

**Increasing The Influence Of Product Quality And Price Perception On Purchase Decisions: The Mediating Role of Social Media Interaction
(Case Study at Bubble Teahouse Chain Outlet)**

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Abstract

This study explores the mediating role of social media interaction in the relationship between product quality and price perception affecting purchase decisions at a Bubble Teahouse Chain outlet. Employing an accidental sampling technique, questionnaires were distributed to customers, resulting in a final sample size of 120 respondents. Smart PLS 3.0 was utilized for hypothesis testing. The results indicated that product quality significantly influenced social media interaction, and price perception had a substantial impact on purchase decisions. However, product quality did not directly affect purchase decisions, price perception did not significantly influence social media interaction, and social media interaction did not directly impact purchase decisions. Introducing social media interaction as an intervening variable between product quality and purchase decisions yielded different results, indicating a significant influence of product quality on purchase decisions. These findings underscore the potential of social media interaction to augment the impact of product quality and price perception on purchase decisions, suggesting its effectiveness as a tool for enhancing marketing strategies and subsequently improving sales performance.

Keywords: Product Quality, Price Perception, Social Media Interaction, and Purchase Decision.

Introduction

The current era witnesses rapid growth in the packaged beverage industry, evident from the increasing array of beverage products available, including various coffee and tea variants. Intensifying competition for consumers necessitates heightened efforts from business owners to stay competitive. This growth is fueled by Indonesia's expanding population and rising purchasing power, impacting the food and beverage industry due to improved well-being and evolving lifestyles (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008).

Initially limited to soft drinks like mineral water, tea, and health drinks in packaged forms, Indonesians now encounter a multitude of drink variations. The emergence of cafes and diverse drink options, particularly in major cities, reflects consumer trends, viewing these outlets as spaces for relaxation, socializing, business meetings, and learning. The rapid growth of outlets is linked to the swiftly evolving lifestyles of the community, resulting in the establishment of new outlets. In the culinary beverage industry, marked by fierce competition, key players such as Share Tea, Hop-Hop, XiBoBa, Gulu-Gulu, and Fore compete, with tea-based drinks currently prevailing. An example of this trend is Chatime, a Taiwan-based tea company founded in 2003, positioning itself as a leading tea brand with a diverse flavor range popular across age groups.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2008), consumers tend to favor the most preferred brand in purchasing decisions. However, the journey from purchase intention to the actual decision involves a nuanced interplay of two factors. Marketers must discern the individuals involved in buying decisions and understand their distinct roles. Identification is crucial, and

business actors must engage in compelling interactions, particularly through social media, to introduce bubble tea to the community. Engagement through various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others, follows conventional methods, allowing global and diverse users to share post-purchase reviews and experiences (Maecker et al., 2016). Price perception significantly influences consumer purchasing intent and satisfaction, categorizing prices as high, low, or reasonable, as highlighted by Schiffman and Kanuk (2018). This perception is crucial in the beverage industry, balancing product quality to maintain consumer loyalty (Wijaya, 2018).

Research within the food and beverage industry, specifically within Bubble Teahouse Chain Outlets, reveals critical gaps requiring exploration. Existing literature addresses general aspects of consumer behavior and marketing strategies, but there is a lack of focused research on the unique dynamics of Bubble Teahouse Chain Outlets. Identified gaps emphasize the need for targeted investigations to enhance understanding of consumer behavior in this segment (Lee et al., 2019; Smith & Brown, 2020; Chen & Wang, 2018).

Chatime, a Taiwanese provider of over 50 brewed tea flavors, operating in Indonesia since 2011, presents a multifaceted challenge in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Factors such as perception, quality, and social media interactions play pivotal roles, and outlets can actively encourage informed purchasing decisions by strategically managing these interconnected elements. Choosing Chatime as a case study offers several compelling reasons for its relevance in understanding consumer behavior in the bubble tea industry. As an international player with a widespread presence and brand recognition, Chatime provides insights into diverse consumer preferences across cultural contexts (Lee et al., 2019).

The brand's product offerings, digital engagement, and social media interactions allow an exploration of the impact on consumer choices (Smith & Brown, 2020; Chen & Wang, 2018). The franchise model enables a comparative analysis with competitors, contributing to understanding brand differentiation and consumer decisions (Johnson, 2018). Additionally, Chatime's continuous innovation and adaptation to industry trends offer an opportunity to explore how these factors shape consumer behavior in the dynamic beverage market (Lee & Garcia, 2018). This research aims to fill identified gaps by deepening comprehension of consumer behavior within Bubble Teahouse Chain Outlets and providing insights for effective marketing strategies, particularly emphasizing the influence of Product Quality and Price Perception on Purchase Decisions with a focus on the mediating role of Social Media Interaction.

Literature Review

Product Quality

Kotler and Armstrong (2018) define product quality as the characteristics of a product or service that enable it to meet the customer's stated or implied needs. This attribute directly influences the performance of the product or service and serves as a crucial positioning tool for marketers (Rangkuti, 2009). Wijaya (2018) further elaborates on quality, describing it as the collective features of goods and services across marketing, engineering, production, and maintenance, aimed at meeting customer expectations.

Previous research highlights the impact of various dimensions of product quality, such as brand performance, reliability, and innovativeness, on customer loyalty (Nwachukwu et al., 2019). Building on this, Jacobson and Aaker (1987) emphasize the importance of product

quality in implementing a successful quality strategy, leading to increased profitability within both focus and market share contexts.

