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## Effects of Quality and Price on Purchase decision Mediated by Brand Image

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### Abstract

Local cosmetic brands have evolved to remain competitive in the market as a result of the beauty industry's advancements. The rise of SASC as a regional cosmetics company that can draw in customers. Price and quality are two factors that drive rivalries among brands. Businesses must therefore be able to create strategies that promote favorable customer reactions. The purpose of this study is to ascertain how consumer perceptions of brand image, price, and product quality affect their decisions to buy. The data was gathered using a technique called purposeful sampling. A questionnaire completed by Semarang-based women who had previously purchased SASC yielded 124 samples for this investigation. The AMOS program's SEM analysis was used to process the acquired data. The data analysis results of this study demonstrate that pricing and product quality positively affect the image of the brand and purchasing decisions. Additionally, this study shows that purchase decisions are positively impacted by brand image. Therefore, in order to boost sales, SASC needs to be able to create a brand strategy.

### Keywords

Brand Image, Price, Purchase Decision, Product Quality.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, entrepreneurship performs a role in advancing business in a country. The progressively sophisticated and rapidly evolving life these days, the more open society has become, and the technological advancements, especially in the industrial sector, can advance the economy of a country. The development of local cosmetic brands is currently growing rapidly. According to data from the Statistics Indonesia, the growth of the pharmaceutical, chemical, and also cosmetic products industry increased by 5.59% in the first quarter of 2020. In 2021, the growth of the Indonesian cosmetics market increased by 7%. The presence of new cosmetic brands has significantly increased competition in the cosmetic market. In the last five years, the Indonesian Food and Drug Authority has recorded over 185,000 cosmetic products circulating in Indonesia. Reported by *Compas.co.id*, this year, the highest sales on e-commerce platforms were achieved by cosmetic products, accounting for 46.8%. In line with Hussain and Wan (2016), who reported that consumers prefer imported goods from well-off countries over their own in terms of quality and image, local cosmetic firms compete to make goods of the same caliber as those from elsewhere. In order to keep their competitive advantages and produce formulae that consumers want at a reasonable cost, they are vying for customers' attention.

One Indonesian cosmetic business founded in 2017 is called Socially Aware Sexy Cosmetics, or SASC. The lower middle class is the intended audience of SASC's market segmentation. In addition to its reputation for producing high-quality cosmetics, SASC is dedicated to helping local communities and empowering women via the SASC Warrior program. Along with the given price, product quality is one of the key considerations in the purchasing process, so businesses need to focus on and maintain product quality. When consumers are unable to personally experience a product, business actors must be able to communicate to them that the product is of high quality (Wang et al., 2019). The intention to buy is significantly influenced by one's perception of quality. According to Agostini et al. (2021), perceived quality encompasses not only the quality of the product but also extra features that customers view as indirect measures of quality.

Boyle et al. (2018) explain that sometimes consumers will look at more expensive products in order to gain better product quality, which aligns with the opinion of Sun et al. (2020) that if price represents product quality, consumers are currently more sensitive to the perceived price offered when making purchasing decisions (Graciola et al., 2018; Farashahi et al. 2018). In the cosmetics industry, the prices offered vary significantly depending on the brand that releases the cosmetic products. In local cosmetic brands, the brands tend to have affordable prices with high quality goods. From the quality of the products and the prices offered, a brand image can be formed. Djatniko and Pradana (2016) explain that brand image is a valuable aspect, meaning that a brand can differentiate the products they offer from competing products with the same benefits or type.

