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Enhancing Brand Image through Product Quality, Price Perception, Innovation, and Word of Mouth

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effects of product quality, price perception, product innovation, and Word of Mouth (WOM) on the brand image of Wuling cars in Province B. It employs a quantitative descriptive method, with data analysis tailored to the research pattern and variables studied, using the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach. The results indicate that all proposed hypotheses are accepted. Product quality significantly influences WOM, with attractive car design as the main indicator, supported by promotional strategies such as discounts. The perception that price aligns with product benefits also enhances WOM, particularly through well-structured discount strategies. Product innovation, including the development of new car models, significantly drives positive WOM, further strengthening Wuling's brand image. Moreover, WOM plays a crucial mediating role in the relationship between product quality, price perception, product innovation, and brand image. In the context of brand image, attractive car design is the primary element that creates a positive impression among consumers. This study makes a valuable contribution to marketing literature by integrating five key variables into a comprehensive analytical framework. Practical implications include a focus on product innovation, competitive pricing strategies, and leveraging WOM to enhance brand positioning in the automotive market.

Keywords

Brand Image, Price Perception, Product Innovation, Product Quality, WOM

1. Introduction

The Association of Indonesian Automotive Industries (*Gabungan Industri Kendaraan Bermotor Indonesia/GAIKINDO*) has announced national car sales data throughout 2021. Based on the data, it appears that *whole sales* car sales (from factories to dealers) grew 66.6 percent (*year-on-year*) from 532,407 units in the January-December 2020 period to 887,200 units in the January-December 2021 period (Gaikindo, 2021a). Retail car sales (from dealers to consumers) increased 49.2 percent (*yoy*) from 578,762 units in the January-December 2020 period to 863,359 units in the January-December 2021 period. On a monthly basis, national car sales also increased. In the *whole sales category*, car sales in December 2021 were recorded at 96,671 units or up 10.6 percent (*month-to-month/mom*) compared to November of 87,437 units. Retail car sales in December 2021 reached 101,479 units, up 20 percent (*mom*) compared to the previous month's results of 84,544 units. The following is a graph of the development of car production and sales in Indonesia.

During 2019–2021, car sales were still dominated by Japanese cars. Japan's dominance in the automotive industry Indonesian automotive makes competitor products must provide added value for consumers to gain a good position in the minds of consumers. Perceived value *is* an important stimulus in evaluating and ultimately deciding whether or not to accept the product offers available to consumers. Evidently, car sales from the Chinese automotive manufacturer were able to rank in the top 10 best-selling cars, competing with Japanese and other countries' automotive brands. In total, Wuling was able to send 25,546 units of its products to dealers in 2021. Meanwhile, for its retail car sales, Wuling also experienced an increase of 151.2 percent to 23,920 units (Gaikindo, 2021b).



Figure 1. Wuling Car Sales in B Province 2017–2022

Sales in the first half of 2022 have increased in several regions in Indonesia, such as Bali, Riau Islands, West Java and West Nusa Tenggara. However, in DKI Jakarta, which is an urban area and the area around the capital city, namely B, Wuling sales have decreased. Based on Figure 1, it shows that total Wuling car sales experienced a significant decline in April to July 2020 due to government policies related to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, Wuling car sales again experienced a significant increase in August to October 2021. In 2022, Wuling sales in B Province experienced a decline again. As of September 2022, only 1774 car units were sold. The decline in sales of this Chinese brand is quite surprising. The reason is, previously Wuling Confero sales were above 1000 per month. Not to mention, quality MPVs at fairly affordable prices This economy also entered the taxi market in collaboration with Express, with orders of up to 1,000 units.

Wuling faces challenges in building its brand image in Indonesia because the stigma against Chinese automotive brands is still lower than that of Japan and Europe. Despite investing \$700 million (IDR 9.4 trillion), Wuling needs to make

more efforts to erode negative perceptions. Wuling admits that building trust takes a long process and one of its strategies is to strengthen its brand image through media coverage. In addition, Wuling continues to develop after-sales services with 131 dealers throughout Indonesia, including 12 dealers in B Province to increase trust and convenience for its consumers. Interviews with 40 respondents in B Province showed that 27 people did not know the factors that make Wuling cars easily recognizable. This confirms that Wuling's brand image is still weak in the region. Although PT SGMW has carried out various promotional strategies to build brand image and brand trust, Wuling still needs more efforts to be able to compete with other car brands in Indonesia. Wuling also faces challenges in brand differentiation and positioning in the Indonesian automotive market, which requires a more effective brand management strategy. To strengthen its brand equity, Wuling needs to adopt a stronger brand positioning approach by highlighting its competitive advantages, such as technological innovation and cost efficiency. In addition, more proactive Customer Relationship Management (CRM) can help increase customer loyalty and improve brand perception in the market (Smith, 2023). With a data-driven marketing approach, Wuling can identify consumer preferences more accurately and design more effective communication strategies to improve its brand image.

