

**THE INFLUENCE OF BRAND AMBASSADOR AND BRAND AWARENESS ON PURCHASE DECISION MEDIATED BY PURCHASE INTENTION OF TOSTOS TORTILLA PRODUCTS X NCT DREAM (A STUDY ON NCT DREAM FANS IN LAMONGAN REGENCY)**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research aims to examine the influence of brand ambassador and brand awareness on the purchase decision of Tostitos Tortilla products in collaboration with NCT Dream, with purchase intention as a mediating variable using PLS-SEM. The study was conducted on NCT Dream fans in Lamongan Regency. The method used is a quantitative survey with data collection through questionnaires distributed to 85 respondents. The sampling technique employed is purposive sampling. The data analysis technique used is PLS-SEM (Partial Least Square) utilizing SmarPLS 3 software, including testing models (validity and reliability tests), structural models (coefficient of determination and path coefficient tests), hypothesis decisions (determining t-statistics and decisions), and mediation tests. The results show that: 1) brand ambassador does not have a significant effect on purchase decisions, 2) brand awareness does not have a significant effect on purchase decisions, 3) brand ambassador has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, which subsequently affects purchase decisions, and 4) brand awareness also has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, which subsequently affects purchase decisions.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The snack food industry in Indonesia shows significant growth, particularly with an annual growth rate reaching 3.75% in the first quarter of 2022. Projections indicate that the distribution volume of snacks is expected to reach 1.357 million kilograms, an increase of about 6% compared to the previous year. This growth reflects not only an increase in demand but also a shift in consumer lifestyles favoring convenient foods. In this context, companies in this sector need to adapt to existing trends and seek innovative ways to attract consumer attention. With the growing awareness of the importance of product quality and variety, opportunities for developing new products are increasingly wide open (Maulayanissa, 2024).

In facing intense competition, companies in the snack food sector strive to capture consumer attention through various marketing strategies. One increasingly popular approach is the use of brand

ambassadors, who play a significant role in influencing purchase decisions. Brand ambassadors can bridge the relationship between brands and consumers, providing a positive image of the products. The selection of the right brand ambassador, aligned with the values and identity of the brand, can significantly enhance brand awareness. This phenomenon is crucial in the context of snack foods, which often compete with established major brands.

PT. Dua Kelinci, as a player in the food industry, has launched TosTos Snack Tortilla Chips in collaboration with the music group NCT Dream as brand ambassadors. This collaboration aims to leverage the popularity of NCT Dream to attract consumer interest, especially among loyal K-Pop fans. The launch of advertisements featuring well-known artists serves not only as a promotional strategy but also as an effort to strengthen brand awareness among the target market. This collaborative advertisement is expected to create support on social media, which in turn can enhance purchase intention. Thus, this approach reflects modern marketing trends that leverage celebrity influence to impact consumer decisions (Maulayanissa, 2024).

The collaboration between TosTos and NCT Dream has successfully captured the attention of fans on social media, particularly through the cheerful expressions of the group members that spark curiosity. The use of the hashtag #TosTosxNCTDream on Twitter reflects high participation from fans, contributing to the increased popularity of the product. This partnership not only boosts TosTos's brand awareness among K-Pop fans but also opens opportunities for international market expansion. With effective marketing strategies, including special packaging and photocards, TosTos has successfully increased consumer purchase intention, making this collaboration a successful model in snack marketing in Indonesia (Maulayanissa, 2024).

Indonesia has a large and loyal K-Pop community. As a sign of loyalty, many fans purchase items advertised by their idols. Thus, this Korean cultural trend may be one of the factors driving consumer purchases (Waluyan, 2023). According to Marcella et al. (2023), a brand ambassador is a tool used by companies to communicate and connect with the public regarding ways to boost sales. Indicators of a brand ambassador, based on the VisCAP model, include Visibility, Credibility, Attraction, and Power. The use of brand ambassadors serves as an attraction in advertisements that can influence consumer preferences, as they can act as reference groups that impact consumer behavior and become trendsetters for the products being sold. The selection of the right brand ambassador can enhance consumer purchase levels.