This study aims to analyze the influence of product quality, price, and brand image variables on the purchase decisions of SASC customers in Semarang City. Product quality is frequently used by customers as a benchmark when evaluating a brand before purchase, making it essential that the actual quality aligns with marketing promises (Foster, 2016; Rehman & Ishaq (2017). Furthermore, setting reasonable prices plays a crucial role in shaping a positive brand image and customer perception of product value (Albari, 2018; Cheah et al., 2020). This research also examines the direct impact of product quality and price on purchase decisions, considering that quality positively affects customers' emotional responses while price remains a key factor in consumer decision-making (Akram et al., 2017; Komaladewi & Indika, 2017). Additionally, brand image is expected to mediate the relationship between these variables and purchase decisions, as a positive brand

image enhances perceived value, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase (Gök et al., 2019; Yaseen & Mazahir, 2019; Antwi, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing purchase decisions through the lens of product quality, price, and brand image.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Product Quality on Brand Image**

Customers frequently consider product quality as a benchmark when assessing a brand before making a purchase. Brands frequently make quality claims about their items in marketing. Consequently, the quality produced in practice needs to be in line with the marketing promises. When there is a gap between claimed and actual quality, it can lead to customer dissatisfaction, reduced trust, and even brand switching. According to Foster (2016), customers' perceptions of a brand influence their subsequent evaluations of whether the brand is superior to or inferior to its rivals. This evaluation might be based on a number of factors related to the product itself, such as durability, design, functionality, and performance. A high-quality product enhances customer satisfaction, increases perceived value, and builds long-term brand loyalty. In contrast, Gomathy and Sabarirajan (2017) contend that because the idea of effectively establishing a positive image is intimately tied to the current quality, marketers must exercise caution when putting development methods into practice and making new decisions regarding product quality. Any effort to improve brand image will be ineffective if not supported by consistent product quality. As such, product quality serves as a foundation for shaping brand image in consumers' minds. A strong brand image not only reflects customer trust but also contributes to their willingness to pay premium prices and recommend the brand to others.

Therefore, based on the above discussion, we may conclude that there is a significant and positive relationship between product quality and brand image. This leads us to formulate the hypothesis that product quality has a significant influence on brand image.

H1: Product Quality has a significant effect on Brand Image.

### **2.2. Price on Brand Image**

According to the consumer, the price is the sum of money or ability that they have to compromise in order to buy a good or service. In the study by Cheah et al. (2020), image represents how customers view price, which is a component of customer emotions that may affect their choices and ultimately influence their behavioral intentions. Price perception is not merely about affordability but also tied to subjective evaluations, such as fairness and value for money. However, customers will use price as a criterion of quality, such as the commonly held belief, "you get what you pay for," which becomes one of the factors that consumers take into account when choosing a price (Lien et al., 2015; Arum & Achmad, 2024). This illustrates that customers may associate higher prices with superior product quality, credibility, and prestige.

Additionally, Albari (2018) Ampadu et al. (2021) contends that price is a significant mediating element in price and purchase decisions and that customers take price into account when evaluating a brand. When consumers perceive that the price is aligned with the quality and benefits offered, they tend to form a more favorable opinion about the brand. In this instance, the perception that customers create will assist the business in assessing pricing strategies that correspond with the value of the goods and services they manufacture and offer, while also fostering long-term customer satisfaction and trust. This leads to a need for brands to set reasonable and competitive prices in order to build a positive brand image and a

strong, favorable consumer perception. Thus, the following is the hypothesis on the relationship between the price variable and brand image.

H2: Price has a significant effect on Brand Image

### **2.3. Product Quality on Purchase Decisions**

Customers' perceptions of a product's quality have a favorable emotional influence on their decisions to buy, claim Wang et al. (2019). Perceived quality is often linked to trust, reliability, and the belief that the product will perform as expected. When customers are confident in the quality of a product, they are more likely to choose it over alternatives, especially in highly competitive markets. However, in order to quickly become what customers demand, low-quality products must also be addressed. A negative experience with product quality can diminish customer loyalty, reduce repurchase intention, and even lead to negative word of mouth. According to Akram et al. (2017), given the dynamics of a market that is competitive and constantly evolving, businesses must not only consider strategies to draw in customers, but also make sure that customers are happy with the product in order for them to recommend and buy it (Fatma, 2019). Ensuring consistent product quality helps maintain customer satisfaction, which in turn strengthens brand reputation and encourages repeat purchases. In the long run, product quality becomes a strategic differentiator that adds value to both the brand and the customer experience.

