

THE ROLE OF PRICE PERCEPTION IN INTEREST IN BUYING SMARTPHONES THROUGH OPTIMIZATION OF PRODUCT QUALITY AND BRAND IMAGE

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Abstract:

Background: Business actors must be free to determine product prices, which of course must be proportional to the quality of the products offered, this is important because businesses often ignore product quality when emphasizing price perceptions

Purpose: The goal of this research was to assess the impact of product quality, brand image, and price perceptions on consumer purchasing interest, as well as if pricing perceptions are an effective mediator.

Design/methodology/approach: Structural Equation Modeling was then used to examine the data.

Findings/Result: The data indicate that product quality and price perception both positively influence purchasing intention, although price perception does not. Price perception, according to research, influences the relationship between product quality and brand image on purchase intention.

Conclusion: According to this study, smartphone product quality with appealing features, durability, and cheap prices increases consumer purchasing interest.

Originality/value (State of the art): Many studies have examined consumers' buying interest, but few have examined price perception as a mediating factor, particularly when it comes to buying interest. The purpose of this study was to close this gap and develop a model that included price perception as a mediating variable.

Keywords: brand image, buying interes, product quality, price perception, smartphone

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INTRODUCTION

Advances in information technology and information systems are increasing and have become an important aspect of people's lives. Cell phone use for communication, entertainment, and other reasons is one of them. The corporation has expressed an interest in competing to meet rising smartphone demand. Many business owners, however, do not want to pass up this profitable chance. Because of the enormous demand for smartphones, Indonesia has emerged as one of the most important markets for selling smartphones. Furthermore, smartphone prices are falling and becoming a trend, allowing smartphone use to spread throughout the archipelago. Indonesia, the world's fourth most populated country, represents a potential smartphone market share for smartphone manufacturers. Many well-known corporations are working hard to dominate Indonesia's massive smartphone market. As a result, there is fierce competition in the telecommunications business, particularly among Samsung smartphones. Of course, purchasers will be picky when it comes to smartphone devices, which means they will always want to acquire high-quality products with cutting-edge technology and comprehensive features. Technological advances and intense competition in the smartphone industry are one of the problems facing Samsung smartphones.

Price perception is one of the factors of buying interest and customer purchasing decisions. Because price perceptions have a significant impact on consumer purchasing interest (Wijayasari and Mahfudz, 2018). If the price supplied is lower than the market standard price, customers perceive that the quality is low but has high consumer value, and consumers have increased buying interest (Chiang and Jang, 2007). Customers evaluate a product not just based on the nominal value of the absolute price, but also on their impression of the price. Because each person has a different and relative perception of price, setting prices based on product quality can pique consumer interest and become one of the proper references for customers when making purchasing decisions (Satriawan and Setiawan, 2020).

Another factor determining buying interest and consumer purchasing decisions is product quality. Because product quality also has a strong influence on consumer buying interest. If the quality of the product is comparable to the price offered, then consumers tend to have greater buying interest too. The influence

of product quality on purchase intention is proven by Arianto and Difa (2020). Irfan et al. (2022) proves the influence of product quality on price perceptions. Meanwhile, the influence of product quality on brand image was proven by Hanaysha et al. (2014).

A strong brand image is a competitive advantage, where the brand image has a special emotional bond that is created between consumers and the product. If the product has a positive and strong image, the results will have an impact in the long term (Lin, 2013).

A good brand image is one that is easy to recognize and generates buying interest, which is then followed by a purchase action (Peronika et al. 2020). According to Wang and Tsai (2014), brand image positively influences purchase intention, and buy intention is mostly driven by perceived quality. Purchasing interest is generated by a thinking process based on perception. Purchasing interest produces an incentive in the customer's mind, and when the consumer has to meet his demands, he will act on what is in his mind. Buying interest is linked to feelings and emotions; if someone is happy and satisfied with a product, it will increase his purchasing interest. Wells et al. (2011) demonstrated the effect of product quality on consumer purchasing interest.

Many research on consumer purchasing interest have been conducted, but only a few have employed price perceptions as a moderating variable, particularly those connected to purchasing interest. The purpose of this study was to fill that gap by developing a model that included price perception as a moderating variable. The goal of this study was to see if perceived price is an effective mediator of product quality, perceived price, and brand image on customer purchase interest.

METHODS

This research was conducted in the second largest city in Indonesia. Quantitative research approach where the research population is all Samsung smartphone users in the city of Surabaya. With an uncertain population, to obtain a minimum sample size, the 5X formula (number of variables + indicators) was used, and the research sample was rounded up to 200 respondents (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). The research used a purposive sampling method with the sample criteria used being Samsung smartphone owners, and the user's age was at least 17 years. The analysis technique uses SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) with the help

of Warp PLS (Warp Partial Least Square) software. Two independent variables are used, namely product quality and brand image. One mediating variable is price perception, and one dependent variable is buying interest. Meanwhile, operational definitions of variables are shown in Table 1.

Primary data source, obtained from questionnaire responses. Data was collected by providing several statements in the questionnaire and about their demographic factors, perception of responses using a 5-level Likert scale with a score interval from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), then descriptive statistical analysis and hypothesis testing were carried out (Kyriazos and Stalikas, 2018). After testing the instrument, a measurement model is carried out, namely testing the outer model and inner model. The overall model goodness of fit test was carried out to see the structural model and measurement model in an integrated manner. Finally, a hypothesis test is carried out.

