

The Effectiveness of Brand Ambassador in Non-Gen Z In Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The role of a brand ambassador is considered strategic, as it helps build an emotional connection between a brand and its consumers. The use of Korean celebrities as brand ambassadors has become common among Indonesian products due to the global popularity of Korean culture, known as the “Korean Wave.” This study aims to measure the effectiveness of NCT Dream as the brand ambassador of the TosTos snack product among non-Gen Z audiences using the VisCAP model, which includes four components: Visibility, Credibility, Attraction, and Power. This model is considered effective in evaluating how well a brand ambassador conveys a brand message. The research used a descriptive quantitative method, with data collected through an online questionnaire. The sampling technique was non-probability quota sampling, involving 400 respondents from the general public aged 28 years and older who are familiar with NCT Dream as TosTos’s brand ambassador. The findings indicate that NCT Dream is effective as a brand ambassador for TosTos, even among millennial and older age groups, with the “Visibility” component receiving the highest score among the four indicators.

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Article history

Received 1 September 2025

Revised 15 September 2025

Accepted 30 September 2025

Keywords

Brand ambassador

Effectiveness

VisCAP

NCT Dream

TosTos

1. Introduction

Communication plays an important role in building relationships between brands and audiences, especially in the digital age. According to Effendy (2008:10), communication is the process of conveying messages that have an effect, such as understanding and action. Dwijowijoto (2004:72) states that the purpose of communication is to create mutual understanding or change perceptions and behavior. This aligns with Hovland's (1953) S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) theory, which explains that messages (stimuli) are received by the audience (organism) and elicit responses based on their understanding and acceptance.

In the midst of intense business competition, companies need innovative strategies such as Marketing Public Relations (MPR) to reach the market and build a positive image. MPR combines the functions of public relations and marketing to support promotion through

convincing information so that products meet the needs and desires of consumers (Soemirat & Ardianto, 2016). This strategy also aims to raise public awareness of a brand to encourage purchasing decisions. One form of MPR strategy that is often used is the use of public figures as brand ambassadors (Harris, 1993).

A brand ambassador is an individual who supports product promotion and represents the product's identity to consumers (Maksum et al., 2018). The role of celebrities is considered capable of influencing consumer attitudes and beliefs psychologically because they are perceived to have an emotional connection with the public (Lailliya, 2020). In advertisements, celebrities act as a communication bridge between the product and consumers, so their personalities can influence the overall brand image (Lestari et al., 2019). Therefore, the selection of brand ambassadors does not only consider popularity but also the suitability of their character with the product image that is being built (Royan in Kertamukti, 2015:6).

The use of artists as brand ambassadors will be effective if it fulfills the VisCAP elements, namely visibility, credibility, attraction, and power. The VisCAP model was developed by Rossiter and Percy to assess the extent to which celebrities are able to convey brand messages convincingly. Visibility relates to popularity, credibility to trust in the message being conveyed, attraction to physical or personality appeal, and power to the ability to influence the audience. These four aspects can shape positive perceptions of the advertised product.

The use of Korean idols as brand ambassadors is very common in Indonesia due to the high level of public interest in Korean culture. Technological advances have facilitated access to information and strengthened the spread of the Korean Wave or Hallyu. This phenomenon has made Korean culture popular globally, including in Indonesia. According to a report by MCST (2024), Indonesia ranks first with the highest level of interest in Korea, at 86.3%.

The phenomenon of Indonesian society's interest in the Korean Wave has encouraged many companies to partner with Korean artists as brand ambassadors. This trend has been going on since 2015 and is not limited to beauty products, but has also spread to food. Korean idols are often chosen to represent products because of their appeal and influence. According to data from the "Total Distribution Volume Forecast for Snack Foods in Indonesia" graph, snack foods remain highly popular among Indonesian consumers, particularly among millennials and older age groups. Categories such as tortilla chips hold a prominent position in distribution, and the 25–44 age group constitutes the largest consumer segment, indicating strong market potential among millennials and older demographics.