Therefore, businesses must pay close attention to quality control, product innovation, and customer feedback as part of their ongoing development strategies. We can conclude that the following is the hypothesis on the relationship between the variable of product quality and the choice to buy:

H3: Product Quality has a significant effect on Purchase Decisions.

### **2.4. Price on Purchase Decisions**

In the research conducted by Komaladewi and Indika (2017) and Świtąła et al. (2018), price is a significant consideration for customers when making judgments about what they will buy, especially in markets where many similar products are available. Price often serves as a key indicator of value and affordability for consumers across different income levels. Each person has a different income, purchasing capacity, and financial preference, and some people are more concerned with the offered product's price than others due to budget constraints or a strong focus on cost-efficiency. For price-conscious consumers, even minor changes in price can significantly impact their purchase decisions. According to Graciola et al. (2018) and Rahman and Soesilo (2018), a change in price also affects consumer behavior, which can be used as a valuable tool for the company's evaluation and strategy formulation. A well-structured pricing policy can attract new customers, retain existing ones, or even reposition the brand in the market. Customers who have been using a particular brand of product for a long time will be more price sensitive, as they tend to compare the current price to previous ones and may switch brands if they perceive the price to be no longer justified.

Therefore, price sensitivity becomes an important factor in consumer behavior analysis. Thus, it may be said that the following is the hypothesis on the relationship between the price variable and purchase decisions.

H4: Price has a significant effect on Purchase Decisions

### **2.5. Brand Image on Purchase Decisions**

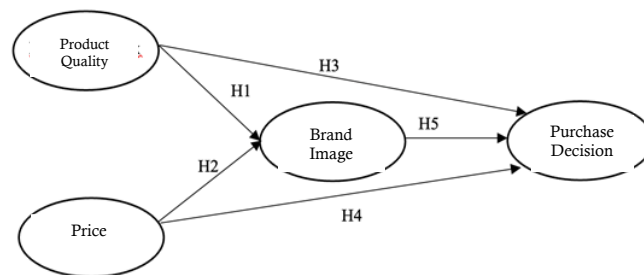
When a consumer makes a purchase, a brand has the power to influence their opinions and emotions about the product, eliciting both good and negative responses.

The way consumers perceive a brand can directly impact their level of trust, satisfaction, and emotional connection with the product. Foster (2016) and Hapsoro and Hafidh (2018). asserts that brand image has a significant role in influencing consumer choices, as it shapes expectations and helps reduce uncertainty in the decision-making process. A strong brand image not only enhances recognition but also builds a sense of reliability and value in the minds of customers. According to Mittal (2017) and Yaseen and Mazahir (2019) brand image is crucial when consumers are making decisions about what to buy. This is because a positive brand image expands the perceived value for customers, which boosts the company's opportunity because customers are more likely to buy from brands that have a positive reputation. Moreover, consumers tend to associate favorable brand images with superior quality, better performance, and greater satisfaction, which ultimately motivates their purchasing behavior.

In an increasingly competitive market, companies must invest in building and maintaining a strong, consistent, and favorable brand image to remain relevant and desirable to their target audiences. Therefore, managing brand image effectively becomes a strategic advantage.

H5: Brand Image has a significant effect on Purchase Decisions

Based on previous research, the relationship between variables and hypothesis formulation, the theoretical framework can be formulated as follows:



**Figure 2.** Conceptual Framework

### 3. Methods

This study examines four main variables: price, brand image, purchase decision, and product quality. Among these, the purchase decision is identified as the dependent variable, while brand image functions as an intervening (mediating) variable. Product quality and price are positioned as independent variables, reflecting their influence on both brand image and consumers' final decisions. To ensure clarity and validity in measurement, each variable is operationalized through established indicators. The product quality variable, for instance, is measured using indicators such as performance, features, durability, and dependability, as proposed by Armstrong and Kotler (2006). These indicators reflect how well a product meets customer expectations in both functionality and longevity. Meanwhile, the price variable is assessed using indicators of perceived price fairness, price-quality evaluation, emotional responses toward price, and general customer price perception, drawing from the work of Graciola et al. (2016; 2018). These dimensions help evaluate not only the objective cost of a product but also how customers emotionally and cognitively interpret that cost. The brand image variable is measured based on strength, distinctiveness, and favorability, which together reflect how a brand is positioned in the minds of consumers (Anita & Ardiansyah, 2019). Finally, the purchase decision variable is gauged using five classic consumer behavior stages: problem identification, information search, alternative evaluation,

purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. This comprehensive measurement approach ensures that consumer behavior is captured holistically, from initial need recognition to post-purchase evaluation.