Firmansyah et al., (2019) states that “brand awareness” is the primary goal of marketing communication, with high brand awareness expected to ensure that when a need arises in a specific category, the brand will be recalled and considered as one of the alternatives in decision-making. Meanwhile, according to Arianti et al. (2021), “brand awareness” refers to the awareness of a brand related to its strength in the public's memory, reflected in people's minds and enabling them to identify various brand elements (brand name, logo, symbol, character, packaging, and slogan) in various situations.

Purchase decision is the final step in the process consumers undergo to understand issues related to seeking information about a specific product brand, evaluating various alternative options to solve that issue, and finally reaching a purchase decision (Cesariana, 2022). According to Zahra et al. (2024), in general, a purchase decision involves choosing between two or more alternatives from marketing management that can influence an individual. This decision includes selecting the type and benefits of the product, form and brand, quantity, time of purchase, and payment method. Companies need to market the goods or services they offer effectively to maintain customer loyalty and remain competitive with other companies.

Purchase intention is the action taken by an individual based on their experiences in selecting, using, and consuming products or services, arising from the desire to make a purchase based on a specific brand (Marcella, 2023). Purchase intention is an important variable in the consumer decision-making process, reflecting interest that drives purchasing actions. In this study, purchase intention acts as a mediator connecting the influence of brand ambassadors and brand awareness on purchase decisions. By understanding the mechanism of purchase intention, businesses can optimize their marketing strategies to boost sales, thereby strengthening their market position.

The differences in results from previous studies are one reason for conducting this research. The researcher undertook a study titled: “The Influence of Brand Ambassador and Brand Awareness on Purchase Decisions Mediated by Purchase Intention of TosTos Tortilla x NCT Dream Products (A Study on NCT Dream Fans in Lamongan Regency).” It is hoped that the results of this research can assist companies in formulating more effective marketing strategies and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the fields of marketing and consumer behavior.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative method with primary data collected through a questionnaire distributed using Google Forms. The population for this research consists of Instagram followers of NCT Dream fans (@nctzen\_lamongan), which has 109 followers as of November 2024. The sample for the study was determined using Slovin's formula, resulting in 85 respondents. The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling method, as the samples were chosen based on specific criteria: followers of the Instagram account @nctzen\_lamongan, who have purchased TosTos Tortilla x NCT Dream products, and reside in Lamongan. Data analysis was conducted using PLS-SEM software, specifically SmarPLS 3, with testing that includes model evaluation (validity and reliability tests), structural model (coefficient of determination and path coefficient tests), hypothesis decisions (determining t-statistics and decisions), and mediation tests.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Data Analysis Results

#### Measurement Model (Outer Model)

##### Validity Test

Convergent Validity test is applied to evaluate the indicators contained in each variable. This process involves analyzing the outer loading value  $> 0.07$ , then the indicator is considered valid. The following are the test results with SmartPLS 3 software:

**Table 1 Outer Loading Results**

Indicator	Outer Loading Results	Rate OF Thumb	Description
X1.1	0.814	0.700	Valid
X1.2	0.735	0.700	Valid
X1.3	0.793	0.700	Valid
X1.4	0.786	0.700	Valid
X1.5	0.791	0.700	Valid
X1.6	0.860	0.700	Valid
X2.1	0.814	0.700	Valid
X2.2	0.803	0.700	Valid
X2.3	0.756	0.700	Valid
X2.4	0.724	0.700	Valid
X2.5	0.795	0.700	Valid
X2.6	0.830	0.700	Valid
Y.1	0.837	0.700	Valid
Y.2	0.827	0.700	Valid
Y.3	0.727	0.700	Valid
Y.4	0.793	0.700	Valid
Y.5	0.813	0.700	Valid
Z.1	0.810	0.700	Valid
Z.2	0.774	0.700	Valid
Z.3	0.792	0.700	Valid
Z.4	0.787	0.700	Valid
Z.5	0.793	0.700	Valid
Z.6	0.740	0.700	Valid

Based on the results of the tests that have been carried out, it can be concluded that each variable indicator shows an outer loading value  $> 0.07$ . This indicates that each indicator is considered valid. This assessment is supported by the data listed in the table above.