The relationship between product quality and customer satisfaction is well-established, with higher satisfaction resulting in increased customer loyalty (Hoe & Mansori, 2018; Fitriyanti, 2021). This heightened loyalty, in turn, positively influences purchase intention (Hong & Cho, 2011). Product quality is delineated into two dimensions: level and consistency. Level pertains to performance quality, representing the product's ability to fulfill its functions, while consistency involves conformance quality, ensuring freedom from defects and consistent delivery of targeted performance levels (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Garvin (1987) identifies eight critical dimensions of quality—Performance, Features, Reliability, Conformance, Durability, Serviceability, Aesthetics, and Perceived Quality. This study specifically focuses on four dimensions of product quality: Features (encompassing product features and benefits), Durability (evaluating the product's long-lasting nature), Aesthetics (considering visual appeal through design and colour combinations), and Perceived Quality (examining subjective perspectives on product quality). The choice to focus on 4 key indicators, instead of all eight dimensions, is driven by considerations of customer preferences, resource constraints, market dynamics, strategic alignment, and historical performance

Price Perception

Price, as defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2018), is the monetary amount charged for a product or service, representing the values exchanged by customers for the benefits derived from using or owning said product or service. This factor significantly influences the quantity of goods consumers are willing to purchase, and an increase in one product's price can lead to an uptick in the demand for substitute products (Pindyck & Rubinfeld, 2018). The process of pricing initiates with a thorough analysis of consumer needs and perceptions of value, aligning the price with the perceived value. If customers perceive the price to exceed the product's value, it may deter purchases, while pricing below costs can adversely affect profits. Within a company's overall value proposition, pricing plays a pivotal role in establishing customer value and fostering customer relationships, emphasizing buyers' perceptions of value as the cornerstone of pricing decisions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Perception, as described by Kotler and Armstrong (2018), is the cognitive process through which individuals select, organize, and interpret information to construct a meaningful worldview. Solomon (2018) adds that perception can also be the immediate response of sensory receptors to stimuli like light, colour, sound, odour, and texture. Varied perceptions of the same stimulus arise from selective attention, distortion, and retention processes. Price perception, particularly how consumers view different prices in terms of high, low, or reasonable, exerts a substantial influence on purchasing intent and satisfaction (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2018). Sudaryono (2014) emphasizes that price perception involves consumers comprehending and assigning meaningful value to price information.

Research by Fecher et al. (2019) highlights that the same price can yield different perceptions, with the measurement unit affecting both price level perceptions and purchase intentions. Price perception extends its impact on the behaviour and repurchase intentions of Generation Y consumers (Yasri et al., 2020). Numerous studies affirm the positive correlation between price perception and repurchase intention (Ladhari et al., 2019). Kotler and Armstrong (2018) identify four indicators of price perception: affordability, alignment with product and service quality, competitiveness, and alignment with benefits. Understanding how to price

perception influences consumer behaviour and purchase decisions is crucial, particularly for products popular among younger generations, such as bubble tea.

Social Media Interaction

The extensive utilization of the Internet and digital technology has brought about significant changes for both consumers and marketers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Digital technology has fundamentally transformed consumer lifestyles, altering the way they access information and engage with products or services more conveniently. Consumers now have easy access to information about products, services, prices, brands, and more. Digital and social media marketing leverage various tools, including websites, email, blogs, social media platforms, online videos, advertising, mobile applications, and other digital channels, enabling direct engagement with consumers through computers, smartphones, tablets, TV-ready internet, and various other digital devices. This innovative approach contributes to creating customer value, fostering customer engagement, and building lasting customer relationships.

Social media, defined as an independent and commercial online social network where individuals converge to socialize and share messages, opinions, pictures, videos, and other content (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018), plays a pivotal role in the contemporary global business environment (Abuhashesh, 2014). Sulianta (2015) elaborates that social media serves as auxiliary technology for conveying information from one person to another or a group of people, serving both individual and group goals.

Describing social media interaction as brand-related communication, Maecker et al. (2016) emphasize the exchange of information between companies and customers, as well as among customers, through company-managed social media channels like brand pages. Social media interaction encompasses the exchange of information in various forms such as messages, videos, images, etc., about a brand's product or service among online community members (Das & Mandal, 2016). The crucial factors associated with social media interaction, as identified by Das & Mandal (2016), include interaction through social media, social media content, social media management, and promotion. Cao et al. (2020) discovered a positive correlation between single social media interaction and price efficiency, while null interaction was found to be negatively related to price efficiency. Drawing from the preceding discourse, the subsequent hypotheses were formulated.

H1. Product quality positively influences social media interaction.

H2. Price perception positively influences social media interaction

Purchase Decisions

The process of making a purchase decision involves a buyer's selection of a particular brand (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). It can be defined as an integration process wherein knowledge is combined to assess various alternative behaviors, ultimately leading to the selection of one (Peter & Olson, 2013). This integration results in a cognitive choice that reflects a behavioral intention, which is essentially a decision plan to execute one or more behaviors. Consumer behavior encompasses the entirety of decisions made by consumers regarding the acquisition, consumption, and disposition of goods, services, activities, experiences, people, and ideas over time (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2010).

In the context of the hospitality industry, the purchase decision-making process is often considered high-risk due to the unique characteristics of the commodity involved. Consumers in this industry rely heavily on intangible attributes such as brand image, quality reviews,

comments, and pricing to guide their purchase decisions (Choi et al., 2020). Notably, consumer reviews play a crucial role in influencing online purchasing decisions (von Helversen et al., 2018).

According to Alamsyah et al. (2016), various factors significantly influence consumers' decisions when choosing soft drinks, including age, education, household expenditure, hang-out frequency, product availability, taste, aroma, product freshness, manufacturer reputation, and peer preferences. Similarly, a study by C. Wang et al. (2021) revealed that shoppers evaluate eleven indexes before making decisions, with perceived product quality, online product price, and business reputation dominating their decision-making behavior.