Marketing strategies that use Korean idols as brand ambassadors have proven effective in attracting the attention of Indonesian consumers, especially the younger generation. PT. Dua Kelinci capitalized on this trend by partnering with NCT Dream, a South Korean idol group, to promote their snack product, TosTos, which was launched in 2022. TosTos is a high-quality tortilla chip with three flavor variants, actively promoted through social media with the tagline #LebihTeroos. The presence of NCT Dream as brand ambassadors has successfully increased the product's appeal among Gen Z, evidenced by a 162% surge in sales and enhanced brand awareness. This campaign also received the Marketeers OMNI Brands of the Year 2024 award for its successful multi-channel communication strategy. The use of popular idols like NCT Dream was deemed appropriate due to their alignment with the product's image and the positive influence they hold among fans.

Three previous studies have examined the role of NCT Dream in the TosTos snack food promotion campaign from various perspectives. A study by Divianti et al. (2024) from Telkom University examined the influence of NCT Dream as a brand ambassador on brand awareness using the VisCAP and Brand Awareness (Recall, Recognition, Purchase Decision) indicators, but the results showed no significant influence. In contrast, Johany (2024) from Petra Christian University assessed the effectiveness of NCT Dream as celebrity endorsers in TosTos YouTube ads before their official announcement as brand ambassadors. Using the TEARS model, the

study results showed that NCT Dream was effective in terms of physical appeal, although less prominent in terms of expertise. Meanwhile, Kinayang (2024) from Atma Jaya Yogyakarta University used the AISAS model to measure the influence of TosTos advertisements featuring NCT Dream on Instagram on followers' attitudes and purchasing decisions. The results showed a significant influence, where positive attitudes toward the advertisements also influenced the decision to purchase TosTos products.

The researchers chose this topic to assess the effectiveness of NCT Dream as brand ambassadors for PT Dua Kelinci's TosTos snack brand using the VisCAP indicator model. Unlike previous studies, which mostly involved Gen Z, this study presents something new by focusing on respondents from outside Gen Z, specifically those aged 25–44, who are the largest group of snack consumers in Indonesia. This study does not address purchasing decisions but purely assesses the effectiveness of NCT Dream as a brand ambassador, not merely as a celebrity endorser. This is important because K-Pop-based marketing strategies typically target Gen Z, yet K-Pop's popularity now extends to broader age groups. Therefore, this study aims to determine whether NCT Dream remains effective in influencing TosTos snack consumption among non-Gen Z consumers.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach using an online survey method to examine the effectiveness of NCT Dream as a brand ambassador for TosTos among the non-Gen Z community. Data were collected through a Google Form questionnaire, which was designed to measure the four VisCAP indicators: Visibility, Credibility, Attraction, and Power. The research involved 400 respondents selected using non probability quota sampling from five provinces in Java, known for high internet usage and large K-Pop fan bases. The questionnaire used an ordinal Likert scale, which “is typically used to measure attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of individuals or groups regarding ongoing social phenomena” (Sugiyono, 2018). Respondents rated each item on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with each option assigned a corresponding score (Singarimbun, 2006). After data collection, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the instrument's quality. The effectiveness of NCT Dream was analyzed using the mean score and interval category to determine whether it fell into the “effective” classification or not. Data processing was carried out using JASP or Microsoft Excel.

3. Results and Discussion

The validity test in this study requires questionnaire response data from 30 respondents to test validity. The validity test in this study will be assisted by the JASP application. The results obtained from the statements will be considered valid if the calculated r value is greater than the table r value. This study will use a table r value of 0.361 for 30 respondents. The following are the validity test results for each item.

Table 1.1 Validity test results

Indikator	Pernyataan	R hitung	R Tabel	Keterangan
Visibility	1	0.772	0.361	Valid
	2	0.762	0.361	Valid

	3	0.689	0.361	Valid
	4	0.733	0.361	Valid
Credibility	1	0.749	0.361	Valid
	2	0.786	0.361	Valid
	3	0.837	0.361	Valid
	4	0.814	0.361	Valid
Attraction	1	0.849	0.361	Valid
	2	0.894	0.361	Valid
	3	0.834	0.361	Valid
	4	0.791	0.361	Valid
Power	1	0.813	0.361	Valid
	2	0.848	0.361	Valid
	3	0.856	0.361	Valid
	4	0.891	0.361	Valid

Source: Researcher's calculation, 2025

The technique used by researchers to measure reliability is Cronbach's Alpha. Each item in the instrument can be considered reliable if it has an $r\text{-alpha} > 0.60$ (Sugiyono, 2013). The following are the results of the reliability test conducted by the researcher using JASP:

Figure 1.1 Reliability test results

Frequentist Scale Reliability Statistics

Coefficient	Estimate	Std. Error	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Coefficient α	0.963	0.010	0.943	0.982

Source: Researcher's calculation, 2025

Based on the results obtained by the researchers, it can be seen that the brand ambassador variable value through the Cronbach Alpha value of each indicator in this study obtained reliable and trustworthy results because the values obtained exceeded >0.60 .