**Discriminant Validity**

In this test, two methods are used to evaluate the validity of the indicators. The first method involves examining the cross-loading values, where an indicator is stated to meet discriminant validity if its cross-loading value meets the established criteria. The following are the results of the testing using SmartPLS 3:

**Table 2 Cross Loading Results**

Indicator	Brand Ambassador (X <sub>1</sub> )	Brand Awareness (X <sub>2</sub> )	Purchase Decision (Y)	Purchase Intention (Z)
X <sub>1.1</sub>	0.814	0.289	0.260	0.410
X <sub>1.2</sub>	0.735	0.184	0.192	0.159
X <sub>1.3</sub>	0.793	0.360	0.464	0.400
X <sub>1.4</sub>	0.786	0.371	0.309	0.386
X <sub>1.5</sub>	0.791	0.248	0.199	0.231
X <sub>1.6</sub>	0.860	0.319	0.360	0.333
X <sub>2.1</sub>	0.269	0.814	0.535	0.608
X <sub>2.2</sub>	0.372	0.803	0.641	0.650
X <sub>2.3</sub>	0.209	0.756	0.403	0.491
X <sub>2.4</sub>	0.215	0.724	0.396	0.424
X <sub>2.5</sub>	0.406	0.795	0.553	0.660
X <sub>2.6</sub>	0.315	0.830	0.621	0.621
Y.1	0.356	0.616	0.837	0.737
Y.2	0.327	0.526	0.827	0.796
Y.3	0.279	0.362	0.727	0.593
Y.4	0.279	0.547	0.793	0.611
Y.5	0.355	0.652	0.813	0.688
Z.1	0.312	0.597	0.684	0.810
Z.2	0.338	0.669	0.614	0.774
Z.3	0.346	0.504	0.713	0.792
Z.4	0.379	0.551	0.640	0.787
Z.5	0.241	0.589	0.708	0.793
Z.6	0.402	0.582	0.693	0.740

In this analysis, the cross loading value obtained for each variable is  $< 0.9$ , this further strengthens that the variables tested are valid.

**Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

In the analysis of variable validity, in addition to considering the cross loading value, it is also important to compare the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of each variable with the correlation that occurs between these variables. To ensure adequate validity, it is recommended that this AVE value should be  $> 0.5$ . The test results related to this analysis will be presented below:

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

Variable	Average Variance Extraced (AVE)	Description
Brand Ambassador (X <sub>1</sub> )	0.636	Valid
Brand Awareness (X <sub>2</sub> )	0.621	Valid
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.641	Valid
Purchase Intention (Z)	0.613	Valid

Table 3 shows that all variables tested in this study, namely brand ambassador, brand awareness, purchasing decision and purchasing interest, have an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of  $> 0.5$ . This indicates that each variable meets the discriminant validity criteria set by the AVE test.

### Reliability Test

Reliability testing in this study was conducted using two methods, namely the analysis of Cronbach's alpha value used to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire, while composite reliability is used to assess the actual reliability of a construct or variable. To state that the respondent's answers to the questionnaire can be considered reliable, the composite reliability value is  $> 0.700$ .

**Table 4 Composite Reliability Values**

Variable	Composite Reliability (rho_A)	Composite Reliability (rho_C)	Description
Brand Ambassador (X <sub>1</sub> )	0.910	0.913	Reliable
Brand Awareness (X <sub>2</sub> )	0.889	0.907	Reliable
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.868	0.899	Reliable
Purchase Intention (Z)	0.874	0.905	Reliable

Based on table 4 above, it can be seen that the variables in this study have a composite reliability value of  $> 0.700$ . This shows that all of these variables meet the criteria for good reliability. Thus, the variables tested show an adequate level of reliability.

### Cronbach's Alpha

**Table 5 Cronbach's Alpha**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Brand Ambassador (X <sub>1</sub> )	0.888	Reliable
Brand Awareness (X <sub>2</sub> )	0.878	Reliable
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.859	Reliable
Purchase Intention (Z)	0.874	Reliable

Based on table 5, the test results show that each variable in this study has a cronbach's alpha value  $> 0.7$ . This indicates that all variables can be considered reliable.

