

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the effect of Cognitive Country Image, Affective Country Image, and Product Image on Purchase Intention of South Korean skincare products on consumers in West Sumatra. The data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to the respondents who met the research criteria, namely consumers aged 17-45 years, domiciled in West Sumatra, never bought but have familiarity with South Korean skincare products, and have a purchase intention of such products. A total of 215 data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.1 to see the relationship between variables in the proposed research model.

Based on the results and discussion in Chapter IV, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The first hypothesis testing shows that Cognitive Country Image has a positive and significant effect on Product Image. This result indicates that generally consumers in West Sumatra view South Korea as a country with great capabilities in terms of innovation, technology, and research and development. Such perceptions lead consumers to associate South Korean skincare products with positive product characteristics.
2. The second hypothesis testing shows that Affective Country Image has a positive and significant effect on Product Image. The finding indicates that consumers have positive feelings towards South Korea in general, which are expressed through their interest, enthusiasm and emotional attachment to the country. Consumers' positive emotions would enable them to be more receptive to South Korean skincare products and to be motivated to develop more favorable perceptions towards such products.
3. The third hypothesis testing indicates that Cognitive Country Image has a positive but insignificant effect on Purchase Intention. This finding suggests that favorable perceptions of South Korea's competence as a country alone are not sufficient to directly encourage consumers' intention to purchase South Korean skincare products. Consumers tend to consider other factors,

such as product-related attributes, before developing purchase intention, indicating that perceptions about the country's capabilities need to be supported by other factors.

4. The fourth hypothesis testing indicates that Affective Country Image has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention. This finding suggests that consumers' positive feelings toward South Korea can directly encourage their intention to purchase South Korean skincare products. Emotional attachment toward South Korea may increase consumers' willingness to purchase products originating from the country, particularly in industries closely associated with lifestyle, and trends.
5. The fifth hypothesis testing indicates that Product Image has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention. This finding implies that consumers can develop purchase intentions directly when they perceive South Korean skincare products as high-quality and reliable. Among all variables examined in this study, Product Image demonstrates the strongest direct effect on Purchase Intention, highlighting the central role of product-related evaluations in shaping consumers' purchasing decisions. Therefore, building a favorable Product Image is crucial in encouraging consumers' intention to purchase South Korean skincare products.
6. The sixth hypothesis testing shows that Product Image plays a crucial role in transforming country-related perceptions into consumers' Purchase Intention. The findings indicate that perceptions of South Korea's competence and advancement alone are not sufficient to encourage consumers to purchase South Korean skincare products. Instead, these perceptions must first be reflected in favorable evaluations of product quality and reliability. This suggests that Product Image fully mediates the relationship between Cognitive Country Image and Purchase Intention, highlighting the importance of product-related evaluations in converting country perceptions into purchase intentions.
7. The seventh hypothesis testing shows that Product Image also strengthens the influence of consumers' positive feelings toward South Korea on Purchase

Intention. While favorable emotional perceptions toward South Korea can directly encourage consumers' willingness to purchase Korean skincare products, their impact becomes stronger when accompanied by positive evaluations of the products themselves. This finding indicates that Product Image partially mediates the relationship between Affective Country Image and Purchase Intention, demonstrating that both emotional attachment to the country and favorable product evaluations contribute to consumers' purchase decisions.

5.2 Implication

5.2.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the Country Image literature by demonstrating that Country Image should not be treated as a single construct in explaining consumer behavior. By distinguishing Cognitive Country Image and Affective Country Image, this study shows that consumers process rational beliefs and emotional feelings toward a country differently. Furthermore, this study extends Wang et al. (2012)'s perspective regarding the role of Product Image as a link between Country Image and Purchase Intention by demonstrating that product evaluation is the mechanism through which country perceptions influence consumer responses. The findings reveal that Product Image fully mediates the relationship between Cognitive Country Image and Purchase Intention, while it partially mediates the relationship between Affective Country Image and Purchase Intention. This suggests that cognitive perceptions of a country require confirmation through favorable product evaluations before affecting purchase intention, whereas positive affective perceptions toward a country can directly trigger interest in purchasing South Korean skincare products while also being strengthened through positive product perception.

This study also extends the application of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, initially introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), by demonstrating that different external stimuli may create different internal evaluation processes. The framework suggests that external stimuli influence behavioral responses through internal psychological mechanisms, which has been

further applied in consumer behavior research (Jacoby, 2002). In this study, Country Image represents the stimulus, Product Image represents the organism, and Purchase Intention represents the response. The findings demonstrate that Product Image is not only an explanatory mechanism but also the strongest predictor of Purchase Intention. This highlights that, particularly for high involvement products such as skincare, consumers rely heavily on product quality, reliability, and perceived value before making purchase decisions. Therefore, favorable country perceptions need to be supported by products that consistently deliver the expected quality associated with the country of origin.