This confirms that Wuling's brand image is still weak in the region. Although PT SGMW has carried out various promotional strategies to build brand image and brand trust, Wuling still needs more effort to be able to compete with other car brands in Indonesia. Brand image and brand trust are very important elements in marketing today (Surapto, 2020). In the context of the Indonesian market, this challenge is increasingly visible from the decline in Wuling sales in B Province in 2022, where until September 2022, only 1,774 units were recorded as having been sold. This figure is lower than the previous period, where Wuling Confero recorded sales of more than 1,000 units per month. In fact, Wuling has carried out various innovations and marketing strategies to attract consumer interest, including collaborating with taxi services such as Express with orders of up to 1,000 units. However, this step is not enough to significantly improve Wuling's brand image in the Indonesian market. Therefore, this researcher aims to analyze the strategy of improving Wuling car brand image through strengthening product quality, price perception, product innovation and word of mouth in B Province.

2. Methods

This study uses data analysis to adjust it to the research pattern and the variables studied. This study uses a causality model (Elliott, 2003). In addition, the analysis technique used to test the research hypothesis is SEM. The type of research is quantitative descriptive. This study involved all Wuling car users who were involved in the decision-making process when making a purchase or who were still using Wuling cars in B Province. Based on the results of the sample calculation using, the number of samples from each district or city was divided proportionally based on the population of residents in the area. The following is the distribution of the resulting samples, namely Cilegon, from 119 people, 42 samples were taken. Tangerang Regency, from 152 people, 54 samples were taken. Tangerang City, from 192 people, 68 samples were taken. Lebak Regency, from 37 people, 13 samples were taken. Serang City, from 57 people, 20 samples were taken, and South Tangerang City, from 130 people, 46 samples were taken. The method used in the data collection process in this study was a short interview method and to complete the data, a questionnaire method was used. This study uses the Partial Least Square-Variance-Based Modeling (PLS-SEM) structural equation analysis method.

3. Results

The following table presents a summary of descriptive statistics of the research variables, which include Price Perception, Product Innovation, and Word of Mouth. Each variable consists of several dimensions that are measured based on the total score and the average score to assess the respondents' perceptions. The assessment categories are given based on the average range of scores, with classifications such as "Very Good," "Good," and "Fair." In addition, standard deviations are listed to illustrate the level of variation in scores within each dimension. The following are the results of the analysis based on the table.

Table 1. Analysis of Price Perception, Product Innovation, and Word of Mouth

Variable	Dimension	Min Score	Max Score	Ave. Score	Ave. Score	Category	Std. Dev
Price Perception	Price Affordability	-	-	-	4.21 – 5.00	Very good	-
	Price Match with Quality	-	-	1074.50	4.21 – 5.00	Very good	21.92
	Price Match with Benefits	-	-	1059.50	4.21 – 5.00	Very good	16.26
	Price Competitiveness	-	-	731.00	2.61 – 3.40	Good enough	463.86
	Overall Price Perception	-	-	-	3.40 – 4.20	Good	-
	Product Innovation	Development	1056	1079	1067.50	4.39	Very good
Line Expansion		-	-	1063.50	4.38	Very good	10.61
New Products		-	-	-	3.96	Good	-
Word of Mouth	Talkers	-	-	1067.00	4.39	Very good	14.14
	Topics	-	-	1052.00	4.33	Very good	14.14
	Tools	-	-	1061.00	4.37	Very good	-
	Talking Part	1049	1063	1056.00	4.35	Very good	9.90
	Tracking	-	-	709.00	2.92	Good enough	-
	Overall Word of Mouth	-	-	989.00	4.07	Good	-

