

Purchase decision: The role of product quality, brand image, and brand ambassador

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- This technological advancement has extended to the world of telecommunications. This can be proven by the presence of smartphones, which offer advantages in various ways. Each manufacturer tries influencing consumers to make purchases by relying on product excellence. Purchasing decisions are essential for every manufacturer regarding marketing their products. Many factors can influence consumer purchasing decisions. This study examines product quality, brand image, and brand ambassadors as antecedents of purchasing decisions.

Design/Methodology/Approach- The respondents in this study were Asian iPhone users. Purposive sampling was used to choose the sample, obtaining 119 responses. Questionnaires were distributed to gather data, and Smart PLS was used for analysis. Validity, reliability, and hypothesis regression tests were the methods of data analysis that were used.

Findings- Product quality that meets consumer desires and expectations, as well as the sacrifices that consumers make to obtain these products, can encourage consumer decisions to buy them. A positive brand image can also promote purchasing decisions because consumers feel that the product has proven reliable and is able to meet consumer expectations and desires. Brand ambassadors are also a driving factor in purchasing decisions because they can influence consumers by promoting products.

Research Limitations/Implications- This study's limitation is that the research results only represent iPhone users in Asia, so the respondents' answers cannot represent all iPhone users in the world. In addition, the iPhone is one of the product lines produced by Apple Inc., so the results of this study are only limited to the iPhone product line; they cannot represent other product lines from Apple Inc.

Originality/Value- Research on the factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions for iPhones in Asia is minimal. Similar studies only discuss iPhone product users in several Asian countries or users of other Apple Inc product lines.

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1. The Introduction

The era of globalization, like today, requires companies to be more careful in business competition (Shenkar et al., 2021). It is necessary for the company always to create product innovations so as not to lose out on the competition. The high level of competition results in consumers not being picky when buying a product (Rihayana et al., 2022). This situation encourages companies to be able to meet the increasingly diverse desires and needs of consumers. Therefore, companies must be able to know consumer behaviour in determining product purchase decisions so that they can win the competition (Kurdi et al., 2022). If a company wants its business to survive, it must pay attention to one of its primary functions, which is marketing. In marketing products, companies must know the needs and desires of consumers so that the products offered will benefit consumers (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017).

In general, the tastes and desires of consumers are always different. Therefore, companies need to conduct marketing research to find out the needs and desires of consumers. In addition, companies must be creative in developing products to attract consumer interest (Herman et al., 2018). Consumers, in making purchasing decisions, are influenced by their perception of product quality, brand image, and even brand ambassadors of the products offered. A purchase decision is a consumer's decision regarding the preference for the brand over its choice (Chovanová et al., 2015). Each consumer's preferences for a product vary. Therefore, companies must focus on implementing their product marketing strategies so that the products produced can provide benefits and meet consumer needs. Good product quality leads to the product's ability to meet consumers' needs and desires (Razak et al., 2016).

Product quality is a marketing strategy that can be used to beat competitors (Al-Azzam, 2015). Product quality allows companies to create brand loyalty and an edge over competition (Lu et al., 2019). Product quality capability to perform a wide range of functions includes durability, reliability, accuracy, and ease of use (Lu et al., 2019). Good quality products, like those that are dependable, have many features and specifications that meet the needs of customers. This will make customers feel happy and interested which will increase their desire to buy. Customers' requirements and wishes are more likely to be satisfied when the product quality is higher (Pabedinskaitė & Akstinaitė, 2014). Previous research by Brata et al. (2017) and Pandey et al. (2021) show purchasing decisions are positively impacted by product quality.

Brand image is another factor that may affect the choice to buy. Customers are influenced by brand image when making purchases (Zhang, 2015). Thus, a product's positive brand image will persuade potential customers to buy it instead of comparable goods from other companies (Foster, 2016). According to Tariq et al. (2017), the corporation uses its brand image to shape a consumer's perception of the product, and the consumer then assesses it. Previous research by Ramesh et al. (2019) and Foroudi et al. (2018) show that brand image influences purchasing decisions in a beneficial way.

