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The Role of Brand Image in Mediating the Relationship between Product Quality and Purchasing Decisions

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui pengaruh *citra merek* dalam memediasi hubungan antara *kualitas produk* dan *keputusan pembelian* pada produk wardah di Kota Serang. Penelitian ini menggunakan 190 sampel dengan metode accidental sampling. Data yang digunakan adalah data primer yang diperoleh dari hasil kuesioner yang diisi oleh 190 orang pelanggan produk wardah di kota serang, dan data sekunder yang diperoleh dari data penjualan wardah, buku-buku dan jurnal-jurnal yang telah terpublikasi. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan adalah analisis statistik deskriptif, sttaistik inferensial yang meliputi uji validitas, dan reliabilitas. Pengolahan data dilakukan menggunakan alat analisis Smart PLS 3.0. Hasil penelitian menunjukan bahwa product quality berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap purchase decision. Product quality berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap brand image. Brand image berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap purchase decision. Brand image dapat memediasi hubungan pengaruh product quality terhadap purchase decision.

Kata kunci: *Kualitas Produk, Citra Merek, Keputusan Pembelian*

Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the effect of brand image in mediating the relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions on Wardah products in Serang City. This study used 190 samples with accidental sampling method. The data used are primary data obtained from the results of questionnaires filled out by 190 wardah product customers in the city of Serang, and secondary data obtained from wardah sales data, published books and journals. The data analysis technique used is descriptive statistical analysis, inferential statistics which include validity and reliability tests. Data processing is done using the Smart PLS 3.0 analysis tool. The results showed that product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Product quality has a positive and significant effect on brand image. Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision. Brand image can mediate the relationship between the effect of product quality on purchase decision.

Keywords : *Product Quality, Brand Image, Purchase Decision*

BACKGROUND

The development of the times that occurs today is a phenomenon that greatly changes people's lives. Changes that occur can be seen from changes in lifestyle. Changes in a person's lifestyle can be seen from the use of cosmetics and skin care needs. For women, it is a very basic need. With the existing developments in cosmetic and skincare needs, facial and skincare products from various brands with relatively low prices to very expensive prices have sprung up (Oktavia et al., 2022). Therefore, currently there are many cosmetic companies that are competing to issue cosmetic products according to the needs and skin type of each consumer (Aristamia et al., 2023).

The development of the cosmetics business is growing rapidly with various brands, especially in Serang City. The biggest local brand that is able to dominate the cosmetics market share in Indonesia and has received special attention from the international market is Wardah cosmetics. Not only able to dominate the market as a local product, Wardah is also able to compete with international brands such as Maybellin, and similar local products such as Emina and Pixy. The Wardah brand is one of the trademarks that has succeeded in creating high-grade product quality at the right price. Therefore, in the national market, Wardah has become a competitor for other cosmetic brands (Kasmiri & Setiany, 2020).

In choosing a product, consumers must make a purchase decision. According to (Permatasari & Hidayat, 2023) a purchase decision is a decision because of the interest felt by someone in a product, and wants to buy, try, use, or own the product.

In general, consumers are always faced with various considerations before making purchasing decisions, especially consumers will pay attention to the quality of the products they will buy, the better the quality of a cosmetic product, the tendency of consumers to buy the product also increases. Each cosmetic company has advantages in the quality of their respective products, where consumers can choose which products are superior according to their needs so that decisions are made in purchasing these products (Anam et al., 2020).

Apart from product quality, there is also a brand image in the eyes of consumers, which is an important element in the process of determining purchasing decisions. Because the brand is a source of information that is used as a reference to whether a product is good or bad. Brand image is related to the attitude of beliefs and preferences towards a brand. When consumers have a positive image of a brand, consumers will make purchases or purchase intentions (Oktavia et al., 2022).

The relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions has been empirically carried out by several previous researchers, but there are still some differences in research results. Research conducted by (Rosanti et al., 2021) & (Romadon et al., 2023) shows that product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions, the higher the product quality the higher the sales. In contrast to research conducted by (Herawati et al., 2023) & (Sari & Harti, 2022) shows that product quality has no significant effect on purchase decision.

The difference in research results is believed to be due to other variables that influence the relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions. According to

research conducted by (Suryantari & Respati, 2022) & (Dheo et al., 2023) shows that brand image is able to mediate the relationship between product quality and purchase decision. According to (Tarigan et al., 2023), the better the brand image that consumers assess, accompanied by product quality, the higher the purchasing decision.

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which the impact of product quality on purchasing decisions with a relationship strengthened by the brand image variable. In other words, whether the brand image variable can mediate the relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses quantitative research. The population in this study were all wardah cosmetic consumers in the city of Serang. The sample used in this study were 190 respondents who were customers of wardah products in the city of Serang using accidential sampling. The sample criteria are that respondents are female, respondents are at least 17 to 60 years old, and respondents have purchased Wardah products at least once. This study uses an analysis method in the form of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through Partial Least Square (PLS) analysis tools using the SmartPLS 3.0 application to test the relationship between variables.

This study uses independent variables, dependent variables and mediating variables. The dependent variable is a purchasing decision that uses indicators of choosing a brand, choosing a seller, purchasing time, purchasing amount and payment time (Ananda, et al, 20..). The independent variable is product quality which uses indicators of performance, durability, conformance to specifications, features, reliability, aesthetics, and perceived quality (Firmansyah, 2019). Brand image variables as mediating variables that use indicators of strength of brand association, favorability of brand association, and uniqueness of brand association (Wardhana et al., 2022).

The data sources used are primary and secondary data. Primary data in this study were obtained from the results of questionnaires filled out by 190 Wardah customers in Serang city. The secondary data in this study were obtained from books, reputable international journals, accredited journals, and cosmetic market development data.

The instrument test used in this study is the validity test and reliability test before being distributed to respondents. Analysis of observational data in this study uses descriptive statistical analysis which includes a description of the characteristics of respondents such as age, marital status, income per month and frequency of using Wardah cosmetics.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The Effect of Product Quality on Purchasing Decisions

Product quality is a totality that has the characteristics of a product or service that can show a measure that sees how high the level of consumer confidence in the product or service they use and how long that trust can last (Maryati & Khoiri.M, 2022). The quality of a product can influence a person's purchasing decision process for a product. The better the product quality, it will increase customer interest in making repeat purchases (Yudiana & Indiani, 2022). In addition, the higher the quality of a product, the more interest consumers

will have in buying the product. So that a company can be superior to its competitors. Therefore, a company must be able to understand consumer desires so that it can create good product quality according to consumer expectations (Ernawati, 2019). According to research (Saraswati & Evelina, 2022) shows that product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Relevant to research conducted by (Sari & Prihartono, 2021) which shows that product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

Based on the explanation of the previous references regarding the relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions, hypothesis 1 can be formulated as follows:

H1 : The higher the product quality, the more purchasing decisions will increase.

Effect of Product Quality on Brand Image

Brand image is formed from perceptions that have long existed in the minds of consumers, with the quality of products that support will also create a good image of the products and brands that exist in the company (Sanjiwani & Suasana, 2019). The existence of good product quality can improve the inherent brand image and people will continue to remember the product (Gircela & Wati, 2020). Improved product quality will have an impact on the brand image in the eyes of consumers and create brand trust (Teguh Afwan & Budi Santosa, 2019). According to research conducted by (Marvianta & Saputra, 2022), it states that product quality has a significant positive effect on brand image. This shows that the higher the quality of the product provided or promised to potential consumers, the better the brand image that each brand has in the eyes of consumers. Thus, the brand image of a product will be recognized by the public because it has good product quality value. In addition, it will also help consumers to make it easier and remember to find products from diecast car models from a brand. Relevant to research conducted by (Apriando et al., 2019) which shows that product quality has a significant positive effect on brand image. This indicates that to improve the brand image of a product, the company must really pay attention to the quality of the product as one of its indicators. The existence of competitive advantages in a company can be created with good product quality. The existence of the quality of a product that is getting better, of course, consumers will also show a positive perception of the image of a brand.