In seeing the effectiveness of NCT Dream as a *brand ambassador* for TosTos snacks, researchers calculated the overall *mean* value of each indicator of *Visibility, Credibility, Attraction, and Power*. The following are the *mean* results of all VisCAP indicators in this study. The questionnaire was distributed to 400 respondents with a rating scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to assess brand ambassador indicators. The data obtained were analyzed through validity, reliability, and average and interval calculations to determine the level of effectiveness.

Table 1.2 Mean values on Visibility indicators

Question	STS	TS	N	S	SS	Mean
NCT Dream is one of the famous Korean idols who have been working for several years.	6	29	29	172	164	4.15
NCT Dream has various achievements in the music industry in Korea and abroad.	10	23	76	136	155	4.01
I ever seen NCT Dream appear on my social media accounts	5	26	65	170	134	4.01
I know NCT Dream as the <i>brand ambassador</i> of local snack brand TosTos.	6	43	49	210	92	3.85
Total Mean Visibility						4.00

Source: Researcher's calculation, 2025

In the Visibility indicator, the first item is about whether NCT Dream, as one of South Korea's idols, is known among non-Gen Z circles. Respondents were asked to respond to this statement. Out of a total of 400 respondents who are non-Gen Z individuals, 6 people (1.5%) strongly disagreed, 29 people (7.25%) disagreed, 29 people (7.25%) chose neutral, 172 people (43%) agreed, and 164 people (41%) strongly agreed. For the second item, regarding whether NCT Dream's various achievements in the music industry are known among non-Gen Z individuals, the results showed that 10 respondents (2.5%) strongly disagreed, 23 people (5.75%) disagreed, 76 people (19%) were neutral, 136 people (34%) agreed, and 155 people (38.75%) strongly agreed.

The statement items in the visibility indicator obtained a mean of more than 3.85. Then, the calculation of the overall mean value of the visibility indicator was 4.00, which means it falls

into the class interval $3 \leq x \leq 5$ (effective). Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents from the non-Gen Z demographic agree that NCT Dream is a music group that has been recognized throughout its career, has a track record of achievements, has appeared on their social media, and is widely known as the brand ambassador for the TosTos snack product. This finding indicates that NCT Dream's existence and influence are not limited to the younger generation but have successfully reached and built awareness among older generations as well.

Table 1.3 Mean values on Credibility indicators

Question	STS	TS	N	S	SS	Mean
NCT Dream impressed honest when describing snack products TosTos	6	34	77	190	93	3.83
NCT Dream is able to convey messages well about products TosTos snacks	12	28	76	167	117	3.87
NCT Dream impressed expert when talking about products food lightweight TosTos	6	26	76	203	89	3.86
NCT Dream is not exaggerated and can be trustworthy in conveying information about TosTos in the community	7	28	84	178	103	3.86
Total Mean Credibility						3.85

Source: Researcher's calculation, 2025

The statement in the Credibility indicator obtained an average (mean) score of 3.85, which means it falls into the $3 \leq x \leq 5$ (effective) class interval. One of the questions with the highest mean is “NCT Dream is able to effectively convey the message about TosTos snack products” with a total mean of 3.87. This result demonstrates NCT Dream’s credibility as the brand ambassador for TosTos snack products. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents from the non-Gen Z demographic agree that NCT Dream, as the brand ambassador for TosTos, meets the characteristics of a group that can effectively convey a product’s message without being excessive, appearing expert, and honest.

