

THE ROLE OF NCT DREAM AS BRAND AMBASSADOR IN BUILDING BRAND AWARENESS LEMONILO'S INSTAN NOODLE (Study Case On Lemonilo's Instagram Account)

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ABSTRACT:

The rise of the use of Korean artists as brand ambassadors is a separate phenomenon. Many local companies are taking advantage of the exciting moment of the Korean fever currently happening in Indonesian society. Brand ambassadors are a company's marketing communication strategy for attracting the audience's attention. Using Korean artists as brand ambassadors will influence consumers to remember a brand and a good reputation, and a broad fan base will build brand awareness. Based on this phenomenon, researchers want to examine the role of NCT Dream as a brand ambassador in building brand awareness of Lemonilo instant noodles. This research was compiled using a qualitative research method with descriptive analysis, describing the facts quoted systematically and using the case study method. The results of this study state that NCT Dream's involvement as the brand ambassador for Lemonilo instant noodles has successfully attracted a wider audience, especially NCT Dream fans or K-popers and built brand awareness of Lemonilo instant noodles.

Keywords: Brand Ambassador, NCT Dream, Brand Awareness

INTRODUCTION

The high competition between companies in Indonesia causes companies to try to find the right marketing communication strategy for the wants and needs of consumers. Brand ambassadors are a marketing communication strategy to bring products or brands closer to consumers, resulting in emotional closeness (Novianti et al., 2017). A brand ambassador is someone who can promote and represent a product or company and can talk a lot about the product being represented so that it can have a sizable impact on brand awareness and product sales (Samosir et al., 2016). Brand ambassadors aim to make people more familiar with and aware of the existence of a brand.

Brand ambassadors can not only introduce products or services to potential customers, but they can lead potential customers so that they are interested and want to buy the promoted product (Fabuga & Azizah, 2021). So brand ambassadors play an important role in influencing consumer interest in a

product and can build consumer awareness of the brand's existence. Therefore every company needs to choose the right person as its brand ambassador. According to Lea-Greenwood, there are several characteristics that brand ambassadors must have, namely: transference, congruence, credibility, attractiveness, and power (dalam Putra et al., 2014).

The public increasingly favors the popularity of South Korean culture in Indonesia. Discussions about K-pop on Twitter reached 7.8 billion tweets throughout 2020-2021 worldwide. Indonesia is the country that ranks first as the country with the most tweets about K-pop (Merdeka.Com). The spread of Korean culture in Indonesia will undoubtedly impact the economy. The popularity of Korean culture in Indonesia is a potentially good business opportunity for business companies to introduce their brands to a broader audience and to build consumer awareness of the existence of a brand. Many local companies and retailers are starting to hook up celebrities from South Korea as their brand ambassadors (Merdeka, 2023). One local company from Indonesia that has managed to hook a celebrity from South Korea as its brand ambassador is PT Lemonilo.

Inspired by the popularity of Korean culture, an instant noodle company from Indonesia, namely Lemonilo, has successfully collaborated with NCT Dream, a band from South Korea. Reporting from the Anataranews page, Shinta Nurfauzia, Co-CEO of Lemonilo, said that the reason why Lemonilo took NCT Dream as a Brand ambassador was that an idol group is a boy group that has many achievements and inspires the younger generation to make dreams come true (Cecilia, 2022). The NCT Dream band is currently popular among K-poppers. NCT Dream's popularity can be seen from the high number of views of its music through the official NCT Dream YouTube account. Quoted from the chart, the number of music video views on YouTube NCT Dream in June 2022 has reached 91.2 billion, and Indonesia is the top country with 25.4 billion music video views. The collaboration between Lemonilo and NCT Dream will undoubtedly bring many innovations. One is Lemonilo instant noodles, packaged in a unique NCT Dream collaboration. Based on this background description, the authors feel motivated to research the role of the brand ambassador for the boy group NCT Dream from South Korea in building brand awareness. The author's title is "The Role of NCT Dream as a brand ambassador in building brand awareness of Lemonilo instant noodles (Case study on Lemonilo's Instagram account)."

RESEARCH METHODS

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research. Moleong states that qualitative research is research that intends to understand a phenomenon about what is experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, etc., holistically and using descriptions in the

form of words and language, in an exceptional natural context and by utilizing various natural methods (in Budiman et al., 2019). Whereas qualitative research, according to Aeker, is a scientific activity to collect data systematically and sort and describe and interpret the data obtained through observation, interviews, or ordinary conversation as well as documentation (Yung & Sukendro, 2022).