Based on Table 1, the perception of price, product innovation, and word of mouth communication towards Wuling are generally in the good to very good category. Wuling's price is considered affordable and in accordance with its quality and benefits, although the price competitiveness is still in the fairly good category. In terms of innovation, product development and line expansion have received high appreciation, but new product innovation still needs to be improved to be more competitive. Word of Mouth (WOM) shows effectiveness in building positive conversations about Wuling, especially through promotions and social media, but monitoring of customer conversations is still relatively low. Overall, this variable has a positive influence on brand image and competitiveness. By increasing price competitiveness, developing innovative new products, and strengthening monitoring and analysis of customer conversations, Wuling can further strengthen customer loyalty and expand market share sustainably.

Table 2. Analysis of Direct and Indirect Influence on Brand Image

No	Hypothesis	t-count	t-table	p-value	Original Sample
Direct Influence	Product Quality → Word of Mouth	3.039	1.96		
	Price Perception → Word of Mouth	2.877	1.96		
	Product Innovation → Word of Mouth	4.461	1.96		
	Product Quality → Brand Image	4.909	1.96		
	Price Perception → Brand Image	3.709	1.96		
	Product Innovation → Brand Image	2.597	1.96		
Indirect Influence	Product Quality → Word of Mouth → Brand Image	2.093	1.96	0.037	0.045
	Price Perception → Word of Mouth → Brand Image	2.320	1.96	0.021	0.037
	Product Innovation → Word of Mouth → Brand Image	2.565	1.96	0.011	0.057

Based on Table 2, Product Quality, Price Perception, and Product Innovation have a significant direct influence on Word of Mouth, as indicated by the t-count value which is greater than the t-table (1.96). In addition, the three variables also have a significant influence on Brand Image. The analysis of indirect influence shows that Word of Mouth acts as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between Product Quality, Price Perception, and Product Innovation on Brand Image. This is evidenced by the p-value which is below 0.05, namely 0.037 for the relationship between Product Quality, 0.021 for Price Perception, and 0.011 for Product Innovation. Thus, it can be concluded that increasing product quality, price perception, and product innovation not only directly improves brand image, but also through the mediation effect of Word of Mouth.

Table 3. Hypothesis test results

HA	Direction	t-h>1,96	P-value	conclusion
H1	Product quality (X1) -> Word of Mouth (Z)	4.909	0.010	significant
H2	Price perception (X2) -> Word of Mouth (Z)	2.877	0.000	significant
H3	Product innovation (X3) -> Word of Mouth (Z)	4.461	0.000	significant
H4	Product quality (X1) -> Brand Image (Y)	3.709	0.002	significant
H5	Price perception (X2) -> Brand Image (Y)	3.709	0.000	significant
H6	Product innovation (X3) -> Brand Image (Y)	2.597	0.004	significant
H7	Word of Mouth (Z) -> Brand Image (Y)	3.399	0.001	significant
H8	Product quality (X1) -> Word of Mouth (Z) -> Brand Image (Y)	2.093	0.011	significant
H9	Price perception X2) -> Word of Mouth (Z) -> Brand Image (Y)	2.320	0.037	significant
H10	Product innovation (X3) -> Word of Mouth (Z) -> Brand Image (Y)	2.565	0.021	significant

Based on Table 3, product quality, price perception, and product innovation have a significant effect on Word of Mouth (WOM) and Brand Image. Quality products, appropriate prices, and innovation encourage positive consumer talk, which ultimately strengthens brand image. In addition, WOM acts as a mediator, strengthening the relationship between independent variables and Brand Image. Product quality, price perception, and innovation not only directly improve Brand Image, but also through WOM. These findings emphasize that companies need to maintain product quality, offer competitive prices, and innovate in order to get

positive recommendations from customers, which have an impact on improving overall brand image.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Image (Y)	0.807	0.804
Word of Mouth (Z)	0.694	0.690