The significance of product quality on purchase decisions is evident in the findings of Anggita & Ali (2017), while previous studies have consistently shown that price exerts a substantial influence on consumers' decision-making behavior (Wang et al., 2021; Anggita & Ali, 2017; Macall et al., 2021). However, the study by Yasri et al. (2020) contradicts this trend, indicating no significant effect between price perception and brand preference on repurchase intention.

According to Olson & Reynolds (2008), managers must address four fundamental issues to effectively frame consumer decisions: consumers, decision focus, decision context, and choice alternatives. Managers must comprehend the key choice criteria considered by consumers when evaluating alternatives and the factors deemed significant by consumers. In this context, consumers can gather information from various sources, including social media, which plays a role in facilitating the decision-making process. Models of consumer behavior have traditionally assumed the existence of independent consumers capable of making purchases, and social media, containing valuable knowledge such as customer feedback and product/service suggestions, can significantly impact business decision-making (Yang et al., 2022).

Yost et al. (2021) present compelling empirical support for the idea that active engagement on social media platforms can significantly enhance firm performance by driving sales. Brands leverage social media platforms not only to influence their customer base but also to be influenced by them through dedicated brand pages (Kingsnorth, 2016). Moreover, Abrar et al. (2017) discovered that social media interactions and customer usability contribute positively to the development of brand attachment and affection. In the realm of consumer products, online discussions about brands on social media channels persist, irrespective of a brand's responsiveness. It's noteworthy that the quality of negative comments can wield considerable influence over consumer decision-making. Presently, customers often turn to social media for product ratings, reviews, and shared experiences before making purchasing decisions, underscoring the critical need for businesses to actively engage with customers through these platforms (Szolnoki et al., 2018). This engagement plays a pivotal role in shaping purchasing decisions.

The buyer decision process comprises five distinct stages: 1) problem recognition, 2) information search, 3) evaluation of alternatives, 4) purchase decision, and 5) post-purchase behavior (Engel & Roger D. Blackwell, 1978; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). The initial stage involves the recognition of needs or problems by buyers, triggered by internal stimuli or external stimuli like advertisements or social media interactions with friends. In the second stage, information search, consumers access information from various sources, including personal sources (family, friends, neighbors), commercial sources, social media, and experiential sources (product examination and usage).

As described by Kotler & Armstrong (2018), consumers typically lean towards purchasing their preferred brand. However, two factors can influence the purchase decision: 1) the attitudes of others and 2) unexpected situational factors. Purchase intentions may initially be based on factors like expected income, price, and product benefits. Yet, the attitudes of others and unforeseen events, including opinions expressed through social media interaction, can alter these intentions.

Social media possesses several key characteristics outlined by Kotler & Armstrong (2018): 1) it is targeted and personal, 2) interactive, 3) immediate and timely, 4) well-suited for creating customer engagement and community, and 5) allows customer involvement in shaping and sharing brand content, experiences, information, and ideas. This personalized nature is evident in marketers' ability to create and share tailored brand content with individual consumers and customer communities. The interactive aspect enables marketers to actively participate in customer conversations and attentively listen to their feedback. Social media's immediacy and timeliness empower marketers to reach customers anytime, anywhere, delivering timely and relevant marketing content about brand activities. The primary advantage of social media lies in its engagement and social sharing capabilities, making it particularly effective for fostering customer engagement and community, encouraging customers to connect with the brand and each other. Consequently, social media interaction becomes a crucial tool for marketers in influencing consumer purchase decisions.

Consumers access information from various sources, such as personal sources (family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances), commercial sources, social media, and experiential sources (product examination and usage). Four major psychological factors—motivation, perception, learning, and beliefs and attitudes—further shape an individual's buying choices. The influence of these information sources varies based on the product and the buyer. Recognizing the individuals involved in buying decisions and understanding their roles is crucial for marketers, as it is often evident in many cases. Conversely, businesses must engage in interaction activities through social media to convince potential customers and introduce products to the community. Information on product quality, price perception, and consumer interactions on social media can collectively impact consumer purchasing decisions.

Drawing from the preceding discourse, the ensuing hypotheses have been formulated:

- H3. Product quality positively influences purchase decisions.
- H4. Price Perception positively influences purchase decision
- H5. Social Media Interaction positively influences purchase decision
- H6. Product quality indirectly influences purchase decisions through social media interactions
- H7. Price perception indirectly influences purchase decisions through social media interactions

Figure 1, depicted below, outlines the conceptual framework encapsulating the proposed hypotheses.