### Structural Model

#### Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

**Table 6 R-Square Results**

Variable	R-Square	Description
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.749	Moderate
Purchase Intention (Z)	0.577	Moderate

The table presented shows the R-Square values for two variables. For the purchase decision, the R-Square value is 0.749 or 74.9%, reflecting a "moderate" relationship between the independent variables and that decision. For purchase intention, the R-Square value is 0.577 or 57.7%, which also

indicates a "moderate" relationship. Thus, the table above indicates that both variables have significant and moderate relationships with the analyzed factors.

**Path Coefficient**

This model testing is conducted to analyze the direct relationship between two variables, namely the independent variable and the dependent variable, without involving intervening variables. The purpose of this test is to see the direction and strength of the relationship between the two relationships between the two variables. The influence between variables can be categorized as positive if the original sample value > 0, if the original sample value < 0 then the influence is declared negative.

**Table 7 Path Coefficient Results**

Variable Influence	Original Sample	Direction of Relationship
Brand Ambassador (X <sub>1</sub> ) – Purchase Decision (Y)	0.030	Positive
Brand Ambassador (X <sub>1</sub> ) – Purchase Intention (Z)	0.165	Positive
Brand Awareness (X <sub>2</sub> ) - Purchase Decision (Y)	0.083	Positive
Brand Awareness (X <sub>2</sub> ) - Purchase Intention (Z)	0.680	Positive
Purchase Intention (Z) - Purchase Decision (Y)	0.789	Positive

The table above presents the Path Coefficient results, illustrating the influence of the variables on purchase decision and purchase intention. (1) The brand ambassador variable (X<sub>1</sub>) has a significant influence on purchase decision (Y) with an original sample value of 0.030, indicating a positive relationship. (2) The brand ambassador variable (X<sub>1</sub>) also positively affects purchase intention (Z) with a value of 0.165, suggesting that an increase in brand ambassador can enhance purchase intention. (3) Brand awareness (X<sub>2</sub>) has an effect on purchase decision (Y) with a value of 0.083, which is still positive. (4) Brand awareness (X<sub>2</sub>) has a greater influence on purchase intention (Z) at 0.680, indicating that higher brand awareness can increase purchase intention. (5) Purchase intention (Z) also contributes to purchase decision (Y) with a value of 0.789, showing that the higher the purchase intention, the greater the likelihood of making a purchase decision.

**Hypothesis Testing**

The variable criteria can be considered to have a significant influence if the t-statistic value is > 1.98, both for direct and indirect influences. Conversely, if the t-statistic value is < 1.98, then the influence is not considered significant. In addition to t-statistics, p-value is also used to assess significance if the p-value is < 0.05 (5%), then the direct and indirect influences are declared significant.

**Table 8 Hypothesis Testing Results**

Variable	T-Statistics (IO/STDVI)	P-Values	Description
Brand Ambassador (X <sub>1</sub> ) – Purchase Decision (Y)	0.562	0.574	Positive and Not Significant
Brand Ambassador (X <sub>1</sub> ) – Purchase Intention (Z)	2.316	0.021	Positive and Significant
Brand Awareness (X <sub>2</sub> ) – Purchase Decision (Y)	0.720	0.472	Positive and Not Significant
Brand Awareness (X <sub>2</sub> ) – Purchase Intention (Z)	9.138	0.000	Positive and Significant
Purchase Intention (Z) – Purchase Decision (Y)	7.804	0.000	Positive and Significant

The table above presents the results of hypothesis testing that includes an analysis of the influence of certain variables on purchasing decisions and purchase interest, complete with T-Statistics and P-Value values. (1) brand ambassador ( $X_1$ ) on purchasing decisions (Y) T-Statistics value is  $0.562 < 1.98$  with P-Value  $0.574 > 0.05$ , so this hypothesis is not accepted because the significance value is greater than 0.05, indicating that the influence is positive and not significant. (2) brand ambassador ( $X_1$ ) also shows a positive and significant influence on purchase interest (Z) with a T-Statistics value of  $2.316 > 1.98$  with P-Value  $0.021 < 0.05$ , so this hypothesis is accepted. (3) brand awareness ( $X_2$ ) towards purchasing decisions (Y) has a T-Statistics value of  $0.720 < 1.98$  with a P-Value of  $0.472 > 0.05$ , which indicates that the influence is positive and not significant. So this hypothesis is not accepted because the significance value is greater than 0.05. (4) brand awareness ( $X_2$ ) towards purchasing interest (Z) shows a positive and significant influence with a T-Statistics value of  $9.138 > 1.98$  with a P-Value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , so this hypothesis is accepted. (5) the relationship between purchasing interest (Z) and purchasing decisions (Y) shows a T-Statistics value of  $7.804 > 1.98$  with a P-Value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , so this hypothesis is accepted, indicating that the influence is positive and significant.