Bugin stated that qualitative research has the goal of describing and summarizing a condition or phenomenon regarding the social reality that occurs in society as the object of research and seeks to draw reality to the surface as characters, characteristics, models, and descriptions of a particular condition or phenomenon (in Budiman et al., 2019). The research method used in this study is a qualitative research approach with descriptive research in obtaining and answering the research problem formulation regarding the role of NCT Dream as a brand ambassador in building Lemonilo instant noodle brand awareness in detail and depth.

This research uses a case study method or approach. Case studies aim to find meaning, investigate a process, and gain an in-depth understanding and understanding of groups, institutions, and individuals (Sugianto, 2015). Under the explanation above, this research uses a case study approach because this research is a type of research that seeks to find meaning, investigate a process, and gain an in-depth understanding of the role of the NCT Dream brand ambassador in building brand awareness of Lemonilo instant noodles.

To obtain data and information for this study, the authors used several data collection techniques: making online observations, interviewing informants, and studying literature and documentation. This study uses data analysis techniques by Miles and Huberman (1992), which state that data analysis is divided into three streams of activities that can coincide. The three flows are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Hardani et al., 2020).

This study uses source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation, namely comparing or re-checking information obtained through different sources (Sutriani & Octaviani, 2019). At the same time, method triangulation is an attempt to check data or the validity of the research. Method triangulation can usually be done by using multiple data collection techniques to obtain the same data (Sutriani & Octaviani, 2019).

RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of NCT Dream as Brand Ambassador Lemonilo

According to Lea Greenwood and Gaynor, brand ambassadors are tools companies use to communicate and connect interests with consumers and build brand awareness (Yung & Sukendro, 2022).

Generally, someone chose or appointed as a brand ambassador is famous. Kennedy said that brand ambassadors are usually represented by professional figures, mascots, and religious figures (Nurmawati, 2019). Because brand ambassadors are the faces that will present the product or what is commonly called a spokesperson, they must have an attractive appearance to attract attention and influence consumers to remember the product.

The wave of Korean culture in Indonesia over the past few years has continued to increase. Reporting to newsroom.tiktok.com, based on the 2021 K-pop Tiktok infographic, the K-pop challenge hashtag has increased ten times in the last three years, the number of K-pop video creations has increased by 97.87 million as of September 2021, and Indonesia is the largest market for making videos. Kpop, namely 16.4% (Tiktok, 2021). So it can be seen clearly that the band from South Korea is no stranger to Indonesian society. With the popularity of Korean culture, Lemonilo officially partnered with a band from South Korea as a brand ambassador.

Based on the results of observations on online news conducted by the author regarding NCT Dream news, the popularity of South Korean celebrities occupies the most search sites on the internet, one of which is NCT Dream. According to the [Kapanlagi.com](https://www.kapanlagi.com) page, NCT Dream is a boy band that debuted in 2016 with seven members. They succeeded by breaking sales records of 3.23 million copies and crowned triple million sellers (Subyakto, 2021). With NCT Dream's popularity, Lemonilo looks at this as a business opportunity to expand the market and build brand awareness.

Therefore Lemonilo invited NCT Dream to collaborate as brand ambassadors. Royan emphasized that the purpose of using a brand ambassador is to influence or invite consumers to use a product (Prayogi & Djabatmiko, 2019). Using brand ambassadors to attract the audience's attention to a brand can lead audiences to choose and use the product it represents. Generally, people will feel interested in buying and using a product because it is recommended directly by people they know or admires figures. Source Sofi, an NCT Dream fan, also stated this:

"Yes, because before I had never tried Lemonilo noodles but now I definitely buy Lemonilo products. So I think maybe NCT Dream has had quite a big influence on Lemonilo, especially for people like me who already know about Lemonilo products but weren't really interested but are now more interested. In fact, because of that, non-kpopers are curious because I often update stories when I get PCs from NCT Dream members, so they buy Lemonilo instant noodle products too" (interview with Sofi, 23, 11, 2022).