The population of this study consists of female consumers aged 17 and above who are users of SASC products and reside in Semarang. The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling approach, selecting respondents based on specific characteristics aligned with the research objectives. The data analysis method employed is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which allows the researcher to examine complex relationships between multiple variables simultaneously. The SEM procedure involves seven stages, including theory-based model development, formulation of path diagrams and structural equations, selection of matrix input types, estimation and evaluation of model identification, assessment of goodness-of-fit indices, and potential model modification. The analysis was conducted using SPSS AMOS 24.0 software, which supports robust testing of the proposed structural model and its fit to the observed data.

#### 4. Results

The research respondents represent of several age groups, occupations, and personal expense categories. The response results in the age category of 21-23 years received the highest percentage, which is 75.8%. Most of these respondents are students with a percentage of 92.7%. Then, based on personal spending on cosmetics purchases in one month, most respondents had expenses of Rp. 200,001 – Rp. 300,000 with a percentage of 36.3%.

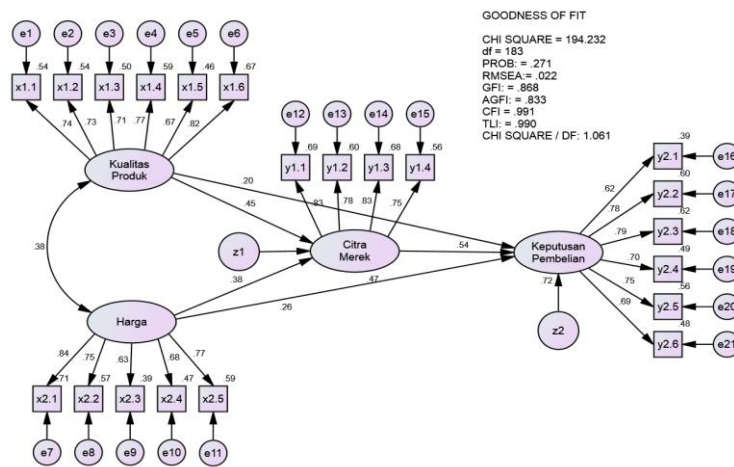


Figure 2. Full Model Structural Results

Figure 2 represents the results of a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, illustrating the relationships between variables in a study of consumer purchase decisions for SASC products. There are four main variables in this model: Product Quality, Price, Brand Image, and Purchase Decision. Product quality and price act as independent variables, brand image serves as the intervening (mediating) variable, and purchase decision is the dependent variable. Each latent variable is measured by multiple observed indicators, represented by arrows pointing from the latent constructs to their respective items, along with the standardized loading factors that indicate the strength of the relationship between each indicator and its variable.

In terms of inter-variable relationships, the model shows that both price and product quality have direct effects on brand image, with coefficients of 0.38 and 0.45 respectively. Price also has a direct effect on purchase decision (0.26), while product

quality has a smaller but still direct influence (0.20). Brand image, however, exerts the most significant direct effect on purchase decision, with a path coefficient of 0.54. This suggests that brand image plays a crucial mediating role in the influence of price and product quality on consumers' purchasing decisions. The model captures how consumer perceptions of brand value and quality directly shape their buying behavior.

The goodness-of-fit indices indicate an excellent fit between the model and the empirical data. The Chi-Square/df ratio is 1.061 (ideal when below 2), RMSEA is 0.022 (well under the 0.08 threshold), while CFI and TLI are both above 0.99, exceeding the commonly accepted benchmark of 0.90. These values suggest that the structural model is statistically sound and accurately represents the relationships among the studied variables.