Table 1.4 Mean values on Attraction indicators

Question	STS	TS	N	S	SS	Mean
NCT Dream is a group that good-looking	3	19	32	191	155	4.19

NCT Dream is a group that have a positive personality	7	15	95	174	109	3.91
NCT Dream personnel display a snack-loving lifestyle like me	6	31	96	162	105	3.82
NCT Dream is a group that has in common a taste snack with me because we are the same age	38	100	53	126	83	3.29
Total Mean Attraction						3.80

Source: Researcher's calculation, 2025

In the attraction indicator, there are four questions, consisting of two questions on likeability and two questions on similarity. In Table 1.4, for the first item regarding whether NCT Dream is an attractive group, out of 400 respondents, the majority answered agree and strongly agree, while a few respondents disagree and strongly disagree. This statement received a mean score of 4.19. In this statement, 155 respondents strongly agree, 191 respondents agree, 32 respondents neutral, 19 respondents disagree, and 3 respondents strongly disagree. In the second item, regarding NCT Dream's positive personality, the mean score was 3.91, with the majority of respondents agreeing (174) and strongly agreeing (109). The third item, regarding a lifestyle that enjoys snacks, had a mean score of 3.82, with 162 respondents agreeing and 105 strongly agreeing. Meanwhile, the fourth item, related to age similarity and snack preferences, showed the lowest mean of 3.29, with a majority of respondents disagreeing (100) and strongly disagreeing (38).

The statement in the Attraction indicator obtained a mean value of 3.80, which means it falls into the class interval $3 \leq x < 5$ (effective). Based on this result, the researcher can conclude that the majority of research respondents who are non-Gen Z people mostly agree that NCT Dream is attractive and has a positive personality. The respondents also mostly agree that NCT Dream also displays a lifestyle that enjoys snacks like the respondents. However, on the last item, although the presence of NCT Dream as a brand ambassador is still considered quite effective by the respondents, the effect is not yet optimal due to age relevance limitations.

Table 1.5 Mean values on Power indicator

Question	STS	TS	N	S	SS	Mean
NCT Dream as a <i>brand ambassador</i> can make me interested in products foods lightweight TosTos	8	55	50	182	105	3.80
NCT Dream as a <i>brand ambassador</i> is able to influence me to remember the TosTos brand.	7	38	56	191	108	3.89

NCT Dream as a <i>brand ambassador</i> is able to influence me to like TosTos products.	12	38	90	119	141	3.85
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NCT Dream as a <i>brand ambassador</i> is able to influence me to consume TosTos products.	13	49	69	158	111	3.76
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Total Mean Power						3.83
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Source: Researcher's calculation, 2025

The statement in the Power indicator obtained a mean value of 3.83, which falls within the class interval $3 \leq x \leq 5$ (effective). Based on these results, the researcher concludes that the majority of respondents who are non-Gen Z individuals believe that NCT Dream, as a brand ambassador, is sufficiently capable of influencing them regarding TosTos products. Most respondents agree that the presence of NCT Dream can attract attention to TosTos snack products, help recall the brand, and foster interest in the products. However, the influence to encourage direct consumption is still not very strong. This indicates that although NCT Dream is considered effective in general, their influence in encouraging consumption decisions in the older age segment has not yet reached its maximum point, possibly due to differences in age relevance and personal preferences.

Table 1.6 Results of Mean Calculation of All Indicators

Indicator	Mean	Effectiveness
Visibility	4.00	Effective
Credibility	3.85	Effective
Attraction	3.80	Effective
Power	3.83	Effective
TOTAL	3.87	Effective

Source: Researcher's calculation, 2025

Based on Table 1.6, the overall mean score for the VisCAP indicator in this study was 3.87, which falls within the range of $3 \leq x \leq 5$. Therefore, the use of NCT Dream as the brand ambassador for TosTos snacks among non-Gen Z consumers is effective. Giannini (2010) argues that Public Relations Marketing efforts have the potential to increase product and

organizational visibility, inform stakeholders about organizational issues, influence public opinion, and encourage trial or increased use of a product. In this case, TosTos uses a brand ambassador to support their snack food product. According to Harris (1993), MPR is associated with efforts to provide useful information to raise public awareness of a product or brand so that consumers want to purchase that product or brand. One of the methods and strategies used by a company is to use a figure commonly referred to as a brand ambassador.

Table 1.6 shows the average (mean) values for each research indicator. The indicator with the highest mean, 4.00, is Visibility. This is followed by the Credibility indicator with a mean of 3.85, then the Power indicator with a mean of 3.83, and the Attraction indicator with a mean of 3.80. The Visibility indicator has the highest mean in terms of the effectiveness of NCT Dream as the brand ambassador for TosTos snacks among the non-Gen Z population.