### Mediation Testing

Mediation testing aims to demonstrate the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables through a mediating or intervening variable. This indirect effect is calculated by multiplying the effect of the independent variable on the intervening variable with the effect of the intervening variable on the dependent variable. In this study, purchase intention serves as the intervening variable that connects the two independent variables.

**Table 8 Mediation Testing Results**

Variable	T-Statistics	P-Value	Description
Brand Ambassador ( $X_1$ ) – Purchase Intention (Z) – Purchase Decision (Y)	2.250	0.025	Positive and Significant
Brand Awareness ( $X_2$ ) – Purchase Intention (Z) – Purchase Decision (Y)	6.032	0.000	Positive and Significant

The table above shows the results of the mediation test involving two variables: (1) brand ambassador ( $X_1$ ) and brand awareness ( $X_2$ ) in relation to purchase intention (Z) and purchase decision (Y). The test results for brand ambassador indicate a T-Statistics value of 2.250 and a P-Value of 0.025, which indicates that the relationship between brand ambassador and purchase intention is significant and positive. (2) For brand awareness, the T-Statistics value is 6.032, with a P-Value of 0.000, also indicating that the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention is significant and positive.

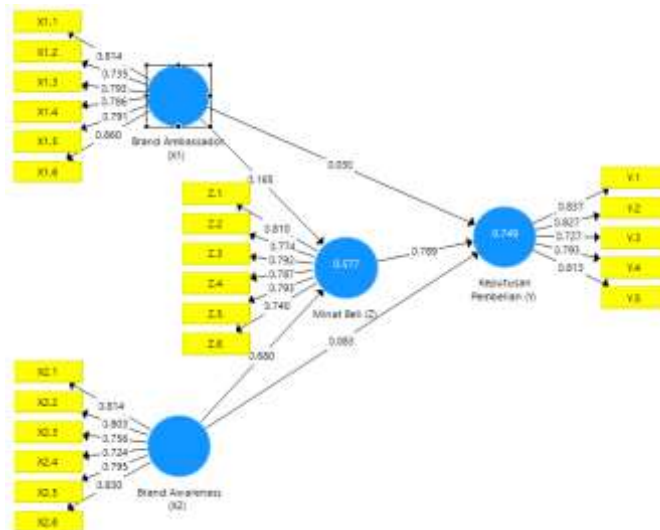


Figure 1 PLS Diagram

Based on the figure displayed above, there is an illustration of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables, along with the indicators associated with each variable in this study. Additionally, the figure depicts the relationship between brand ambassador and brand awareness concerning purchase decision. In this context, purchase intention serves as the intervening variable that influences this relationship, particularly in the analysis of Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream.

## DISCUSSION

### The Influence of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision

Based on the results of data analysis on the Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream product using SmartPLS 3 software on 85 respondents, it was found that the brand ambassador variable ( $X_1$ ) on purchasing decisions (Y) T-Statistics value is  $0.562 < 1.98$  with P-Value  $0.574 > 0.05$ , so this hypothesis is not accepted because the significance value is greater than 0.05 and shows that the influence is positive and not significant. The insignificant influence of brand ambassadors on purchasing decisions for the Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream product shows that although brand ambassadors can increase brand awareness, not all NCT Dream fans feel compelled to buy products just because of the involvement of these public figures. The results of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Marcella et al. (2023) noted that although brand ambassadors can have a positive influence, the impact is not always significant on purchasing decisions. In addition, another study conducted by Salsabiela et al. (2022), although brand ambassadors can have a positive influence, their impact on purchasing decisions is not always significant.