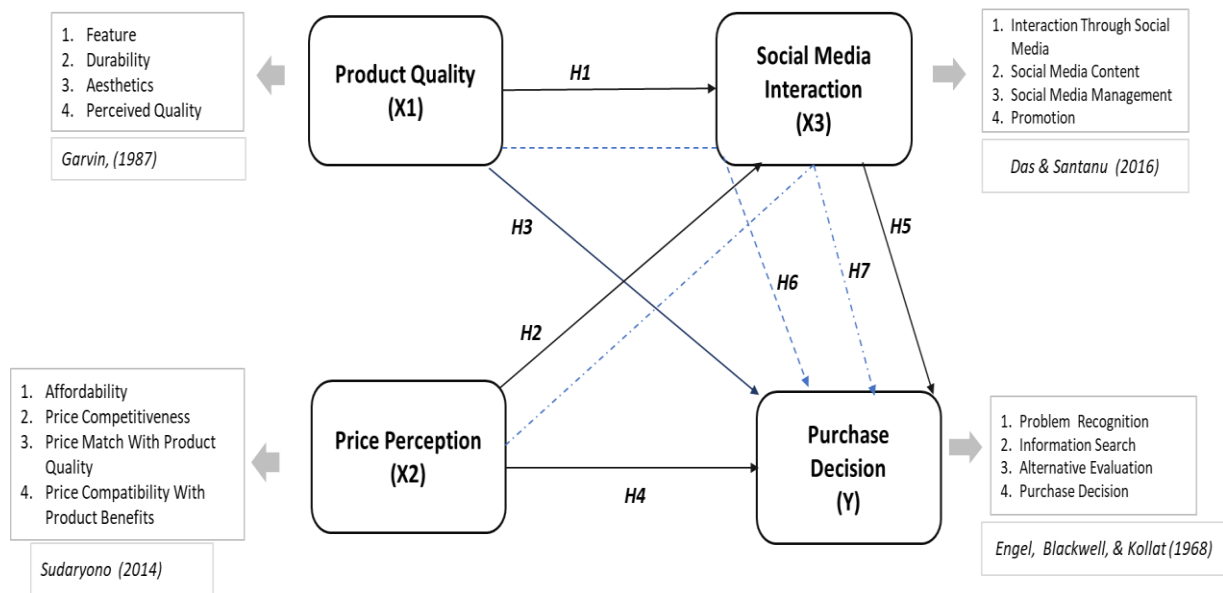


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Sample

The survey was carried out at the Jakarta Mall branch of Chatime Bubble Teahouse, a global franchise originating from Taiwan with its base in Zhubei, established in 2003. Having entered the Indonesian market in 2021, Chatime has expanded its presence to encompass over 389 outlets across 58 major cities in Indonesia, all adhering to the same standards of design, quality, and service. Currently, Chatime offers a diverse range of more than 50 flavor variants. The sampling approach employed accidental sampling techniques, targeting 100 respondents who visited the Jakarta Mall outlet in 2021. Before the main research phase, a reliability and validity test was conducted, involving 20 respondents.

Measurement

The study adopted a first-order measurement approach for all constructs, with the primary aim being to uncover the relationships between variables and their theoretical and managerial implications for consumer purchase decisions. Utilizing a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 7 (Strongly disagree). The exogenous variables are 1) Product Quality (X1) and 2) Price Perception (X2), the intervening variable is Social Media Interactions (X3), and the endogenous variable is Purchase Decision (Y).

Breaking down the components, Product Quality is composed of four indicators (Garvin, 1987): 1) features, 2) durability, 3) aesthetics, and 4) perceived quality. The choice to focus on 4 key indicators, instead of all eight dimensions, is driven by considerations of customer preferences, resource constraints, market dynamics, strategic alignment, and historical performance. Price Perception comprises four indicators (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018): 1) affordability, 2) price competitiveness, 3) price matching with product quality, and 4) price compatibility with product benefits. Social Media Interaction involves four indicators (Das &

Mandal, 2016): 1) interaction through social media, 2) social media content, 3) social media management, and 4) promotion. Purchase Decision encompasses five indicators (Engel & Blackwell, 1978): 1) problem recognition, 2) information search, 3) alternative evaluation, 4) purchase decision, and 5) post-purchase decision evaluation..

Data Analysis

The hypothesis testing phase employed the Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method, chosen for its suitability with non-normal data, small sample sizes, and formative constructs, as indicated by Hair Jr et al.'s (2014) meta-analysis. Rigorous reliability and validity checks were conducted, including discriminant validity assessed through the square root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeding the highest construct correlation, aligning with Hair Jr et al. (2019), and adherence to construct validity criteria outlined by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Reliability testing, addressing the consistency of measurement, was conducted to ensure that the instrument consistently measures the same attributes under similar conditions with the same subjects, as articulated by Hong & Cho (2011). Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients were employed to measure and assess the reliability of each item in the questionnaire.

Results

Respondents Profile

Table 1 provides a demographic breakdown revealing a higher percentage of female respondents (57%) compared to male respondents (43%). Analyzing the age distribution, the majority falls within the 21-30 age group (72%), followed by respondents below 20 years old (18%), those in the 31-40 range (9%), and a minor representation in the category exceeding 40 years old. This pattern signifies that almost all customers (99%) belong to the Millennial and Z generations, characterized as individuals under 40 years old. Millennials, born between 1981 and 1995, and Generation Zers, born from 1996 to early 2010 (Cheng, 2019), share distinctive traits such as social consciousness, reliance on technology, and financial awareness. Millennials showcase their sociability online, utilizing platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, facilitating information sharing and connections through mobile apps and social media websites (Cheng, 2019). On the other hand, Generation Z, deeply entrenched in technology, exhibits a constant online presence, actively engaging in messaging, social networks, and mobile systems. Their tendencies include a keen interest in trends and a rapid propensity for researching prevalent issues (WGU, 2021).

Table 1. Respondents Profile (N=100)

Attribute	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	43	43
	Female	57	57
Age	< 20 year	18	18
	21 – 30 year	72	72
	31 – 40 year	9	9
	> 40 year	1	1
Job	Students	57	57
	Private employees	32	32
	Entrepreneurs	9	9
	Other	2	2

Frequency of Visit	1-3 times	40	40
	4-5 times	28	28
	More than six times	32	32

Source: Primary Data.

Examining job criteria, the majority of respondents were identified as students (57%), with private employees comprising the second-largest group (32%). These findings suggest that the primary demographic of visitors to the outlet consists largely of students and private employees, who utilize the location for socializing with friends or colleagues. In terms of visit frequency, 60% of respondents reported visiting the outlet more than three times, indicative of a high level of loyalty. Several factors contribute to this loyalty, including a preference for the taste of Chatime bubble tea variants (indicative of product quality), the perception of competitive pricing compared to other brands, and the favorable ambiance and strategic location of the teahouse outlet within the shopping center area.