Lemonilo's marketing communication strategy of inviting NCT Dream to become brand ambassadors has greatly influenced Lemonilo. Reported through the [Marketeers.com](https://www.marketeers.com) page, Irfan Prabowo, Head of Content Marketing at PT Lemonilo, said that the company received various benefits

after collaborating with NCT Dream, including expanding the market and influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Besides that, the emergence of nano influencers who voluntarily campaigned for Lemonilo advertisements through their social media (Yunianto, 2022). After collaborating with NCT Dream, Lemonilo experienced a surge in revenue from product sales. This is evidenced by the following graphic:

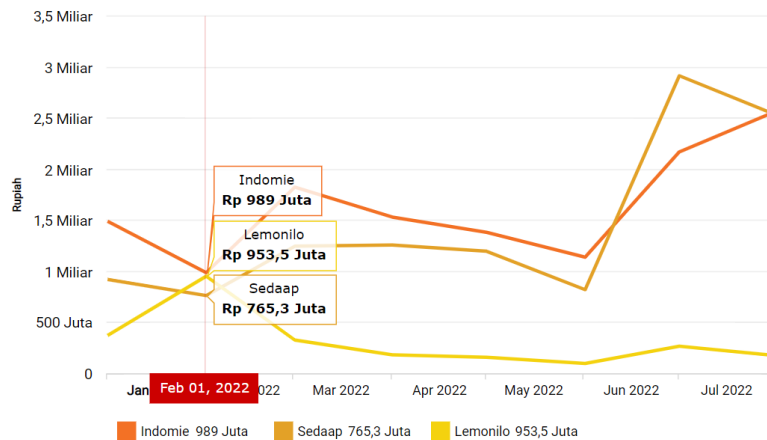


Figure 1 Graph of instan noodle sales in Indonesian E-Commerce (January-August 2022)

Source: Databoks.com

Through the graphic image of instant noodle sales revenue above, it can be concluded that Lemonilo experienced a spike in sales revenue in February of IDR 756.3 million. From the surge in sales revenue, it also proves that Lemonilo's marketing communication strategy using the NCT Dream brand ambassador has had a pretty good impact on Lemonilo.

To determine and choose a brand ambassador that suits the brand is not an easy thing, because every company must be smart and thorough in adjusting their corporate image based on lifestyle, knowledge, behavioral attitudes contained in a brand ambassador (Nurmawati, 2019). The popularity of NCT Dream is one of the considerations for Lemonilo to make them brand ambassadors, especially with the large number of NCT Dream fans or commonly known as NCTZen. Apart from popularity, there are several characteristics that brand ambassadors must have. According to Lea-Greenwood (in Putra et al, 2014), the characteristics that must be owned by a brand ambassador are transference, congruence, credibility, attractiveness and power.

Transference, which is when a celebrity endorses a brand related to their profession. As previously explained, NCT Dream's popularity cannot be doubted, with their large number of music video viewers on YouTube, having a large fan base, achievements, they have achieved success by breaking sales records of 3.23 million albums and crowned a triple million seller. With the popularity of NCT Dream, Lemonilo will

certainly get more attention from the public, especially among K-popers because he uses NCT Dream as his brand ambassador.

Congruence, someone who is selected to become a brand ambassador should have a match or compatibility with the brand that will be represented. NCT Dream is one of the celebrities who is good enough to become Lemonilo's brand ambassador. NCT Dream has a good image for its fans. In addition, the Lemonilo and NCT Dream brands have a similar or compatible mission, namely wanting to develop the younger generation, especially in making a healthy lifestyle the key to success. With this similarity or suitability, NCT Dream is considered capable of presenting the values and characters that are upheld by Lemonilo.

Credibility, brand ambassadors should have relevant knowledge, expertise or experience, so they can be trusted to provide objective information. Based on the results of the interviews conducted by the writer, the writer found that the achievements and experience of NCT Dream had a pretty good influence on the Lemonilo brand.

"In my opinion it is more towards achievement. Because this year is the year where NCT Dream is very popular and popular. If you look at their achievements, they have been involved in the entertainment world since they were small and eventually became a group and in this group their names have always been hailed, they have even won awards several times. Besides that, they can also be said that NCT Dream is the next BTS. So in my opinion, judging from their achievements, NCT Dream is suitable to be made a brand ambassador." (interview with Utik, 20, 11, 2022).