Based on Table 4, the purpose of testing the coefficient of determination is to determine how accurately the dependent variable can be explained or influenced by the independent variable. This test is also based on the R^2 or R Square value which is in the range of 0 to 1. If the coefficient of determination value is close to 1, it indicates that the independent variable is more accurate in explaining the dependent variable. Furthermore, there are three classifications that indicate the level of accuracy based on the R^2 value, including low values (0 - 0.50), medium values (0.50 - 0.75), and high values (≥ 0.75). Table 3 shows the R^2 value for each dependent variable (including the mediating variable), the R-Square value of the brand image variable (Y) is 0.807. This means that brand image (Y) is influenced by product quality (X1), price perception (X2), product innovation (X3), and word of mouth (Z) by 80.7% while the remaining 19.3% is influenced by other factors. R-square in this study has a model with high accuracy because (≥ 0.75). In addition, it can also be seen that the R-Square value of the word of mouth variable (Z) is 0.694. This means that word of mouth (Z) is influenced by product quality (X1), price perception (X2), and product innovation (X3) by 69.4% while the remaining 30.6% is influenced by other factors. R-square in this study has a model with moderate accuracy because (0.50 - 0.75).

Table 5. Effect Size (f^2)

Variable	(Y)	(X3)	(X1)	(X2)	(Z)
Brand Image (Y)					
Product innovation (X3)	0.057				0.130
Product quality (X1)	0.154				0.062
Price perception (X2)	0.081				0.052
Word of Mouth (Z)	0.038				

Based on Table 5, the f Square value of product quality (X1) and word of mouth (Z) on the brand image variable (Y) is obtained with f square values of 0.154, 0.081, 0.057, and 0.038. It can be concluded that product quality (X1), price perception (X2), product innovation (X3), and word of mouth (Z) each have a moderate contribution (≥ 0.15), small contribution (≥ 0.02), small contribution (≥ 0.02), small contribution (≥ 0.02) to the brand image variable (Y). In addition, it can also be seen that the f Square value of product quality (X1), price perception (X2), and product innovation (X3) on the word of mouth variable (Z) each has an f square value of 0.062, 0.052, and 0.130. It can be concluded that product quality (X1), price perception (X2), and product innovation (X3) each have a small contribution (≥ 0.02), a small contribution (≥ 0.02), and a small contribution (≥ 0.02) to the word of mouth variable (Z).

Table 6. Cross -validated Redundancy (Q^2)

Variable	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
Brand Image (Y)	2430.000	981.060	0.596
Product innovation (X3)	1458.000	1458.000	
Product quality (X1)	3888.000	3888.000	
Price perception (X2)	1944.000	1944.000	
Word of Mouth (Z)	2430.000	1305.509	0.463

Based on Table 6, testing of *cross-validated redundancy* or *Q Square* in table 6 aims to determine whether or not there is *predictive relevance* to the dependent variable. In this test, it is based on the results of the *Q Square value* which is carried out with the *blind folding procedure* first. Furthermore, the independent variable is said to have *predictive relevance* to the dependent variable if the *Q Square value* > 0 . Conversely, if the *Q Square value* < 0 , then the independent variable cannot be said to have *predictive relevance* to the dependent variable. The *Q Square value* for each dependent variable. The *Q Square value* that has been obtained namely the *Q Square value* that has been obtained is $0.596 > 0$ indicating that the product quality variables (X1), price perception (X2), product innovation (X3), and *word of mouth* (Z) has *predictive relevance* which is high on the brand image variable (Y) or any change/variation in the brand image variable (Y) can be predicted by variables product quality (X1), price perception (X2), product innovation (X3), and *word of mouth* (Z). In addition, it can be seen that all *Q Square values* that have been obtained, namely the *Q Square value* that has been obtained is $0.463 > 0$, indicating that every change/variation in the *word of mouth variable* (Z) can be predicted by variables product quality (X1), price perception (X2), and product innovation (X3).

The collinearity test or collinearity assessment aims to determine whether or not there are symptoms of collinearity in each research variable. This test is based on the inner variance inflorescence factor (VIF) value which must be < 5.00 . The analysis obtained the results of the inner variance inflorescence factor values of all independent variables showing < 5.00 . This proves that there are no symptoms of collinearity. In the PLS evaluation model in the structural model, the path coefficient value is used for the independent variables which are then assessed for significance based on the t-statistic value of each path. The structural model research can be seen in the following figure:

Perception of price that is comparable to benefits and promotional strategies such as discounts play an important role in driving positive word of mouth (WOM). When consumers feel they are getting more value, they are more likely to share their experiences, increase brand visibility, and strengthen the product's reputation. This strategy also helps build consumer loyalty and expand market share. Price influences WOM because it shapes the perception of product value and quality. Too high a price can reduce recommendations, while too low a price can raise doubts about quality. Therefore, setting the right price can increase positive perceptions and encourage consumers to recommend the product. Previous studies have also shown that price and customer satisfaction have a positive effect on WOM (Sutriani et al., 2024; Zahid & Ruswanti, 2024; Saputra et al., 2024).