Measurement Model

The assessment of convergent validity revealed the questionnaire's capability to generate valid data, as indicated by the loading factors' values (Figure 2). Concurrently, discriminant validity was assessed through the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 2). Figure 2 illustrates that every variable indicator exhibited an outer loading value surpassing 0.7, with none falling below 0.5. This observation underscores the viability and validity of all variable indicators for the research, affirming their suitability for subsequent analysis..

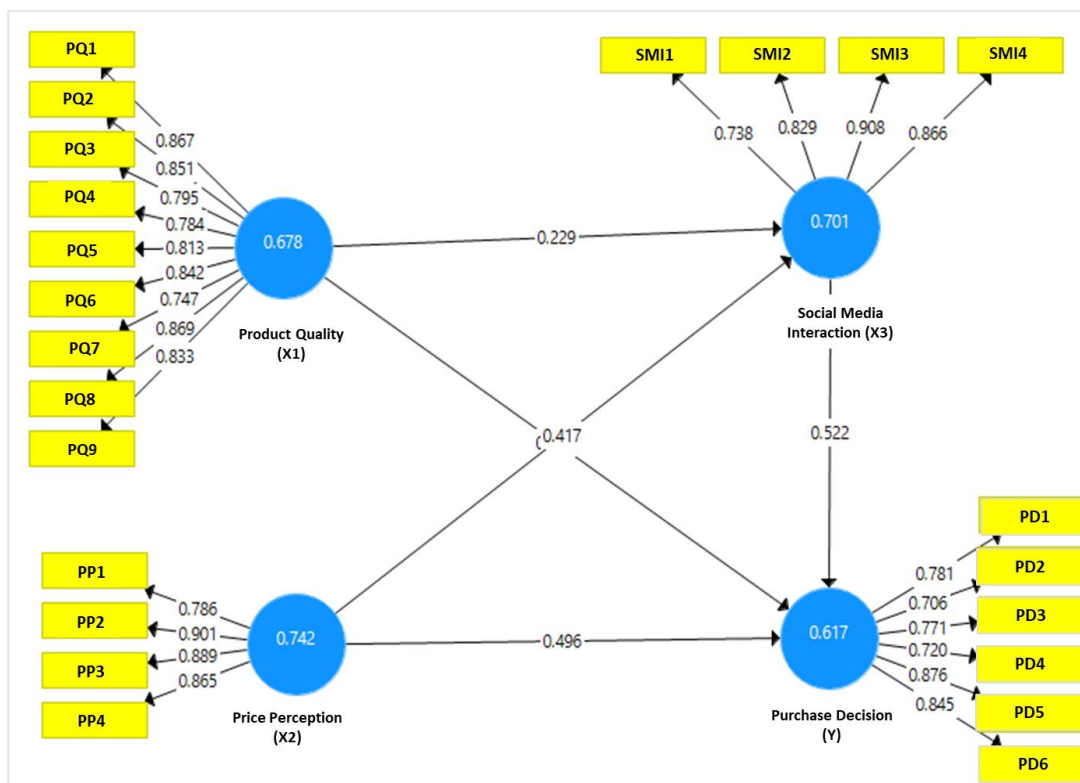


Figure 2. Outer Model

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each latent variable are essential indicators of measurement validity. According to Table 2, the AVE values for Product Quality, Price Perception, Social Media Interaction, and Purchase Decision all exceed 0.5 (> 0.5), signifying the validity of the measurements. To assess reliability, the Composite Reliability (CR) examines the reliability value of indicators within a variable. A variable is deemed to meet composite reliability standards when the CR value exceeds 0.7. Table 3 reveals that the composite reliability values for all variables in the research surpass the threshold of 0.7, indicating that each variable demonstrates a high level of reliability.

Table 2. The Measurement Model Assessment

Variable	AVE	CR	CA	SSO	SSE	Q ²
• Product Quality (X1)	0,678	0,856	0,897	900.000	900.000	
• Price Perception (X2)	0,742	0,875	0,908	400.000	400.000	
• Social Media Interaction (X3)	0,701	0,941	0,890	400.000	315.429	0.211
• Purchase Decision (Y)	0,617	0,883	0,908	600.000	405.396	0.324

Source: SmartPLS Output 3.0

Notes: Composite Reliability (CR), Cronbach Alpha (CA), Q² (1-SSE/SSO)

Table 2 reveals that the Social Media Interaction variable falls within the moderate category of predictive accuracy, registering a value of 0.211. This value, situated within the range of 0.15, indicates a moderate level of predictive accuracy. Similarly, the Purchase Decision variable demonstrates fair predictive accuracy with a value of 0.324, which hovers around 0.35, signifying a large degree of predictive accuracy.

The Fornell Larcker criterion test presented in Table 3 illustrates correlations between variables, with the values along the top row surpassing those of other variables: X2 to X2 (0.861), X1 to X1 (0.823), Y to Y (0.786), and X3 to X3 (0.837). To further ensure discriminant validity, the cross-loading values were examined to meet the specified criteria, indicating that each variable's indicator value is greater than those of other variables' indicators.

Table 3. Fornell Larcker Criterion

	SMI (X3)	PD (Y)	PQ (X1)	PP (X2)
Social Media Interaction (X3)	0,837			
Purchase Decision (Y)	0,705	0,786		
Product Quality (X1)	0,448	0,455	0,823	
Price Perception (X2)	0,537	0,598	0,525	0,861

Source: SmartPLS Output 3.0 2021

Conducting a multicollinearity test on a construct serves to assess the potential linkages between two or more constructs within the model. Table 4 highlight that this examination involves evaluating the interrelationships between constructs, ensuring that the tolerance level exceeds 0.2, and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values remain below 5. A conclusion of collinearity indications can be drawn based on these criteria.