Attractiveness, a brand ambassador should have attractiveness both in terms of intelligence, personality traits, lifestyle and so on that can support a product to get attention. Several fans of NCT Dream who were interviewed by the writer stated that the physical appearance possessed by NCT Dream has a considerable influence, especially among young people because basically the main thing that is seen from celebrities is their physical or visual appearance. Apart from that, each NCT Dream member also has a pretty good personal branding.

Power, a form of charisma emitted by a brand ambassador, is one thing that is quite important because it will affect consumer purchasing decisions. The aura or charisma that is emitted by NCT Dream can be a power in influencing consumers to buy and use Lemonilo products. This was also acknowledged by one of the NCT Dream fans in an interview.

"So from the start I liked NCT Dream. Then when they became brand ambassadors, I still liked them, but when I saw their appearance they looked fresher and truly amazing. And when you see

their performance with Lemonilo, it seems more unified and looks very local.” (interview with Utik, 20, 11, 2022).

From the entire explanation above, it can be concluded that NCT Dream's involvement as a brand ambassador for Lemonilo Instant Noodles is appropriate and fulfills the characteristics of a brand ambassador. As the brand ambassador, NCT Dream is considered capable of representing Lemonilo and being able to attract the attention of the audience or K-pop fans in Indonesia, which is currently being widely discussed.

Lemonilo's Brand Awareness

Aaker said that brand awareness is related to the ability of a consumer to recognize or recall a brand (in Budiman et al., 2019). Brand awareness has several levels starting from the lowest level to the highest level. The first level is unaware of the brand (not aware of the existence of the brand), the second level is brand recognition, the third level is brand recall, the fourth and highest level is top of mind. For every brand, brand awareness is quite important because this is the initial stage of a buying process.

The collaboration between Lemonilo instant noodles and NCT Dream received a very good and positive response from netizens and NCT Dream fans. It can be seen from Lemonilo's Instagram social media account which received very good achievements from netizens and NCT Dream fans who participated in the celebration.



Figure 2 Screenshot of LemoniloXNCTDream Instagram content
Source: Instagram Lemonilo (2022)

From the capture of the Instagram content layer above, it can be seen that the enthusiasm of Indonesian people, especially among NCT Dream fans, is very good. The collaboration post managed to get as many as 117,075 thousand likes and 3,393 thousand comments. So it can be said that NCT Dream's involvement as a brand ambassador has succeeded in attracting the attention of a wider audience and

quite a good impression when compared to Lemonilo's Instagram content prior to NCT Dream's involvement.

NCT Dream's involvement as the brand ambassador for Lemonilo's instant noodles has certainly had a pretty good impact not only in terms of the number of likes and comments that are busy on social media but also has an impact on sales of its instant noodle products. Some of the sources that the authors interviewed said that after NCT Dream got involved as brand ambassadors they became more interested in this instant noodle product. This was expressed directly by NCT Dream fans, as follows:

"Initially, I already knew because everywhere there were advertisements for Lemonilo. But when I found out that NCT Dream was the brand ambassador, I became more interested and wanted to try other Lemonilo products too." (interview with Devina, 18, 11, 2022).

"Before NCT Dream became Lemonilo's brand ambassador, I already knew, but I just knew and the price was quite expensive. But after NCT Dream became the brand ambassador, I was interested in trying it and after trying it, it turned out to be quite delicious." (interview with Sofi, 23, 11, 2022).

From the results of the interview above, it can be concluded that the Lemonilo brand is already at the level of brand recognition, where the three sources above were previously aware of the existence of the brand but were not very interested and after NCT Dream became brand ambassadors, they remembered again and were more interested in the product.

With the collaboration of Lemonilo and NCT Dream, the brand was successfully recalled without any stimulus assistance. From the results of interviews conducted by the author with several sources, some of them mentioned the Lemonilo brand in the first place.

"Lemonilo, Fit mee, Tropicana slim, healthy noodles, I think that's all I've ever known, but from some of these noodles the most prominent now is Lemonilo, because their brand is everywhere and their advertisements can often be seen." (interview with Sofi, 23, 11, 2022).

"As for healthy noodles, I only know Lemonilo, Ladang Lima, Tropicana slim, healtimie." (interview with Utik, 20, 11, 2022).

"The most prominent or most frequently seen lemonilo." (interview with Yumna, 22, 11, 2022).

"Just Lemonilo and Healtimie as far as I know, about the others I don't know." (interview with Husna, 22, 11, 2022).