Outer model testing of 243 respondents showed a significant relationship between product innovation (X3) and word of mouth (WOM) (Z) in Wuling car marketing. Indicator X3.1 ("Wuling develops a new type of car that has never existed before") has the highest factor loading value, indicating that consumers judge Wuling's innovation from its ability to introduce new models to the market. WOM in this study is reflected by 10 indicators, with Z3 ("Wuling offers discounts to customers") having the highest factor loading, indicating that discounts and promotions encourage consumers to talk about the product. Overall, the development of new car types (X3.1) and promotional strategies (Z3) play a major role in creating positive WOM, expanding the market, and enhancing Wuling's brand image. The combination of effective innovation and promotion enables organic marketing through consumer experience. These results are in line with the research of (Erislan, 2024; Habibie et al., 2024).

This analysis shows that product quality, especially attractive car design, has a significant effect on brand image. Consumers who are impressed with Wuling's design are more likely to remember and associate the brand with high quality, which ultimately increases loyalty and positive purchasing behavior. Improving product quality is a major factor in maintaining brand image (Sudarman et al., 2021). Previous studies have also shown a positive relationship between product quality and brand image, such as studies by Diputra & Yasa (2021) and Dam & Dam (2021). Thus, attractive design not only attracts new consumers but also strengthens brand image and drives customer loyalty in Wuling's long-term marketing strategy.

The relationship between price perception and brand image is clearly seen from these results. Positive price perceptions, especially those that reflect the value of the benefits received compared to the price paid, can significantly affect brand image. When consumers feel that the price of a product is comparable to the benefits they receive, they tend to have a positive view of the brand. This suggests that positive experiences with product prices can strengthen brand image in the eyes of consumers. On the other hand, a good brand image, reflected in the brand's recallability, can further strengthen this relationship. Brands that are easy to remember are often perceived as stronger and more trusted by consumers. In this case, an increase in positive price perception can increase the brand's recallability, thereby strengthening the overall brand image. Thus, there is a dynamic interaction between price perception and brand image that influences each other. This hypothesis supports research from Hidayatulloh & Susila (2024) which states that one of the price variables has a significant influence on brand image.

Overall, the results of the outer model test indicate a mutually influential relationship between product innovation and brand image. Significant product innovation, such as the development of a unique new car type, can strengthen brand image and increase brand recall. For companies like Wuling, it is important to continue to innovate while ensuring that the brand image remains strong and positive in the eyes of consumers. In this way, product innovation can maximize its impact on brand image and create a mutually beneficial relationship between the two.

This study is in line with previous studies which also state that Product Innovation influences the brand image of a product (Yasin et al., 2007; Yusuf, 2021; Reynaldi & Nuvriasari, 2024).

This analysis confirms that Word of Mouth (WOM) plays an important role in building and strengthening brand image. Attractive discount promotions not only encourage purchases but also increase positive talk about the brand. Increasing positive WOM contributes to strengthening Wuling's image in the market. Conversely, negative WOM can harm brand image. This result is in line with research by Alrwashdeh et al. (2019) and Sun et al. (2021), which show that WOM has a positive and significant effect on brand image.

The test results show that product quality, especially attractive design, has a significant effect on brand image through word of mouth (WOM) mediation. Promotional strategies such as discounts can strengthen this positive impact. Therefore, Wuling needs to focus on design innovation and effective WOM strategies to strengthen brand image. WOM acts as a communication channel between consumers and potential customers, helping to expand brand reach. Good product quality increases customer satisfaction, which encourages them to recommend the product to others. Previous studies, such as Kotler & Keller (2016) and Anh (2023), confirmed that superior product quality triggers positive WOM and strengthens brand image. In the context of Wuling in B Province, fuel efficiency, innovative design, and modern technology features are the main factors that drive WOM. Positive WOM from satisfied customers strengthens Wuling's image as a reliable vehicle brand, supporting the finding that WOM mediates the relationship between product quality and brand image.