Although AGFI and GFI were marginal, as indicated in the table, the whole SEM model feasibility test was carried out utilizing chi-square, CFI, CMIN/DF, TLI, and RMSEA within the expected value range.

**Table 1.** SEM Feasibility Test Results

<b>Goodness of Fit Index</b>	<b>Cut-off Value</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Model Evaluation</b>
Chi – Square	Kecil (< 215,563)	194.232	Good
Probability	≥ 0.05	0.271	Good
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.022	Good
Chi square / df	≤ 1.20	1.061	Good
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.868	Marginal
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.833	Marginal
TLI	≥ 0.95	0.981	Good
CFI	≥ 0.95	0.989	Good

The table 1 presents the Goodness of Fit Indices used to evaluate the suitability of the structural model in representing the observed data. Several key statistical measures are included, each with a specific cut-off value that indicates acceptable model fit. The Chi-Square value of 194.232 falls below the threshold of 215.563, and the probability value of 0.271 exceeds 0.05, indicating that the model fits the data well and there is no significant difference between the model and the observed data. Additionally, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.022, which is far below the maximum acceptable limit of 0.08, further supporting a good model fit. The Chi-Square/df ratio of 1.061 also confirms a strong fit, as it is within the ideal range of ≤ 1.20.

Other indices such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) are both above the recommended value of 0.95, with scores of 0.989 and 0.981 respectively, indicating excellent model performance. However, the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) fall slightly short of the ideal cut-off of 0.90, with values of 0.868 and 0.833 respectively, suggesting a marginal fit for these two indicators. Despite these minor deviations, the overall evaluation shows that the model is statistically sound and acceptable for interpreting the relationships among the variables.

**Table 2.** Hypothesis Testing

	Hypothesis	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Brand Image	-> Quality Product	0.504	0.115	4.388	***
Brand Image	-> Price	0.352	0.089	3.954	***
Purchase Decisions	-> Brand Image	0.428	0.097	4.424	***
Purchase Decisions	-> Quality Product	0.18	0.085	2.117	0.034
Purchase Decisions	-> Price	0.191	0.069	2.763	0.006

Table 2 shows the data results regarding whether there is a significant influence correlation at a significance level of 0.05. Based on the results shown in the table above, there is a substantial and beneficial correlation between the variables. The table above displays the results of the structural model analysis, highlighting the relationships among the variables tested: product quality, price, brand image, and purchase decisions. Each relationship is presented with its standardized estimate, standard error (S.E.), critical ratio (C.R.), and p-value (P), which indicate the strength and significance of the paths in the model. Asterisks denote highly significant relationships with p-values less than 0.001. The findings show that both product quality and price have a significant and positive effect on brand image, with standardized estimates of 0.504 and 0.352 respectively. This means that improvements in product quality and reasonable pricing contribute positively to how consumers perceive the brand. The critical ratios (4.388 for product quality and 3.954 for price) both exceed the minimum required value of 1.96, and the p-values are highly significant, confirming the strength of these relationships.

Furthermore, brand image significantly influences purchase decisions, with a standardized estimate of 0.428 and a critical ratio of 4.424 ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that a strong and positive brand image encourages consumers to make a purchase. In addition, both product quality (0.18) and price (0.191) also have direct and significant effects on purchase decisions, though the effects are relatively smaller compared to that of brand image. The p-values for these two variables (0.034 for product quality and 0.006 for price) are still below the 0.05 threshold, signifying statistical significance. These results suggest that while brand image is a dominant mediating factor, price and product quality also directly contribute to consumers' purchasing behavior.