Based on the explanation of the previous references regarding the relationship between product quality and brand image, hypothesis 2 can be formulated as follows:

H2 : The higher the product quality, the more brand image will increase.

The Effect of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions

Brand Image is the consumer's perception of a brand which includes whether the brand is good or bad. A brand that succeeds in creating a positive image of consumers will be more likely to encourage consumers to make purchases (Ernawati, 2021). Consumers view brand image as the most important part of a product, because brand image is one of the important elements that can encourage consumers to buy products. The better the brand image attached to the product, the more interested consumers will be in buying the product

(Huda, 2020). Based on research conducted by (Hermiyenti & Wardi, 2019), which states that brand image has a positive effect on purchasing decisions. The better the brand image of a product in the eyes of consumers, the more sales will increase and vice versa, if the image of a product does not have a good reputation, consumers are reluctant to buy it. Relevant to research conducted by (Marvianta & Saputra, 2022) which states that brand image has a significant positive effect on purchasing decisions. The better the brand image owned by a diecast product, the more consumer decisions to make purchases will also increase.

Based on the explanation of the previous references regarding the relationship between brand image and purchasing decisions, hypothesis 3 can be formulated as follows:
H3 : The better the brand image, the more product quality will increase.

The Role of Brand Image in Editing the Relationship between Product Quality and Purchasing Decisions

Brand image as an important factor to improve product purchasing decisions. This also indicates that the importance of an image on a product brand has a positive influence on consumers to make purchases (Apriando et al., 2019). One factor that plays an important role in improving brand image is product quality. This indicates that to improve the brand image of a product, the company must really pay attention to the quality of the product. This is because the competitive advantage of a company can be created with good product quality. The existence of the quality of a product that is getting better, of course, consumers will also show a positive perception of the image of a brand (Marvianta & Saputra, 2022). When the product quality is good the buyer's intention process is expected to continue into decision making after consumers search for information and evaluate the criteria for a product. When the evaluation of product quality criteria matches consumers, consumers will immediately decide to purchase the product. Thus, product quality is a very important thing that must be considered by producers, because consumer decision-making behavior is closely related to the quality of the products offered by producers (Abi, 2020).

Based on the explanation of the previous references regarding the relationship to purchasing decisions mediated by brand image, hypothesis 4 can be formulated as follows:
H4 : Higher product quality can improve brand image, so that purchasing decisions will increase.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

This research was conducted on 190 respondents who are Wardah cosmetic customers in Serang city. The characteristics of the respondents were female, the respondents were at least 17 to 60 years old, respondents who had jobs, respondents who were married, respondents who had income, and the frequency of purchase of respondents in buying wardah products. Data collection in the study was carried out by distributing questionnaires to respondents through online questionnaires with google forms media, following the results of descriptive analysis of respondent characteristics:

Table 1. Respondents Based on Gender

Gender	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
Female	190	100%
Total	**190**	**100%**

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on table 1. in this study, it can be seen that for gender data, from the results of the questionnaire it was found that the number of female respondents was 190 people or 100% of the total respondents. Because Wardah cosmetics is a halal cosmetic brand that focuses primarily on women, therefore all respondents in this study were women.

Table 2: Respondents by Age

Age	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
17-25 Years	52	27,4%
26-35 Years	121	63,7%
Above 35 Years	17	8,9%
Total	**190**	**100%**

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on table 2. from the results of the questionnaire, it was found that the number of respondents aged 17 to 25 years was 52 people or 27.4% of the total respondents, while those aged 26 to 35 years were 121 people or 63.7% of the total respondents, and respondents aged over 35 years were 17 people or 8.9% of the total respondents. From the results of this data it can be concluded that the majority of respondents in this study were aged 26-35 years with a percentage of 63.7% of the total respondents.

