated with profit orientation. Thus, their work demands performance as well as an attractive appearance. This can be seen in the following table.

Table 3. Respondents' Job

Category	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
Students	99	61,9%
Civil servants	2	1,2%
Private employees	36	22,5%
Professionals	3	1,9%
Housewifes	1	0,6%
Entrepreneurs	8	5%
Others	11	6,9%
Total	160	100%

Resource: Researcher Processed Data, 2023

Product Description

Meanwhile, when viewed from several brands of beauty products that have been circulating in Indonesia and have been promoted by the Korean band EXO and its members, there are 10 brands, namely Nature Republic, Dr Jart +, Bobbi Brown, Nacific, Whitelab, Anua, Scarlett, and Ever Bilena. In this study, respondents were given choices regarding some of these brands that they have used so far. Thus, the results obtained can be seen in the following table.

Table 4. Beauty Products Promoted by EXO that Have Ever Been Used

Category	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
Nature Republic	128	80%
Dr. Jart+	6	3,8%
Bobbi Brown	1	0,6%
Tirtir	2	1,3%
Some by Mi	63	39,4%
Nacific	64	40%
Whitelab	82	51,2%
Anua	5	3,1%
Scarlett	113	70,6%
Ever Bilena	2	1,3%
Total	466	291,3%

Resource: Researcher Processed Data, 2023

Based on the results in Table 4, it appears that Nature Republic and Scarlett brands show high usage. This is possible because the two brands are promoted by the EXO band group as brand ambassadors, compared to other brands that only use EXO members as brand ambassadors individually. Meanwhile, when viewed from the analysis of consumer buying interest in these brands, even though they have never used them before, the following results are obtained.

Table 5. Purchase Interest in Beauty Products

Category	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
Nature Republic	84	52,5%
Dr. Jart+	29	18%
Bobbi Brown	15	9,4%
Tirtir	9	5,6%
Some by Mi	67	41,9%
Nacific	77	48%
Whitelab	45	28,1%
Anua	34	21,3%
Scarlett	34	21,3%
Ever Bilena	11	6,9%
Total	405	253%

Resource: Researcher Processed Data, 2023

Table 5 shows that fan enthusiasm is high for EXO brand ambassador activities in the form of groups rather than individuals, which is in line with the findings of high consumer interest in the Nature Republic brand. In addition, there is also high interest in the brands Nacific promoted by Park Chanyeol and Some by Mi by Oh Sehun, both of which are EXO members with higher popularity than other members. This phenomenon is in line with the high purchase interest of the respondents.

Social Media Usage by Respondents

The high intensity of chatting is in line with the high level of social media usage. In addition, chatting can support the information, entertainment or financial needs of most respondents. In addition, the other biggest finding is in product purchasing activities. This is related to the increasingly tech-savvy society, causing them to easily access online platforms to buy their needs.

Table 6. Respondents' Social Media Activities

Category	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
Chatting	130	81,3%
Product Searching and Reviewing	102	63,7%
Product Purchasing	107	66,7%
Job Requirement	50	31,3%
Others	20	20%
Total	409	263%

Resource: Researcher Processed Data, 2023

Meanwhile, when associated with the intensity of respondents in searching for and or reviewing products online, the results are shown in Table 7 below. It appears that the searches and reviews conducted by respondents on beauty products circulating in Indonesia that have been promoted by the EXO band are on average around 1 to 3 times searches and reviews.

Table 7. Respondents' Intensity in Searching and Reviewing Products Online

Category	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
1 – 3 times	107	66,9%
4 – 6 times	47	29,4%
7 – 9 times	2	1,2%
> 10 times	4	2,5%
Total	160	100%

Resource: Researcher Processed Data, 2023

Meanwhile, when viewed from the various social media platforms used by respondents in conducting social media activities, searching, and reviewing online, beauty products promoted by EXO brand ambassadors in groups and individuals can be seen in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Social Media Platforms Used to Search and Review Beauty Products

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Website	31	19,4%
Instagram	81	50,6%
Facebook	4	2,5%
Twitter/X	122	76,3%
Tiktok	95	59,2%
E-commerce	128	80%
Youtube	48	30%
Others	3	3%
Total	512	321%

Resource: Researcher Processed Data, 2023

Based on Table 8, the highest frequency of social media used to search/share reviews is through e-commerce and twitter/X. It can be concluded that both platforms have good accessibility to use and allow for easy interaction (in the e-WOM process) between audiences. In addition, both platforms allow consumers of beauty products, some of which are imported products, to access information about these products.