Table 4. Inner VIF Data

Variable	VIF
PQ1	4.203
PQ2	3.813
PQ3	2.738
PQ4	2.675
PQ6	2.492
PQ7	2.222
PQ8	3.687
PQ9	2.896
PP1	1.731
PP2	3.085
PP3	2.823
PP4	2.369
SMI1	1.464
SMI2	2.191
SMI3	3.113
SMI4	2.365
PD1	1.603
PD2	1.792
PD3	1.753
PD4	2.973
PD5	2.596
PD6	1.951

Source: SmartPLS Output 3.0 2021

Evaluation of Inner Model

This evaluation is necessary to gauge the robustness of the structural model or the overall Goodness of Fit. The R-square value plays a pivotal role in determining the extent to which an endogenous variable is influenced by the factors that impact it.

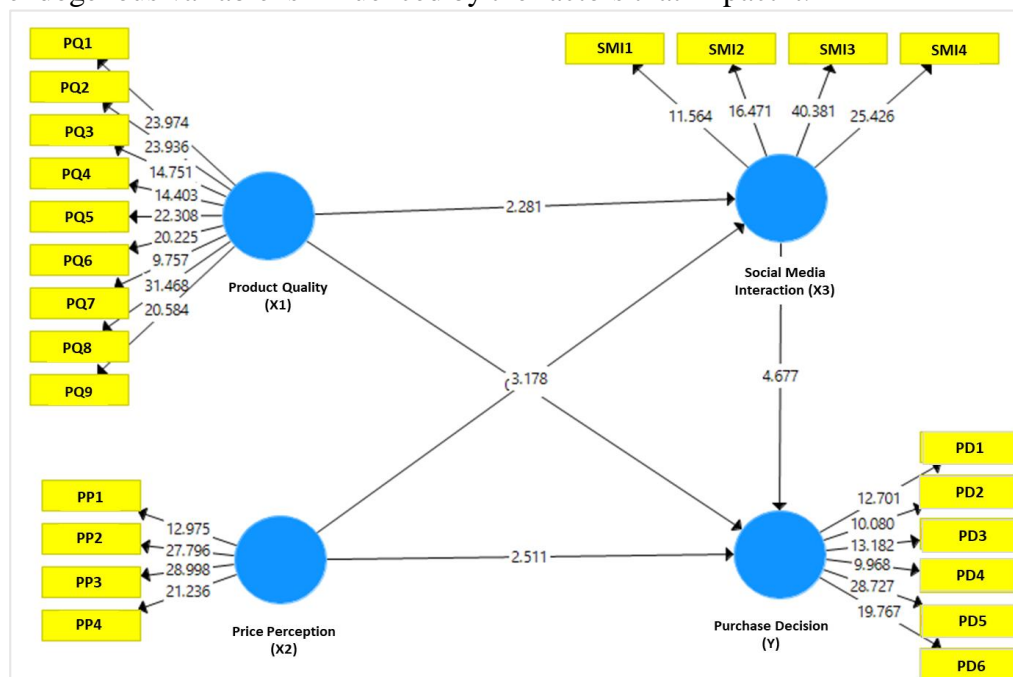


Figure 3 Inner Mode

Validity Test

The R-Square value is exclusively attributed to the endogenous variable or variable Y. For the social media interaction variable, the R-Square result is 0.327, while for the purchase decision variable, it is 0.569. According to the SRMR Result, the saturated model exhibits a value of 0.076, indicating its goodness as it is less than 0.08. The magnitude of the effect size is determined by the following values: 1) if it falls within 0.02, the effect is deemed small; 2) if it hovers around 0.15, the effect is categorized as medium; and 3) if it is approximately 0.35, the effect is considered large (Cohen, 1988).

Table 5. F-Square Data (F²)

Variable	SMI (X3)	PD (Y)	PQ (X1)	PP (X2)
Social Media Interaction (X3)		0.426		
Purchase Decision (Y)				
Product Quality (X1)	0.056	0.009		
Price Perception (X2)	0.187	0.110		

Source: SmartPLS Output 3.0 2021

Table 5 provides insights into the comparative size of F-Square values, revealing notable disparities. The largest value, 0.426, significantly exceeds the F-Square criterion of 0.35 for the X3 variable against Y. Additionally, the F-Square criteria indicate medium effects for specific variable pairings: X1 against X3 (0.056), X2 against X3 (0.187), and X2 against Y (0.110) - the latter just surpassing the 0.15 threshold. On the other hand, the smallest F-Square value is observed for the X1 against Y pair, registering at 0.02, surpassing the criterion of 0.009. Similarly, the X1 against X3 pair exhibits an F-Square value of 0.056, aligning closely with the 0.02 range.

Hypothesis Testing

The examination of hypotheses in this study involved the assessment of T-statistics and P-values. Unlike traditional approaches, the measurement estimates and error standards were determined not through statistical assumptions but rather derived from empirical observations. In employing the bootstrapping resampling method, the significance level utilized (two-tailed) was a t-value of 1.96, corresponding to a significance level of 5%. It was stipulated that the t-statistical value must exceed 1.96, and the p-values should be less than 0.05 for significance.