### The Influence of Brand Awareness on Purchase Decision

Based on the results of data analysis using SmartPLS 3 software on 85 respondents, it was found that the brand awareness variable ( $X_2$ ) on purchasing decisions (Y) of the Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream product had a T-Statistics value of  $0.720 < 1.98$  with a P-Value of  $0.472 > 0.05$ , which indicates that the effect is positive and not significant. So this hypothesis is not accepted because the significance value is greater than 0.05. High brand awareness does not always guarantee a positive purchasing decision. This shows that brand awareness must be accompanied by marketing efforts that build desire and need for the product. Consumers may be more likely to choose products that they perceive as having high quality or added value, even though they recognize the brand. The results of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Mahsyar et al. (2023) found that brand awareness does not always have a direct effect on purchasing decisions. This could be due to the fact that even though consumers recognize the brand, they may not have enough motivation to make a purchase.

### **The Influence of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision Mediated by Purchase Intention**

Based on the results of the analysis of Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream product data using SmartPLS 3 software on 85 respondents, it was found that the brand ambassador variable ( $X_1$ ) had a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y) through purchase interest (Z) with the results of the T-Statistics study value of  $2.250 > 1.98$  with a P-Value of  $0.025 < 0.05$ , we can conclude that the relationship between these variables is positive and significant. The influence of brand ambassadors on purchase interest is a key point in the marketing strategy of the Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream product, and companies must choose brand ambassadors who have emotional appeal and relevance to the product to increase purchasing decisions. The results of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Mahsyar et al. (2023), which shows that brand ambassadors can increase purchase interest, which in turn has an impact on purchasing decisions. In addition, another study conducted by Marcella et al. (2023), brand ambassadors can strengthen the image of the product in the eyes of consumers, encourage purchase interest and purchase decisions. This indicates that marketing strategies involving well-known and loved public figures can increase product appeal.

### **The Influence of Brand Awareness on Purchase Decision Mediated by Purchase Intention**

Based on the results of data analysis using SmartPLS 3 software on 85 respondents, it was found that the Brand awareness variable ( $X_2$ ) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y) of Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream products through purchase interest (Z) with the results of the study T-Statistics value  $6.032 > 1.98$  with P-Value  $0.000 < 0.05$ , we can conclude that the relationship between these variables is positive and significant. This shows that the high influence of brand awareness on purchasing interest in Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream products shows that consumers who have strong brand awareness tend to be more interested in buying products. The results of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Salsabiela et al. (2022) support this finding, showing that brand awareness has a significant effect on purchase interest. In addition, other research conducted by Mahsyar et al. (2023) highlighted that consumers who are exposed to positive content on social media are more likely to develop purchase interest, which shows how digital marketing can strengthen brand recognition

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the research and discussion that have been described previously, the following conclusions can be drawn. 1) Brand ambassador ( $X_1$ ) has a positive and insignificant effect on the purchasing decision (Y) of Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream products on NCT Dream fans in Lamongan Regency, with a T-Statistics value of  $0.562 < 1.98$  with a P-Value of  $0.574 > 0.05$ , so this hypothesis is not accepted because the significance value is greater than 0.05 and indicates that the influence is positive and insignificant. 2) Brand awareness ( $X_2$ ) has a positive and insignificant effect on the purchasing decision (Y) of Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream products on NCT Dream fans in Lamongan Regency, with a T-Statistics value of  $0.720 < 1.98$  with a P-Value of  $0.472 > 0.05$ , which indicates that the influence is positive and insignificant. So this hypothesis is not accepted because the significance value is greater than 0.05. 3) Brand ambassador ( $X_1$ ) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y) through purchase interest (Z) of Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream products on NCT Dream fans in Lamongan Regency, with a T-Statistics value of  $2.250 > 1.98$  with a P-Value of  $0.025 < 0.05$ , we can conclude that the relationship between these variables is positive and significant. 4) Brand awareness ( $X_2$ ) has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions (Y) through purchase interest (Z) of Tostitos Tortilla X NCT Dream products on NCT Dream fans in Lamongan Regency, with a T-Statistics value of  $6.032 > 1.98$  with a P-Value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , we can conclude that the relationship between these variables is positive and significant.

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