Besides product quality and brand image, brand ambassadors can also be one of the factors driving purchasing decisions. Brand ambassadors can be interpreted as promotional supporters to attract the attention and memory of consumers (Clarissa & Bernarto, 2022). Therefore, it is unsurprising that many companies take strategic steps in promoting their products by selecting and using brand ambassadors to influence consumer purchasing decisions (Dreher, 2014). Well-known brands also use brand ambassadors as a marketing tool that effectively increases product sales (Suleman et al., 2023). This proves that promotional strategies with brand ambassadors effectively influence consumer purchasing decisions. Previous research from Dewi et al. (2020) demonstrates that brand ambassadors positively affect decisions.

Cecere et al. (2015) state that smartphones dominate the mobile device market and contribute to the innovative development of communication technology. In addition, the introduction of Apple to the smartphone market, combined with technological developments, will help the company grow. All these things will shape customer preferences for smartphones and make them the preferred mobile device (Cecere et al., 2015). According to O'Donnell and Epstein (2019), consumers purchase smartphones due to the advantages they provide, and they use them for socializing, entertainment, fast accessibility, and internet browsing.

Apple Inc. released its first smartphone in 2007, influencing the industry to innovate (Boamah & Agbozo, 2017). Today, one of the most recognized smartphones worldwide is the iPhone. With similar reliable operating devices in the Apple ecosystem, the iPhone has earned the trust of its consumers. One of the core competencies of Apple Inc. is product innovation. From a technological perspective, Apple Inc. has used its core competency to develop highly functional and easy-to-use mobile devices (Giachetti, 2018). One key differentiating aspect of the iPhone is the level of exclusivity that comes with the software, and iOS is the name of the software on every iPhone (Teece, 2018). The iOS operating system provides a user-friendly layout and creates an appeal for iPhone users. This is done to capture more of the needs of these consumers. Consumer behaviour towards smartphone brands is also a fundamental factor in Asian society.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Van Weelden et al. (2016) define a product as anything that may be made available to customers for use or consumption and that can satisfy their needs or wants. Product quality is the capacity of a product to carry out its intended purpose. One element that influences purchasing decisions is product quality (Brata et al., 2017). Every business strives to provide items of the highest caliber in order to succeed in the market due to growing competition and customer demand. In order to grasp its market position and work to enhance and develop the quality of its products to the best of its ability, a company must be able to implement a variety of tactics and initiatives (Brata et al., 2017). Durability, accuracy, dependability, ease of use, repairability, and other beneficial qualities are some of these characteristics (Daengs et al., 2020). Therefore, it can be said that consumers make better and more informed purchasing decisions when products of higher quality are produced. This study confirms other research that revealed a positive relationship between product quality and consumer purchase decisions, including studies by Brata et al. (2017) and Pandey et al. (2021). **H₁: Product Quality Has a Positive Effect on Purchase Decision**

One of the factors that can affect business progress is brand image. The brand is contained in the company's promise to consumers to provide benefits, privileges and services (Dewi et al., 2020). Dam and Dam (2021) define brand image as consumer perceptions of brands formed by data and consumer experiences with these brands. Chen et al. (2020) state that brand image can be positive or negative, depending on a person's perception of the brand. Therefore, brand image is an important thing that companies must consider because it affects customers' thinking when choosing a product. Customers' confidence to stick with a brand increases with its perceived strength, which in turn affects their purchasing decisions. Customers are more confident using a product when they have a more positive perception of the brand. This study confirms other research that revealed a positive relationship between brand image and customer purchase decisions, including studies by Foroudi et al. (2018) and Ramesh et al. (2019). **H₂: Brand Image Has a Positive Effect on Purchase Decision**

A brand ambassador is a strategy companies use to influence consumers to purchase products (Fadila et al., 2021). The role of brand ambassadors in increasing product sales is very important. Therefore, brand ambassadors are chosen from famous public figures. Brand ambassadors can be referred to as supporting a brand's promotion by using celebrities' roles (Nelson & Deborah, 2019). Brand ambassadors can be considered a promotional attraction and influence consumer preferences because they can become trendsetters for the products sold by the company. A brand ambassador is one of the strategies companies use in the product marketing process to increase sales to the broader community (Akramiah et al., 2021). Using the right brand ambassador can also increase consumer purchasing decisions (Kok et al., 2021). This study confirms previous research that revealed a beneficial relationship between brand ambassadors and customer purchase decisions, including studies by Dewi et al. (2020). **H₃: Brand Ambassador Has a Positive Effect on Purchase Decision**

Figure 1 explains the research framework for analyzing factors that influence purchasing decisions. The factors examined include product quality, brand image, and brand ambassadors, each of which is thought to affect purchasing decisions positively.