Table 6. Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Path	S	Mean	SD	T-Statistics	P-Value	Conclusion
Direct Effect							
H1	X1 → X3	0,229	0,233	0,100	2,281	0,023	Significant
H2	X2 → X3	0,417	0,420	0,131	3,178	0,002	Significant
H3	X1 → Y	0,074	0,075	0,075	0,986	0,324	Not Significant
H4	X2 → Y	0,278	0,279	0,111	2,511	0,012	Significant
H5	X3 → Y	0,522	0,532	0,112	4,677	0,000	Significant
Indirect Effect							

H6	X1 → X3 → Y	0,120	0,124	0,060	1,991	0,047	Significant
H7	X2 → X3 → Y	0,218	0,221	0,086	2,534	0,012	Significant

Source: SmartPLS Output 3.0 2021

Note: Original Sample (S), Sample Average (Mean), Standard Deviation (SD), T-Statistics (|O/SD|)

Table 6 presents the outcomes of the hypotheses, indicating a positive and significant relationship between variables, except for the absence of a significant relationship between product quality and purchase decisions. Hypothesis 1 was confirmed, indicating a significant positive influence between product quality and social media interactions (t-statistical value = 2.281, p-value = 0.023). Similarly, Hypothesis 2 was validated, showing a significant positive influence between price perception and social media interactions (t-statistical value = 3.178, p-value = 0.002). However, Hypothesis 3 was rejected, revealing that product quality does not exert a significant influence on purchasing decisions (t-statistical value = 0.986, p-value = 0.324). In contrast, Hypothesis 4 was substantiated, indicating a significant positive influence of price perception on purchase decisions (t-statistical value = 2.511, p-value = 0.012). Furthermore, Hypothesis 5 was confirmed, highlighting that social media interaction significantly and positively influences purchase decisions (t-statistical value = 4.677, p-value = 0.000). Hypothesis 6 was accepted, suggesting significant positive influences among product quality variables and social media interactions on purchase decisions (t-statistical value = 1.991, p-value = 0.047), indicating an indirect influence. Lastly, Hypothesis 7 was upheld, showing significant positive influences on price perception, social media interactions, and purchase decisions (t-statistical value = 2.534, p-value = 0.012), indicating an indirect relationship.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the role of social media interactions as an intervening variable, enhancing the impact of product quality and price perception on purchase decisions at the Chatime Bubble Tea Outlet in the Jakarta shopping center. The study makes several significant contributions:

First, this study initially demonstrated a positive and statistically significant correlation between product quality and social media interaction. In this context, Chatime strategically leveraged the Internet and social media platforms to showcase product quality indicators such as features, aesthetics, and perceived quality. For instance, the promotion included visually appealing images of the Chatime bubble tea variants, accompanied by declarations emphasizing the meticulous selection of top-quality ingredients to craft a refreshing and satisfying beverage. Consumers were readily exposed to this information on social media, providing them with avenues to peruse, evaluate, and express opinions or ratings about Chatime products. This dynamic interaction among consumers, coupled with predominantly positive ratings, substantiates the established influence of product quality on social media interaction.

The exemplified practice underscores the paramount role of social media as a potent tool for brand marketing and promotion. Recognizing the significance of these platforms, brands like Chatime are compelled to curate compelling content for their brand pages and engage actively with consumers. In essence, social media's pervasive influence necessitates a continuous and meaningful brand-consumer interaction to maintain visibility, positive perception, and consumer engagement (Al-Qudah, 2020).

Second, this study further uncovered that price perception exerts a positive and significant impact on social media interaction. Schiffman and Kanuk (2018) characterize price perception as the way consumers perceive specific prices, categorizing them as high, low, or reasonable, influencing purchasing intent and satisfaction. Within the realm of bubble tea, consumers readily access menus and prices from various brand providers through online platforms, including the internet and social media, with Chatime being a prominent player in this landscape. Despite the market offering numerous bubble tea variants at comparable prices, Chatime stands out as a preferred choice, particularly among socially active millennials. Several factors contribute to this preference: 1) numerous positive consumer reviews on social media praising the taste and affordability of Chatime bubble tea, and 2) Chatime's prices being perceived as reasonable and offering corresponding benefits.

These findings resonate with prior research by Sudaryono (2014) and align with respondent demographics, primarily consisting of millennials and Generation Z. These consumer segments, characterized by their strong social media interaction and financial consciousness (Cheng, 2019; WGU, 2021), further contribute to the preference for Chatime's bubble tea. Chen et al. (2011) added nuanced insights into the evolving relationship between marketing variables, such as product quality and price, and consumer online-posting behavior. The study noted disparities in this relationship during the early and mature stages of internet usage. Initially, price exhibited a negative correlation with the likelihood of posting a review. However, as internet usage became more widespread, the correlation shifted to a U-shape, reflecting diverse motivations for online review posting among different consumer groups (Chen et al., 2011).

Third, contrary to previous studies, the findings of this research indicate that product quality does not exert a significant influence on purchase decisions (Al-Qudah, 2020). Product quality, defined as the characteristics of a product or service that fulfill the customer's stated or implied needs (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Wijaya, 2018), encompasses four key indicators: features, durability, aesthetics, and perceived quality (Garvin, 1987). Despite its recognized importance, this study suggests that consumers might make purchasing decisions without prioritizing product quality. Factors such as price perception, lifestyle considerations, external opinions, and other variables may overshadow the impact of product quality on consumer choices. Social media interaction, among these influencing factors, plays a role in shaping consumers' decisions, further emphasizing the multifaceted nature of purchasing dynamics.