Based on the results of all VISCAP indicators, the visibility indicator showed the highest mean value. The visibility indicator for NCT Dream as the brand ambassador for TosTos snacks received the highest mean value of 4.00, which means it falls into the effective class interval category. The visibility indicator measures the popularity attached to the artist representing the product (Rossiter & Percy, 1985). The presence of a brand ambassador with a high reputation, authority, or popularity can shape positive perceptions toward the product or brand they represent (Das & Mishra, 2022). Thus, NCT Dream's popularity can shape positive perceptions toward the Tos Tos brand.

In terms of popularity, despite debuting at a young age and facing both praise and criticism, NCT Dream's eight-year journey has not been an easy one. Jaemin took a nearly two-year hiatus due to health issues, and Mark had to leave the group due to SM Entertainment's graduation system. After several other members nearly faced the same fate, the fans' (NCTzen) demands to abolish the graduation system finally bore fruit. SM Entertainment designated NCT Dream as a permanent unit and reinstated Mark to the lineup. Their comeback with the song "Hot Sauce" featuring the full lineup was met with enthusiastic reception and achieved the title of double million seller for two consecutive years, marking a significant turning point in their career. In addition to being widely recognized by the public for their various achievements in the music industry, NCT Dream has maintained a clean image free of negative controversies throughout their career. This positive reputation is further strengthened by their consistency in creating music and the numerous awards they have won in the music industry.

The *Credibility* indicator of NCT Dream as a *brand ambassador* for TosTos snacks gets the third highest *mean* value of 3.85 which is still included in the effective class interval category. The *Credibility* indicator or artist credibility is assessed from whether the celebrity as a *brand ambassador* can convince consumers of the product depending on *expertise*, namely the artist's knowledge of the product; *trustworthiness*, namely how honest the artist conveys information with *objectivity*, namely the artist's ability to build consumer confidence in the product (Rossiter & Percy, 1985). Researchers found that NCT Dream is able to convey messages well about TosTos snack products and has the highest *mean* result. This is because the respondents felt that NCT Dream's delivery style felt natural, innovative, and easy to understand well. NCT Dream as the *brand ambassador of* TosTos also shows that they really try and bring the TosTos snack products in their daily lives, such as during *events*, concerts, even during their *interviews* while in Indonesia, so that *reviews* or testimonials related to these products can be trusted by the audience.

The Power indicator in this study obtained a mean of 3.83. The power indicator, which is one of the indicators of the VisCAP model, is how much power the artist has in carrying out persuasive actions that will ultimately influence consumer decisions (Rossiter & Percy, 1985). The power indicator obtained the lowest mean value of all indicators, but this mean is still classified as effective. One statement that received the lowest mean in the power indicator was

“NCT Dream as a brand ambassador can influence me to consume TosTos products,” with a mean of 3.76. This indicates that NCT Dream as a brand ambassador has not been able to maximally influence non-Gen Z consumers to consume TosTos products.

However, NCT Dream as a brand ambassador successfully influenced me to remember the TosTos brand, as evidenced by the fact that this statement received the third highest mean on the power indicator. Most respondents assessed that the presence of NCT Dream as a brand ambassador had an influence in increasing interest in TosTos snack products, thereby generating curiosity to try TosTos products. This aligns with Percy & Rossiter (2018), who state that the influence or impact of celebrities can convince the audience to succumb to the celebrity's power. In line with this, NCT Dream as brand ambassadors are able to influence their audience to increase brand interest.

Finally, the attraction indicator received the lowest mean score of 3.80. Although the results were not optimal, this indicator still produced effective results. The attraction indicator itself refers to attractiveness as one of the inherent characteristics of the artist, such as likeability, which is related to the artist's physical appearance and personality. Then there is similarity, which refers to the emotional resemblance between the audience and the brand ambassador (Rossiter & Percy, 1985). According to Belch & Belch (2018), attractiveness is one of the strategic advantages that can influence consumer interest in the brand or product it represents.