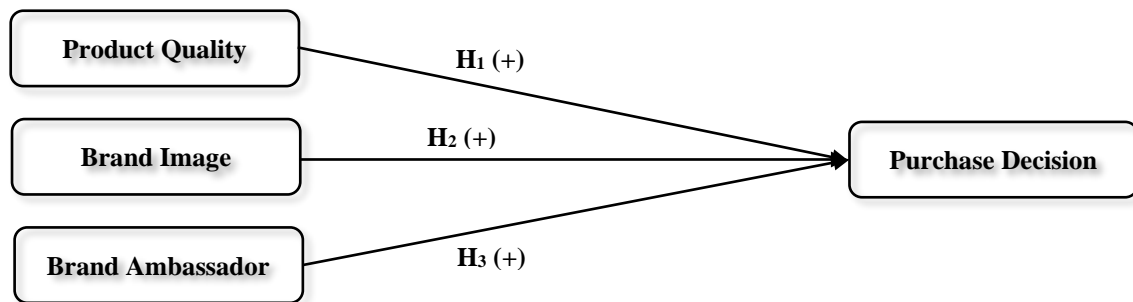


Figure 1. Research Model

3. Research Methodology

Asian individuals who use or have purchased iPhone products make up the study's population. The purposive sampling technique was then used to choose the study data sample, which was based on the criterion of either having previously bought an iPhone product or being an iPhone product user. Based on the conditions specified in the questionnaire, data from 119 respondents was collected. Each variable is represented by an indication in the questionnaire that was distributed to the respondents. Eight indicators represent the product quality variable (PQ), the brand image (BI) and brand ambassador (BA) variables are represented by five indicators each, and three indicators represent the purchase decision variable (PD). Then, respondents' answers to each variable indicator were assessed using the Likert scale with five assessment points.

Additionally, this study's data testing employs the bootstrapping method using Smart PLS to examine validity, reliability, and regression. Each variable indicator's loading factor value was used to evaluate the validity test. The indicator is deemed legitimate if the loading factor value exceeds 0.6 (Hair et al., 2020). Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for every variable were used to evaluate the reliability test. A variable is considered dependable if its composite reliability is greater than 0.7 and its Cronbach's alpha value is greater than 0.6 (Hair et al., 2020). Additionally, the p-value is used to quantify regression testing; if it is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is deemed accepted or supported (Hair et al., 2020).

4. Result and Discussion

Validity Test

Figure 2 shows the bootstrapping model after removing three variable items (PQ4, PQ6, BI 1) from the data analysis. Based on these results, it is known that the remaining items have a factor loading value of more than 0.6, so they are declared valid.

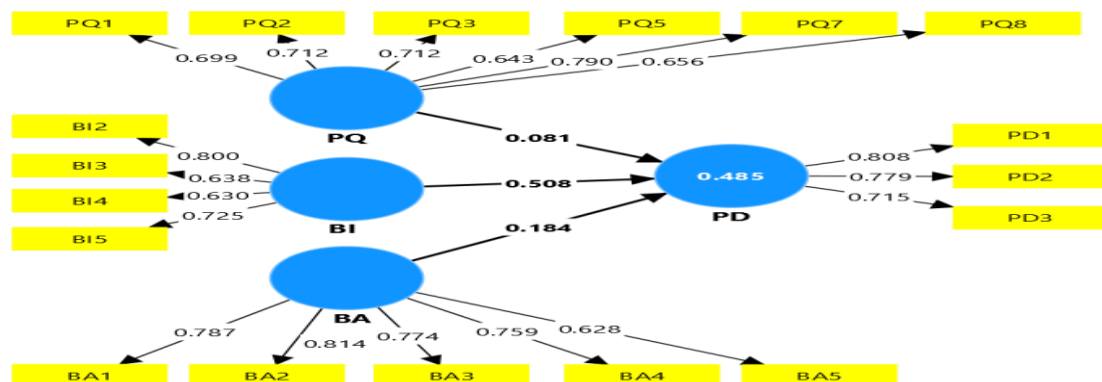


Figure 2. Measurement Model

Each variable indicator's loading factor value and the results of the bootstrapping analysis are displayed in Table 2. These findings indicate that the brand image variable (BI 1) and the product quality variable (PQ 4; PQ 6) indicators need to be eliminated due to their loading factor values being below 0.6.