Fourth, The findings of this investigation reveal that the perception of price significantly and positively impacts purchase decisions. This outcome aligns with prior research affirming that the way consumers perceive the prices of Chatime products plays a positive role in shaping their purchasing choices (Iswara & Rahadi, 2021; Yasri et al., 2020; Ladhari et al., 2019). Sudaryono (2014) emphasized that price perception involves consumers fully comprehending price information and attaching profound significance to it. According to Peter and Olson (2013), purchasing decisions represent an integration process, wherein knowledge is combined to assess multiple behavioral alternatives and choose one among them. This relationship between price perception and purchasing decisions is substantiated by the tendency of most consumers to select products based on their prices. This interpretation is consistent with the traits observed in Chatime respondents, characterized by their financial consciousness. The majority of these respondents, belonging to the millennial and Generation Z cohorts, exhibit a preference for "sharing economy" services and prioritize building their savings (WGU, 2021). Consequently, price perception emerges as a significant influencer on their purchase decisions.

Fifth, this investigation demonstrates that social media interaction significantly and positively impacts purchase decisions. Consumers shape their purchase intentions based on factors such as expected price and anticipated product benefits. The study highlights that consumers gather product information through social media interaction, influencing their ultimate purchasing decisions. These findings align with earlier research indicating the influential role of social media interaction in shaping purchase decisions (Hajli, 2014; Chen et al., 2011). Online consumer socialization, facilitated by peer communication, plays a dual role in affecting purchasing decisions—directly through conformity with peers and indirectly by reinforcing product involvement (Wang et al., 2012). This observation is consistent with the majority of respondents' profiles, predominantly millennials, and Generation Z, who engage deeply and interact extensively with others through social media.

Sixth, this investigation unveils that product quality exerts an indirect impact on purchase decisions mediated by social media interaction. Recognized as a pivotal factor shaping consumer preferences, product quality influences purchasing decisions, with consumers obtaining relevant information through their interactions on social media platforms. Consequently, an indirect influence is observed, linking product quality through social media to purchase decisions in the context of Chatime outlet. This outcome aligns with a prior study suggesting that product quality, service quality, and perceived value collectively contribute positively and significantly to customer satisfaction in the context of social media usage (Uzir et al., 2021).

Seventh, this investigation establishes that price perception exerts an indirect influence on purchase decisions, facilitated by interactions on social media platforms. This finding aligns with a prior study that highlighted the impact of price perception on online purchase decisions, particularly among millennials, especially during the COVID-19 era (Lutfie & Marcelino, 2020). Sulianta (2015) elucidated that social media serves as a facilitative technology for conveying information among individuals or groups, aligning with both individual and collective goals. As described by Peter and Olson (2013), purchasing decisions involve an integration process that combines knowledge to evaluate various behavioral alternatives, leading to the selection of one. Given that Chatime's consumers primarily comprise millennials and Generation Z, deeply engaged in social media interactions and financially conscious, the study affirms that price perception significantly influences consumer purchase decisions through social media interactions.

In summary, the analysis and discussion above lead to the conclusion that social media interaction plays a crucial role in amplifying the impact of both product quality and price perception on purchase decisions. Despite the absence of a direct influence of product quality on purchase decisions in this study, the mediation of social media interaction yields distinct and positive outcomes for purchase decisions. Notably, price perception, relative to other prices and associated use values (Monroe, 1973), holds a more substantial sway on customer value perceptions than quality. This, in turn, has a significant direct effect on both customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Varki & Colgate, 2001).

In light of these findings, it is imperative for managers to actively oversee consumers' perceptions of price and product quality, leveraging social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. This is especially pertinent for Millennials and Generation Z, digital natives who engage extensively in social media, thereby enhancing their interaction and subsequently influencing purchase decisions. To sustain and augment customer affinity, managers should persistently enhance product quality aspects that customers appreciate,

encompassing packaging quality, taste consistency, and the introduction of new menu variants and toppings. Such improvements in quality not only bolster customer satisfaction but also contribute to increased purchase decisions.

Conclusions

This study investigated the impact of social media interactions as an intervening variable, enhancing the effects of product quality and price perception on purchase decisions at Chatime Bubble Tea Outlet in the Jakarta shopping center. The research revealed significant insights into consumer behavior. First, it demonstrated a positive correlation between product quality and social media interaction, emphasizing the strategic use of online platforms by Chatime to highlight product quality indicators. Second, price perception was identified as a crucial factor influencing social media interaction, supported by positive consumer reviews and perceived affordability. Contrary to previous studies, product quality did not directly impact purchase decisions, suggesting the prevalence of other influencing factors such as price perception, lifestyle, and external opinions. Nevertheless, both product quality and price perception indirectly affected purchase decisions through social media interactions. The study underscores the importance of active brand engagement on social media platforms, especially for digitally savvy millennials and Generation Z, providing valuable insights for brand managers and marketers.

The study's limitations stem from its geographical confinement to a single location, limiting the generalizability of findings to a broader context. Focused primarily on millennials and Generation Z, the research may introduce a sampling bias, neglecting potential variations in preferences among other age groups. The resulting limitations underscore the need for caution in generalizing the observed relationships between product quality, price perception, social media interaction, and purchase decisions. To enhance the study's robustness, future research should consider expanding the sample diversity, incorporating multiple locations and age groups, and employing mixed-methods approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the bubble tea industry.

Managerial Implication

These results offer actionable insights for managers seeking to enhance marketing strategies. Firstly, prioritizing transparent pricing strategies and cultivating positive price perceptions are paramount. Investing in social media engagement, through compelling content and responsive interactions, can significantly impact consumer decisions. Moreover, the indirect influence of product quality on purchase decisions through social media interactions highlights the importance of maintaining high-quality offerings. A balanced and integrated approach that considers the interconnected dynamics of price, quality, and social media can guide effective decision-making and foster consumer loyalty in a competitive market.

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