The relationship between price perception and brand image can be mediated by word of mouth (WOM). When consumers feel that the price of Wuling cars is comparable to the benefits obtained, they have a positive price perception. This drives positive WOM, especially if supported by promotional strategies such as discounts, which ultimately strengthens the brand image. WOM acts as a bridge between price perception and brand image. Consumers who feel they get more value than the price they pay tend to share positive experiences, which increases brand recognition and awareness. Conversely, a strong brand image can strengthen the WOM effect, because memorable brands are more likely to be talked about positively. Previous studies Seo et al. (2020) and Sun et al. (2021), also show that WOM can mediate the effect of price on brand image, especially in the hospitality, cosmetics, and clothing industries. Therefore, Wuling needs to optimize their marketing strategy by setting competitive prices, offering attractive promotions, and implementing effective WOM strategies to strengthen their brand image in B Province.

The results of the outer model test show that word of mouth (WOM) plays an important role in mediating the relationship between product innovation and brand image. Interesting innovations, such as the development of new car types, can be strengthened through effective WOM strategies, such as discount offers, thus having a positive impact on brand image. This study is in line with Yasin et al. (2007) and Rayi & Aras (2021), who stated that consumers tend to prefer brands with good product innovation and consider them as a consideration in purchasing decisions. Therefore, Wuling needs to integrate product innovation with WOM strategies to strengthen their brand image in the market.

This study found that word of mouth (WOM) plays a significant mediator in shaping brand image through product quality, price perception, and product innovation. The results of the analysis show that WOM is able to strengthen the relationship between these variables and brand image, emphasizing the importance of consumer communication in building positive perceptions of a product. In addition, this study develops new concepts from existing theories. Product quality is

defined as the characteristics of goods or services that meet consumer needs, including aspects such as performance, reliability, additional features, durability, aesthetics, and perceived quality. Price perception relates to how consumers assess the price of a product, including affordability, suitability to quality and benefits, and price competitiveness. Product innovation includes product development or improvement to increase value and competitive advantage, which includes new product development, product line expansion, and the creation of completely new products. Brand image is understood as consumer perception of a brand, consisting of brand identity, brand personality, brand associations, attitudes and behaviors toward the brand, and brand benefits and competencies. Meanwhile, WOM refers to communication from parties outside the organization that influences consumer perceptions, with elements such as speakers, topics, communication tools, participation, and supervision. The developed research model integrates product quality, price perception, product innovation, and brand image, with WOM as an intermediary variable. The regression results show that product quality has the strongest influence on brand image compared to other variables. In fact, the strongest relationship was found between the additional distinctiveness dimension in product quality and brand identity, which confirms that a product's superior features can increase brand appeal and recognition in the eyes of consumers. These findings provide strategic insights for the automotive industry, such as Wuling, in utilizing product quality and WOM to build a stronger brand image.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion using structural equation modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS), it can be concluded that the factors that influence the brand image of Wuling cars include product quality, price perception, product innovation, and word of mouth (WOM). The results of the analysis support all the hypotheses proposed in this study. In detail, it is explained as follows that this study reveals that Wuling product quality has a significant effect on word of mouth (WOM) in B Province. This study reveals a significant relationship between price perception (X2) and word of mouth (WOM) for Wuling cars in B Province. This study reveals a significant relationship between product innovation (X3) and word of mouth (WOM) (Z) for Wuling cars. This study reveals a significant influence between product quality (X1) and brand image (Y) in the context of Wuling cars. This study reveals a relationship analysis between price perception and brand image shows that consumer price perception, especially the extent to which price is considered comparable to the benefits obtained (X2.5), significantly affects Wuling's brand image. This study reveals successful product innovation can create a dual effect on brand image. This study reveals word of mouth (WOM) can strengthen brand image by increasing brand awareness and recognition in the market through positive conversations triggered by discount promotions. This study reveals that word of mouth (WOM) can mediate the influence of product quality on brand image. This study reveals that price perception and brand image can be mediated by word of mouth (WOM). This study reveals that word of mouth (WOM) plays an important role in mediating the relationship between product innovation and brand image of Wuling cars in B Province. This study makes a significant contribution to the marketing literature by integrating five main variables in the automotive context. The developed model presents a holistic understanding of how product quality and innovation influence price perception, WOM, and brand image, and provides a sharper analytical tool in assessing the impact of these factors on brand image and consumer behavior.

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