Table 1. Validity Test Result

Indicator	Product Quality	Brand Image	Brand Ambassador	Purchase Decision
PQ 1	0.699			
PQ 2	0.712			
PQ 3	0.712			
PQ 5	0.643			
PQ 7	0.790			
PQ 8	0.656			
BI 2		0.800		
BI 3		0.638		
BI 4		0.630		
BI 5		0.725		
BA 1			0.787	
BA 2			0.814	
BA 3			0.774	
BA 4			0.759	
BA 5			0.628	
PD 1				0.808
PD 2				0.779
PD 3				0.715

Reliability Test

All of the study's variables were found to be reliable, as Table 2 shows. This is illustrated by the fact that each variable's Cronbach's alpha value is greater than 0.6 and the composite reliability score is greater than 0.7.

Table 2. Reliability Test Result

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Product Quality	0.796	0.854
Brand Image	0.657	0.794
Brand Ambassador	0.810	0.868
Purchase Decision	0.654	0.812

Hypothesis Test

Table 3 shows that only one of the three hypotheses developed in this study is accepted. This can be proven by the p-value of the second hypothesis, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the second hypothesis is accepted or supported. This study's first and third hypotheses have a p-value of more than 0.05, so they are rejected or not supported.

Table 3. Hypothesis Test Result

Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistic	P Value
Product Quality → Purchase Decision	0.081	0.083	0.136	0.599	0.549
Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.508	0.517	0.108	4.688	0.000
Brand Ambassador → Purchase Decision	0.184	0.192	0.136	1.356	0.175

Discussion

The Effect of Product Quality on Purchase Decision

The study's findings show that product quality influences decisions to buy in a favorable but insignificant direction. One of the elements that can influence consumers' decisions to buy is

product quality (Brata et al., 2017). Kumar and Ghodeswar (2015) state that products that satisfy consumers can influence purchase decisions. If the product used or consumed can fulfil the consumer's desire, the consumer will persuade the consumer to buy the product (Majeed et al., 2017). The quality of products that can satisfy customer expectations or wishes and persuade them to buy is the relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions. The findings of this study are opposite to those of other studies by Brata et al. (2017) and Pandey et al. (2021), which demonstrate that product quality influences decisions to buy.

The Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

The study's findings show that decisions to buy are positively impacted by brand perception. A brand's image is the perception that customers have of it (Azizan & Yusr, 2019). Purchase decisions can be enhanced by trusted brands, claims Atulkar (2020). As a result, businesses need to convey that their goods are better than others. Customers will never forget a brand with a positive image, and it acts as a guarantee that the product will deliver the value that customers desire and anticipate. This is how brand image and purchase decisions are related. Prior research by Foroudi et al. (2018) and Ramesh et al. (2019) demonstrates that brand image has a beneficial impact on buying decisions, which supports the findings of this study.

The Effect of Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision

The study's findings demonstrate that brand ambassadors influence consumers' decisions to buy in a favorable but insignificant direction. According to Usman and Aryani (2020), a brand ambassador is a person who represents a product in the best possible light in promotional materials. Brand ambassadors can be considered a promotional attraction and influence consumer preferences (Akramiah et al., 2021) because brand ambassadors can become trendsetters for a product. A brand ambassador is one of the strategies companies use in the marketing process to increase product sales (Nelson & Deborah, 2019). Customers will be more inclined to buy a product if the brand ambassador is better at presenting the greatest possible image of it during a campaign. The findings of this study are supported by other studies by Siskhawati and Maulana (2021) and McCormick (2016), which demonstrate that brand ambassadors have a small but favorable influence on consumer choices.

5. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis results, this study demonstrates that only brand image has been shown to positively influence purchasing decisions out of the three criteria examined. Purchase decisions have been found to be positively but weakly impacted by brand ambassadors and product quality. When consumers have a favorable perception of a product, they will always remember it and use it as a deciding factor when making a purchase. However, as they are not the only factors influencing decisions to buy, brand ambassadors and product quality have been shown to have a favorable but insignificant effect. Many other factors may be more potent in influencing purchasing decisions, such as price, customer service, and word of mouth.

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