"From several healthy noodle brands that I often see, namely Lemonilo, the others don't really know." (interview with Asna, 23, 11, 2022).

"I know tropicana slim, Lemonilo, then green sarimi that's all I know." (interview with Devina, 18, 11, 2022).

Some of the statements above, several informants could recall the Lemonilo instant noodle brand, without any stimulus or trigger, and they consciously immediately chose and mentioned the Lemonilo brand. So that in the pyramid level, Lemonilo's brand awareness has succeeded in entering the brand recall level.

From the results of the interviews that have been conducted, the writer finds that the Lemonilo brand is easily remembered when you hear products in the healthy noodle and NCT Dream categories.

"I definitely remember, because from the start Lemonilo invited NCT NCT Dream to work together, it was quite excited and their advertisements often appeared so it was easier to remember." (interview with Yumna, 22, 11, 2022).

"Yes, that's for sure, because the branding is healthy noodles and NCT Dream's brand ambassador, so when talking about healthy noodles and NCT Dream, you will immediately think of the Lemonilo brand." (interview with Devina, 18, 11, 2022).

"Yes, because maybe it's really attached to NCT Dream, Lemonilo and photo cards." (interview with Husna, 22, 11, 2022).

From the statement above, the informant can remember that the Lemonilo brand has been widely discussed since the beginning of the collaboration. In addition, they also said that the Lemonilo and NCT Dream brands were very attached because there was a similarity in the green background color. This is in line with Herdana who stated that brand awareness or what is commonly referred to as brand awareness, is the ability in which consumers immediately recognize and remember a brand by simply seeing something such as a logo, image, or color that describes the identity of a brand (Yung & Sukendro, 2022). In the collaboration, Lemonilo also distributed prizes in the form of photo cards which can be obtained in Lemonilo instant noodle products in special collaboration packages. So it can be concluded that the Lemonilo brand has reached the top of mind stage on the brand awareness pyramid, in which some of the sources above are able to remember the Lemonilo brand when they hear products in the healthy noodle category or NCT Dream.

Overall, the authors conclude that NCT Dream has carried out its role as brand ambassador well and has succeeded in helping to build brand awareness of Lemonilo instant noodles. The Lemonilo instant noodle brand can be easily remembered by consumers through the display of collaborative content, the similarity or suitability of the background color between Lemonilo and NCT Dream which is green in color, as well as photo card (PC) prizes offered by Lemonilo to its consumers. In addition, consumers can easily remember the Lemonilo instant noodle brand with triggers or listen to products in the healthy noodle category or NCT Dream. Therefore, if it is categorized in the level of the brand awareness pyramid, the authors conclude that the Lemonilo instant noodle brand has reached the Top of mind level, which is the

highest level where consumers are able to remember a brand when thinking about products in a certain category, according to theory. brand awareness that has been put forward by Aaker.

CONCLUSION

The collaboration between Lemonilo and NCT Dream can be said to be the right step taken by the Lemonilo brand. NCT Dream's involvement as Lemonilo's brand ambassador is appropriate and fulfills the brand ambassador requirements. As the brand ambassador, NCT Dream is considered capable of representing the Lemonilo brand in the category of healthy instant noodles. In accordance with the terms and characteristics of brand ambassadors, NCT Dream has fulfilled the characteristics of transference, congruence, credibility, attractiveness and power. The selection of the right brand ambassador certainly has a good impact and results for brand awareness of Lemonilo instant noodles. This can be seen from the enthusiasm of netizens and NCT Dream fans who enlivened and gave good responses and flooded positive likes and comments on Lemonilo's Instagram social media account.

So it can be concluded that NCT Dream's role as brand ambassador has succeeded in building consumer awareness in remembering the Lemonilo instant noodle brand, through the involvement of NCT Dream. The Lemonilo instant noodle brand can be easily remembered by consumers through collaboration content broadcasts and PC prizes offered by Lemonilo. Consumers can easily remember the Lemonilo instant noodle brand with a trigger or listen to products in the healthy noodle category or NCT Dream. Therefore, if it is categorized in the level of the brand awareness pyramid, the authors conclude that the Lemonilo instant noodle brand has reached the Top of mind level, which is the highest level where consumers are able to remember a brand when thinking of products in a certain category, according to the pyramid. brand awareness level.

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