In this context, NCT Dream is considered to have high likeability among non-Gen Z audiences. This is evident from the respondents' responses in Table 4.16, who perceive NCT Dream as having attractive physical appearances, such as handsome faces, proportional body postures, and fashionable clothing styles. Additionally, the positive personalities of the members also contribute to a good image and support their perception as brand ambassadors. However, the attraction score does not reach the highest level due to the similarity aspect. NCT Dream is an idol group that, in terms of age and image, more closely represents Generation Z. The group's image, which has been known since its debut for its cheerful and energetic vibe (“5 Interesting Facts About NCT Dream,” 2023), aligns with this. This aligns with TosTos' own characteristics, which consistently present promotional content that represents the energetic and cheerful nature of young people, including through the use of the visual symbol “tos” in photo and video posts as a brand identity enhancer.

This creates a generational gap between them and non-Gen Z audiences, causing some respondents to feel less emotionally connected or similar to NCT Dream. This generational difference indirectly affects the perception of similarity, thereby lowering the overall score on the attraction indicator. Nevertheless, NCT Dream's visual appeal and positive image continue to play a significant role in shaping positive perceptions of the TosTos snack product. As shown in the Crosstab table, the older the respondents, the lower the average score on the attraction indicator. This means that as respondents age, NCT Dream becomes less appealing to them. This has implications for NCT Dream's role as a brand ambassador, which weakens as age increases. Therefore, older respondents have lower awareness of TosTos compared to younger respondents.

In addition to brand ambassadors, who can be a key tool for MPR to enhance its brand image, media also plays a crucial role in MPR's activities by publishing or disseminating information related to the company's activities through various media (Ruslan, 2008). In this study, the researcher utilized four primary media platforms employed by TosTos for promotional purposes. Among the data collected, Instagram emerged as the most frequently chosen social media platform by respondents when viewing content and posts related to NCT Dream, the credibility of NCT Dream, and the social media platforms that introduced them to NCT Dream as TosTos' brand ambassador. Instagram itself is one of the social media platforms that allows users to share their moments in the form of photos or videos. Additionally,

Instagram offers various supporting features such as Instagram Stories, Instagram posts, Reels, and collaboration features.

On Instagram, brands or advertisers tell stories or convey messages through visual content in the form of photos or images (Robertson, 2018). TosTos is one brand that actively utilizes social media to promote its products, especially when collaborating with NCT Dream. On Instagram, TosTos frequently shares various types of content, such as quotes, YouTube video clips, testimonials, and other promotional materials, often featuring NCT Dream in the photos or videos. Although all four of their social media platforms—Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook—are active and regularly updated, Instagram remains the platform TosTos uses most frequently to interact with its followers.

This is inseparable from Instagram's interactive features, such as Instagram Stories with a Q&A feature, which enables two-way communication between brands and audiences. Additionally, important information can be saved using the Highlights feature to remain accessible at any time. A concrete example of this interaction is seen when TosTos responded to followers' questions about the meet-and-greet event with NCT Dream in Korea. With this approach, Instagram has become a strategic and effective platform for TosTos in building a closer connection with consumers.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis using the VisCAP model, this study concludes that NCT Dream is effective as a brand ambassador for TosTos snacks among non-Gen Z audiences. This is indicated by an overall mean score of 3.87, which falls within the effective category. The indicator with the highest score is visibility (4.00), reflecting NCT Dream's widespread popularity and influence. Meanwhile, the indicator with the lowest score is attraction (3.80), which, although still effective, indicates limitations in terms of emotional closeness and character similarity between NCT Dream and non-Gen Z respondents. Factors such as age differences and the generational image of Gen Z from NCT Dream are considered in the perception of similarity.

Further analysis through cross-tabulation shows that the 28–35 age group (early millennials) responded most positively to the visibility, attraction, and power indicators, while the 36–44 age group (late millennials) scored highest on the credibility indicator. Women also tend to give higher scores than men across all indicators, although men still demonstrate significant effectiveness, particularly on the attraction indicator influenced by NCT Dream's appearance and fashion style. Thus, the four VisCAP indicators complement each other in assessing the effectiveness of brand ambassadors. These findings can serve as an important reference for companies in selecting brand ambassadors who are not only popular but also align with the characteristics of their target consumers.

Acknowledgment

The researcher would like to express deepest gratitude to Jesus Christ for His guidance and blessings throughout the completion of this research. Special thanks are also extended to the Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industry, as well as the Communication Study Program at Petra Christian University, for their continuous support. The researcher would also like to thank all the respondents who participated and provided valuable input, and to everyone who contributed in any way to the successful publication of this article.

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