This study further contributes empirical evidence to the literature on Country Image, Product Image, and Purchase Intention by examining South Korean skincare products in the Indonesian context. The findings are consistent with previous studies by Nguyen et al. (2025), Pinem et al. (2025), Gantulga and Ganbold (2022), and Nguyen and Dao (2023), while providing additional insight into the distinct roles of cognitive and affective country perceptions. However, this study differs from Ma et al. (2024), as Cognitive Country Image was not found to have a direct influence on Purchase Intention. This difference highlights that the relationship between Country Image and consumer behavior may vary depending on cultural background, consumer characteristics, market conditions, and product categories. Overall, this study demonstrates that consumer purchase intentions are shaped not only by how consumers perceive a country through rational evaluations and feelings, but also by how those perceptions are reflected in product value and quality. The dominant role of Product Image further emphasizes that strengthening product attributes and delivering consistent product quality are essential in converting favorable country perceptions into actual purchase intentions.

5.2.2 Managerial Implications

The findings suggest that skincare companies should prioritize strengthening Product Image, as it was found to be the strongest predictor of Purchase Intention. This indicates that consumers are more likely to purchase skincare products when they perceive them as high-quality, reliable, and capable of delivering the promised benefits. Therefore, companies should focus on product quality, reliability,

innovation, and transparent communication regarding product benefits. While positive perceptions toward a country may attract initial consumer interest and shape product evaluations, purchase intention is ultimately driven by how consumers evaluate the product itself. This finding is important in the highly competitive skincare industry, where consumers increasingly compare products based on product performance and value.

South Korean skincare brands should strengthen both the rational and emotional aspects of their country associations. Companies can reinforce perceptions of expertise and innovation by highlighting research capabilities, ingredient quality, and product effectiveness, while also building emotional connections through brand storytelling, cultural values, lifestyle-oriented marketing communications, and associations with South Korean entertainment and public figures. However, these efforts should be supported by consistently strong product performance because Product Image remains the most influential factor driving Purchase Intention. For local skincare brands, competitiveness should be built through a combination of strong product performance and meaningful emotional connections with consumers. While many foreign skincare brands already benefit from positive reputations and country perceptions, local brands can strengthen their position by delivering reliable products that address the specific skincare needs of Indonesian consumers related to tropical climate conditions, diverse skin conditions, and environmental factors while leveraging Indonesian values, culture, local ingredients, and brand stories to create stronger emotional associations.

The descriptive analysis further indicates differences between Generation Z and Millennial consumers. Millennials reported higher Affective Country Image and Purchase Intention scores, suggesting that emotional branding and country-related associations may be more effective for this segment, whereas Generation Z reported a slightly higher Product Image score, indicating greater attention to product attributes and quality. In addition, most respondents were active skincare users, earned less than IDR 6 million per month, and preferred purchasing skincare products through online channels. Therefore, skincare companies should adopt specific segment marketing strategies, offer products that provide strong value for

money, strengthen their presence on e-commerce platforms and social media, and maintain product availability in offline stores to support an effective omnichannel strategy.

5.3 Limitation

The researcher admits that this study still has several limitations, namely:

1. This study was limited to consumers in West Sumatra. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent consumers from other regions of Indonesia, where cultural backgrounds, purchasing power, and consumer preferences may differ.
2. This study only examined Cognitive Country Image, Affective Country Image, Product Image, and Purchase Intention. Although these variables explained a meaningful proportion of Purchase Intention, other factors such as Brand Image, Halal Awareness, Product Knowledge, Price Perception, Online Reviews, and Social Influence were not included and may also influence consumers' purchase decisions.
3. This study focused exclusively on South Korean skincare products. Therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable to skincare products from other countries or to other product categories, particularly those with different levels of consumer involvement.
4. This study employed a quantitative approach that relied on numerical responses collected through a questionnaire. As a result, the study could not fully capture consumers' deeper motivations, experiences, and emotional considerations underlying their purchase intentions toward South Korean skincare products.

5.4 Recommendation

Future studies are encouraged to expand the research scope by including respondents from different regions of Indonesia, particularly provinces or cities with different economic conditions, purchasing power, and consumption patterns, to examine whether perceptions of Country Image, Product Image, and Purchase Intention vary across regions. Researchers may also incorporate additional variables, such as Halal Awareness, Environmental Concern, Price Perception,

Online Reviews, and Social Influence, to provide a more comprehensive explanation of Purchase Intention. Furthermore, future studies may explore alternative mediating or moderating variables, such as Halal Awareness, to better understand how and under what conditions country-related perceptions influence consumer behavior. Future research may also employ statistical comparison techniques, such as Multi-Group Analysis (MGA), to examine potential differences between Generation Z and Millennial consumers. In addition, qualitative or mixed-method approaches, such as interviews or focus group discussions, could provide deeper insights into consumers' motivations, experiences, and emotional associations with South Korean skincare products.

For practitioners, skincare companies should prioritize strengthening Product Image through continuous improvements in product quality, innovation, and reliability, as Product Image was found to be the strongest driver of Purchase Intention. Companies should also complement strong product performance with rational and emotional branding strategies that reinforce favorable perceptions toward the country of origin. In addition, businesses should adopt segment-specific marketing strategies, as Millennials tend to respond more strongly to emotional and country-related associations, whereas Generation Z places greater emphasis on product-related evaluations. Finally, given consumers' strong preference for online purchasing channels, companies should strengthen their digital presence while maintaining offline availability to support an effective omnichannel strategy.