## 5. Discussion

Entrepreneurship continues to play a vital role in the advancement of local industries, including the cosmetic sector. In Indonesia, the growth of local cosmetic brands is significant, driven by increasing consumer awareness, technological advancement, and market openness. As reported by Statistics Indonesia, the pharmaceutical, chemical, and cosmetic industries grew by 5.59% in the first quarter of 2020, and the Indonesian cosmetics market expanded by 7% in 2021. This rapid growth intensifies competition, with over 185,000 cosmetic products recorded by the Food and Drug Authority in the last five years and cosmetics accounting for 46.8% of total e-commerce sales in 2023 (Compas.co.id, 2023). The rise of local brands such as Socially Aware Sexy Cosmetics (SASC), which targets the lower-middle market segment, reflects how brands are striving to balance price and product quality to gain consumer trust. According to Wang et al. (2019), product quality strongly influences consumer purchasing intentions, especially in online settings where physical product evaluation is limited. Perceived quality encompasses not only the product's intrinsic attributes but also additional benefits that shape consumer perception (Agostini et al., 2021). In this context, SASC's efforts to empower local communities while maintaining product standards contribute to a more favorable

brand image. The structural model analysis from the study further reinforces these observations. Product quality and price both significantly influence brand image, with standardized estimates of 0.504 and 0.352, respectively. These results suggest that improvements in product features and affordable pricing contribute directly to shaping a brand's identity in the consumer's mind. The critical ratios of 4.388 (product quality) and 3.954 (price), alongside highly significant p-values ( $<0.001$ ), emphasize the robustness of these relationships.

Moreover, the findings reveal that brand image plays a mediating role in the relationship between product quality, price, and purchase decisions. With a standardized estimate of 0.428 and a critical ratio of 4.424 ( $p < 0.001$ ), brand image emerges as a key determinant of purchase behavior. This aligns with Foster (2016), who states that the alignment between perceived quality and brand promises is essential in influencing buying behavior. Additionally, Djatmiko and Pradana (2016) and Alfredo and Martawijaya (2024) argue that brand image allows a product to stand out despite offering similar benefits to competitors. Direct effects of product quality (0.180) and price (0.191) on purchase decisions are also statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), albeit smaller in magnitude compared to brand image. This finding is consistent with Albari and Safitri (2018), who emphasized the importance of fair pricing strategies in creating positive consumer perceptions. Furthermore, the interplay between quality and price sensitivity observed by Boyle et al. (2018) and Sun et al. (2020) suggests that consumers may associate higher prices with better quality, yet remain responsive to perceived value. The study underscores the integral roles of product quality, price, and brand image in shaping consumer purchase decisions in the local cosmetics market. While product quality and price directly influence consumer choices, brand image serves as a dominant mediating factor that enhances perceived value and purchasing likelihood. These insights provide a strategic foundation for local cosmetic brands like SASC to sustain competitive advantage by investing in quality assurance, pricing strategies, and brand positioning.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study explored the influence of product quality, price, and brand image on purchase decisions of consumers using SASC cosmetic products in Semarang City. The results demonstrated that product quality and price significantly affect brand image, which in turn plays a critical mediating role in influencing consumer purchase behavior. Although both product quality and price have direct positive effects on purchase decisions, brand image emerges as the strongest determinant, indicating that consumers are highly responsive to how they perceive a brand overall. The structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis validated the proposed model, showing excellent goodness-of-fit indices across multiple criteria, such as Chi-Square/df, RMSEA, CFI, and TLI. These results support the reliability of the model and reinforce the importance of a brand's intangible attributes—like image and perceived value—in addition to tangible elements such as product performance and affordability.

From a managerial perspective, this study underscores that cosmetic businesses, especially local brands like SASC, must maintain a strong focus on consistent product quality and competitive pricing to positively influence consumer perceptions. However, to drive purchase decisions more effectively, these efforts must be complemented with strategic brand positioning and image-building initiatives. A strong brand image enhances consumer trust, reinforces perceived value, and can even offset the limitations of lower marketing budgets or price competition. The findings emphasize that while quality and price remain foundational, brand image serves as a powerful lever in shaping consumer decisions in the beauty industry. Companies that successfully integrate these three elements

are more likely to gain and sustain competitive advantage in an increasingly saturated and dynamic market. A problem caused by an error, or in the method chosen, or its validity, or vice versa.

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