Hypothesis Results

EXO brand ambassador has a significant effect on purchase interest in beauty products circulating in Indonesia

The test results with a sig value of 0.000 < α 0.05 obtained that the negative t table value of -8.091 > t count -1.975. Thus, it is concluded that hypothesis H1 is accepted and means that the boy group EXO brand ambassador has a significant negative effect on the purchase interest of beauty products in Indonesia. This explains that the buying interest of consumers who are also EXO fans in the Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi area does not always go to the products promoted by their idols, which is possible because the trend of using beauty products is slowly shifting towards not only the products promoted by Korean brand ambassadors. It is also possible that consumers of beauty products in Indonesia, especially from the Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi area, consider other factors such as ingredients and functions of the product.

This is in line with research by Hafilah et al. (2019), with findings in the form of brand ambassador variables having a significant negative effect on purchasing decisions. Furthermore, if someone has made a big decision to buy a product or service, then there is no need to pay attention to who the brand ambassador is. Currently local beauty products are starting to be favoured by the public, because of their good quality and brand image. Regardless of the circulation of foreign and local products (EXO as the brand ambassador), it does not make fans interested in making purchases.

Hulberg (2006) states that basically EXO's brand ambassador is one of the parties that has formed a positive image and maintained the reputation of the 10 beauty brands on the list. Together with the brand, they (boy group EXO) have also implemented the six aspects of branding, including: identity (describing the brand's identity to the public), organisational culture (they branded the brand's positive culture), behaviour (through the brand's attitude (workers and other stakeholders) and EXO's positive brand ambassadors in conducting integrated marketing communications). Furthermore, value (reflected in behaviour when communicating with the audience), image (able to form a positive and useful brand image to the audience and other stakeholders), and reputation (able to

maintain or develop a positive image of the brand through a series of integrated marketing communication activities).

E-WOM has a significant effect on purchase interest in beauty products circulating in Indonesia

The test results were obtained with a sig value of 0.000 < α 0.05 and a positive t count of 12.546 > t table 1.975. Thus, it is concluded that hypothesis H2 is accepted, or in other words, it is said that e-WOM has a significant positive effect on the purchase interest of beauty products circulating in Indonesia. The results of testing this hypothesis are in line with research by Wibowo (2016) which states the same thing, namely e-WOM has a significant positive effect on purchase interest. Through shared (especially positive) experiences, audiences can feel interaction with one another, then this fosters audience curiosity to try the product.

According to Kotler & Keller (2016), word of mouth communication through electronic media between audiences makes communication more personal. In this case, EXO fans in the Jabodetabek area have a close bond based on their preferences, then with these similarities they easily influence one another. Furthermore, people with great influence tend to have their opinions accepted and can change other audiences' attitudes towards the product. Thus, the process of e-WOM or social communication between audiences with close relationships (EXO fans in the Jabodetabek area) can increase buying interest in beauty products circulating in Indonesia.

According to Banjaŕnahor et al. (2021), behavioural intention is one aspect in the application of integrated marketing communication. This aspect refers to consumer attitudes and behaviour on brand information obtained through the e-WOM process (both positively and negatively). Based on the test results, positive and negative e-WOM obtained can make consumers take an action, in this case the intention to buy a product or recommend a product to other audiences.

EXO brand ambassadors and e-WOM together have a significant effect on purchase interest in beauty products circulating in Indonesia.

Based on the results of the ANOVA test that has been carried out, the sig value. 0.000 < α 0.05 and the calculated F value of 80.182 > F table 3.05. Thus, it is concluded that the H3 hypothesis is accepted, or in other words, the two independent variables (brand ambassador and e-WOM) simultaneously have a significant effect on the purchase interest of beauty products circulating in Indonesia. These results are in line with research by Utami et al. (2020), in which brand ambassadors and e-WOM simultaneously affect purchase interest. Furthermore, brand ambassadors and e-WOM are effective marketing strategies today, considering that good celebrity personalities and unique product characteristics will produce good marketing output. Furthermore, the use of brand ambassadors and e-WOM is an effective strategy for marketing today. The ability of brand ambassadors to represent the brand as well as well-communicated product characteristics can be an effective marketing strategy for a brand.

CONCLUSION

Overall, buying interest of consumers who are also EXO fans in the Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi area does not always go to the products promoted by their idols, which is possible because the trend of using beauty products is slowly shifting towards not only the products promoted by Korean brand ambassadors. If someone has made a big decision to buy a product or service, then there is no need to pay attention to who the brand ambassador is. Currently local beauty products are starting to be favoured

by the public, because of their good quality and brand image. While for the second hypothesis, the result stated that e-WOM has a significant positive effect on the purchase interest of beauty products circulating in Indonesia. Seemingly, EXO fans in the Jabodetabek area have a close bond based on their preferences, then with these similarities they easily influence one another. Furthermore, people with great influence tend to have their opinions accepted and can change other audiences' attitudes towards the product. Thus, the process of e-WOM or social communication between audiences with close relationships (EXO fans in the Jabodetabek area) can increase buying interest in beauty products circulating in Indonesia. Finally, the last hypothesis argued that brand ambassador and e-WOM simultaneously have a significant effect on the purchase interest of beauty products circulating in Indonesia.

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