Table 3. Respondents by Occupation

Works	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
Student	37	19,5%
Employee/Civil Servant	80	42,1%
Self-employed	26	13,7%
Housewife	32	16.8%
Others	15	7,9%
Total	**190**	**100%**

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on table 3. from the results of the questionnaire, it was found that the number of respondents who were students / students was 37 people or 19.5% of the total respondents, then the number of respondents who worked as employees / civil servants was 80 people or 42.1% of the total respondents, then the number of respondents who worked as entrepreneurs was 26 people or 13.7% of the total respondents. Housewives as many as 32 people with a percentage of 16.8% and others as many as 15 people or 7.9% of the total

number of respondents. From this data it can be concluded that the majority of respondents in this study were employees with a total of 75 people and a percentage of 41.7% of the total respondents.

Table 4. Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
Married	126	66.3%
Unmarried	64	33,7%
Total	**190**	**100%**

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on table 4. It was found that the respondents who were married were 126 people or 66.3% of the total respondents and the respondents who were not married were 64 people or 33.7% of the total respondents. So the majority of respondents are married.

Table 5. Respondents Based on Monthly Income

Income per month	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
< Rp.1.000.000,-	60	31,6%
Rp. 1.000.000 - Rp. 2.500.000,-	21	11,1%
> Rp. 2.500.000,-	109	57.4%
Total	**190**	100%

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on table 5. respondents' income per month, it is found that the number of respondents who have income below Rp. 1,000,000, - per month is 60 people or 31.6% of the total respondents, while respondents who have income between Rp. 1,000,000, - up to Rp. 2,500,000, - are 21 people or 11.1% of the total respondents, and respondents who earn above Rp. 2,500,000, - are 109 people or 57.4% of the total respondents as a whole. So the majority of respondents earn above Rp. 2,500,000,- every month.

Table 6. Respondents Based on Purchase Frequency

Wardah Purchase Frequency	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
1 Time	43	22,6%
2 Time	60	31,6%
More then 3 Time	87	45,8%
Total	**190**	100%

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on table 6. the frequency of purchasing wardah cosmetics, it is found that the number of respondents who have purchased wardah cosmetics 1 time is 43 people or 22.6% of the total respondents, while respondents who have purchased wardah 2 times are 60 people or 31.6% of the total respondents and respondents who have purchased wardah cosmetics

more than 3 times or loyal consumers are 87 respondents or 45.8% of the total respondents. So the conclusion is that many respondents buy Wardah more than 3 times.

Inferential Statistical Analysis
Validity Test Results

Table 7. Validity Test Results

Variables	Indicator	Validity Value	Remarks
Product Quality (X)	**PQ1**	**0.904**	Valid
	PQ2	**0.916**	Valid
	PQ3	**0.917**	Valid
	PQ4	**0.906**	Valid
	PQ5	**0.925**	Valid
	PQ6	**0.930**	Valid
	PQ7	**0.900**	Valid
Brand Image (Z)	**BI1**	**0.909**	Valid
	BI2	**0.927**	Valid
	BI3	**0.878**	Valid
Purchase Decision (Y)	**PD1**	**0.878**	Valid
	PD2	**0.878**	Valid
	PD3	**0.889**	Valid
	PD4	**0.902**	Valid
	PD5	**0.878**	Valid

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on table 7. the test results above show that all indicators are valid because the outer loading value of each indicator on the variable is> 0.7. Thus the research model is suitable for further analysis.

Table 8. Reliability Test Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Product Quality	0.967	0.968	0.973	0.836
Brand Image	0.889	0.892	0.931	0.819
Purchase Decision	0.931	0.935	0.948	0.784

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on the calculation results of table 8. above, it can be concluded that the Cronbach's alpha value of each construct in this study is> 0.60, then the composite reliability value of each construct is also> 0.70 so it can be concluded that the measuring instrument used in this study meets the specified criteria and is reliable.

Table 9. R Square test results

Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Image	0.434	0.431
Purchase Decision	0.549	0.544

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on the results of data processing in table 9. above, it can be concluded that the structural model shows the brand image variable shows an R2 value of 0.434, which means that the variation in changes in the brand image variable of 43.4% is the contribution of changes in product quality while the remaining 56.6% is the contribution of other variables not analyzed in this research model. The R2 value of the purchase decision variable is 0.549, which means that the variation in changes in the purchase decision variable by 54.9% is a contribution from changes in product quality and brand image variables while the remaining 45.1% is a contribution from other variables not analyzed in this research model.

Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing is done by looking at the significance of the relationship and the nature of the relationship between variables. With an alpha value of 5%, the probability value (p-values) is less than 0.05 and the t-table value is more than 1.96. The results of the hypothesis test are as follows:

Table 10. Hypothesis Test Results

Variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Product Quality -> Purchase Decision	0.252	0.256	0.086	2.923	0.002
Product Quality -> Brand Image	0.659	0.658	0.065	10.106	0.000
Brand Image -> Purchase Decision	0.550	0.549	0.092	5.979	0.000

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on table 10. above, it can be seen that the largest direct effect correlation is the relationship between the effect of product quality on brand with a positive correlation coefficient value of 0.659, a t-statistic value of 10.106 and a p-value of 0.000, while the lowest direct effect correlation is the relationship between product quality and purchase decision which has a correlation coefficient value of 0.252, a t-statistic value of 2.923 and a p-value of 0.002. The complete hypothesis testing results are as follows:

Test the Effect of Product Quality on Purchase Decision

Product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision (Table 10 column 1). The t-statistic value is greater than the t-table value of 2.923> 1.96 and the p-value is 0.002 <0.05. These results cause the null hypothesis (Ho) to be rejected or the alternative hypothesis (Ha) to be accepted.

Test the Effect of Product Quality on Brand Image

Product quality has a positive and significant effect on brand image (Table 10 column 2). The t-statistic value is greater than the t-table value of 10.106> 1.96 and the p-value is 0.000 <0.05. These results cause the null hypothesis (Ho) to be rejected or the alternative hypothesis (Ha) to be accepted.

Test the Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase decision (Table 10 column 3). The t-statistic value is greater than the t-table value of 5.979> 1.96 and the p-value is 0.000 <0.05. These results cause the null hypothesis (Ho) to be rejected or the alternative hypothesis (Ha) to be accepted.

Mediation Test

Testing the mediation hypothesis is done with the indirect effect test. Indirect effect testing is carried out to prove whether the intervening variables selected in this study mediate the effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables or not. The indirect effect test results are shown below:

Table 11. Mediation Test Results (Indirect Effect)

Variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Product Quality -> Brand Image -> Purchase Decision	0.362	0.361	0.070	5.178	0.000

Source: Results of respondents' questionnaires

Based on Table 11. Test indirect effect, the original sample value is 0.362 with a t-statistic value of 5.178> t-table value of 1.96 and a p-value of 0.000 <0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant indirect effect of product quality on purchase decision. Thus it can be concluded that brand image mediates the relationship between product quality and purchase decision.

Effect of Product Quality on Purchase Decision

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, the results show that product quality has a significant positive effect on purchasing decisions or hypothesis 1 is accepted. This shows that the better the quality of a product, it will increase consumer purchasing decisions for that product. These results are in line with research (Aghitsni & Busyra, 2022), (Almira Amelia & JE Sutanto, 2018), (Ariella, 2018) which states that the increasing product quality of the product, it will be able to increase consumer purchasing decisions. This proves that the

quality of the product used is a product that is not easily damaged, a product that meets consumer needs, a product size that fits the standard and a product that is comfortable to use, so that it can influence consumer purchasing decisions. Relevant to research conducted by (Zuliawaty Rajasa et al., 2023) which states that product quality has a significant positive effect on purchasing decisions. This shows that purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by product quality. As a result, customers' decisions to buy a product can be influenced by their perceptions of product quality.

Effect of Product Quality on Brand Image

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, the results show that product quality has a significant positive effect on brand image or hypothesis 2 is accepted. This shows that the better the quality of a product, the better the image attached to the product. These results are in line with research (Santika & Mandala, 2019), (Cahayani & Sutar, 2020), (Budhi & Ekawati, 2022), which state that the higher the product quality in various aspects of the company, the stronger the company's brand image will be. Therefore, companies must pay attention to the quality of their products because the higher the quality provided, the stronger the brand image of a brand will be. Relevant to research conducted by (Apriando et al., 2019) which states that product quality has a positive and significant effect on brand image. This shows that with more positive product quality, the brand image will increase. Therefore, product quality is a factor that plays an important role in improving the brand image of a product. This indicates that to improve the brand image of a product, the company must really pay attention to the quality of the product as one of its indicators. This is because the competitive advantage of a company can be created with good product quality. The existence of the quality of a product that is getting better, of course, consumers will also show a positive perception of the image of a brand.

The Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

Based on hypothesis testing, the results show that brand image has a significant positive effect on purchasing decisions or hypothesis 3 is accepted. This shows that the better and stronger the brand image formed on a brand, it will influence consumers in buying a product because consumers will buy products that have a good image. These results are in line with research (Oktarini, 2021), (Faradasya & Trianasari, 2021), (Jamila & Siregar, 2022), which state that the better the brand image that makes good perceptions of prospective buyers, the more it will influence purchasing decisions. A good brand image, the purchasing decision behavior will also increase. Relevant to research conducted by (Apriando et al., 2019) which states that brand image has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. This means that the more positive the brand image, the more purchasing decisions will increase. Brand image as an important factor in improving purchasing decisions for a product. These results also indicate that the importance of an image on a brand will influence positive thoughts for consumers to make purchases.

The Effect of Product Quality on Purchase Decision Mediated by Brand Image

Based on hypothesis testing, the results show that brand image is able to mediate the relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions or hypothesis 4 is accepted. This shows that good product quality will improve brand image and through a strong brand image that has been formed, it will increase purchase decisions. These results are in line with research (Widiastiti et al., 2020), (Arifin et al., 2022), (Nilowardono et al., 2024), which states that brand image has a positive and significant effect in mediating the effect of product quality on purchasing decisions. This shows that good product quality will create a good brand image perception so that it can increase purchasing decisions. Relevant to research (Gircela & Wati, 2020) states that brand image is able to significantly mediate the relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions. Product quality that is improved by providing an attractive appearance by continuing to innovate and keep up with the times, then advertising or promotion to continue to develop the brand image of the labeled product, will influence consumers in making decisions. Thus, building a brand image continuously has a good impact on increasing sales.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to develop an empirical conceptual model by adding brand image variables as mediating variables to the research because there are still gaps in the results of previous research. Brand image is considered capable of strengthening the relationship between product quality variables and purchasing decisions in the hope of overcoming existing research gaps. Based on the results of data analysis and processing conducted with 190 customers, it can be concluded that product quality and brand image together have a significant positive effect on purchasing decisions, brand image has a significant positive effect on purchasing decisions, and brand image can mediate the relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions. The results of this study can be used as material for consideration for wardah product companies to pay more attention to information about the quality of products needed because product quality and brand image greatly influence purchasing decisions for wardah products by consumers. The company should maintain and improve the quality of the products offered by building a good brand image so that consumers are more interested and confident in making purchasing decisions. For further research, it should expand its scope to several research sites in each region, conduct tests with other indicators for each variable observed, and increase the number of respondents.

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