Studying the diversity of consumer behavior is intriguing since it encompasses people of many ages, socioeconomic origins, and cultural and educational backgrounds. An example of customer behavior is

interest in purchasing. Purchase interest is a desire that arises in consumers towards a product as a result of the consumer's observation process towards that product. Consumers who have an interest in buying a product show interest in the product which is followed by action in the form of purchasing behavior (Bakti et al. 2020; Kotler and Keller, 2016). Referring to Abzari et al. (2014) there are four indicators of buying interest: transactional interest, referential interest, preferential interest and exploratory interest.

One of the motivators for consumer purchasing interest is superior product quality at reasonable rates (Bayu et al. (2019). Sudaryanto et al. (2022) demonstrated that brand effectiveness and product quality influence purchasing intention. Furthermore, Ketut (2018), Hakim and Susanti (2017) asserted that product quality and brand image influence purchasing intent. While Retnowulan (2017) and Tonce et al. (2020) found that product quality and perceived pricing influence purchasing intent. The following hypothesis is proposed based on this description:

Hypotheses 1: Product quality has a substantial influence on price perceptions.

Hypotheses 2: Product quality has a major impact on buying intention.

Table 1. Operational definition of variables

Variable	Indicators
Product quality Bayu et al. (2019)	Performance: the performance of the product that provides benefits to consumers Features: to add basic functions related to options and development. Reliability: the reliability of a product is a measure of the small probability that the product will be damaged Conformance: suitability of product performance and quality
Brand image Kotler and Keller (2016)	Favorability of brand association Strength of brand association Uniqueness of brand association
Price perception Lee, and Lawson (2011)	Product affordability Compatibility of price with quality Price competitiveness Price suitability with benefits
Buying interest Bakti et al. (2020)	Transactional interest: a person's tendency to buy a product Referential interest: the tendency for someone to refer a product to others Preferential interest: the behavior of someone who has the main preferential for the product; Explorative interest: the behavior of someone who is always looking for information about the product of interest

Brand image describes extrinsic properties that can be seen and assessed even before consumers use a product (Kotler and Keller, 2016). Brands can also be a differentiator between the products sold by one seller and those sold by others even though the products sold have the same characteristics (Assauri, 2018). Referring to Suryati (2015), brand image is measured through three indicators: favorability of brand association, strength of brand association and uniqueness of brand association.

One of the triggers for customer purchasing interest is products with a well-known brand image and at reasonable pricing (Rahma et al. 2023). Ricardo (2021) discusses image and pricing perceptions in relation to purchasing interest. Additionally, Benhardy et al. (2020) demonstrate a favorable association between brand image and price perception on purchase intention. In the meantime, Fatmalawati and Andriana (2021) claim that brand image has no effect on repurchase intention. Furthermore, Wijayasari and Mahfudz (2018) found that brand image has a negative effect on purchase intention whereas perceived pricing has a positive effect. The following hypothesis is proposed based on this description:

Hypotheses 3: Brand image has a substantial impact on price perceptions.

Hypotheses 4: Brand image has a substantial impact on purchasing intent.

Price perception is a consumer's assessment and associated emotional form regarding whether the price offered by the seller and the price compared with other parties is reasonable and acceptable. Price perception is a form of consumer behavior in viewing and considering the price of a product before purchasing (Lee and Lawson, 2011; Irfan et al. 2022). Referring to Kotler (2019), Anwar and Andrean (2021), price perception is measured through four indicators: product price affordability, price suitability for its quality, price competitiveness, and price suitability for its benefits.

Perceived price is a consumer's evaluation of the amount of sacrifice vs the value derived from items and services. Increasing buying interest and attracting consumers to make purchases is one technique to emphasize the distinctiveness and uniqueness of a company's products in comparison to competitors. Price perceptions had no effect on purchase intention, according to Al Togar and Al Hakim (2022) and

Kusumawati and Saifudin (2020). Temporary. Naami et al. (2017) shown that price perceptions influence buying intent. Suarjana and Suprpti (2018) further show that corporate image and price perceptions influence purchasing interest. The following hypothesis is proposed based on this description:

Hypotheses 5: Price perception influences purchasing intent significantly.

Based on the concerns and literature analysis provided in Figure 1, a research framework that specifies the link between research variables can be constructed.

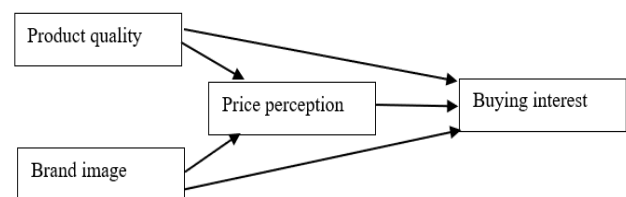


Figure 1: Research Framework

RESULTS

The validity of the instrument was tested using product moment correlation, results with a p value <0.05, all questionnaire instruments were valid. Test the reliability of the instrument, with the results of all variables being reliable with Cronbach's Alpha (α) > 0.05. The results of this test mean that the questionnaire instrument can be used at other times and places in the same situation and produce valid data (Hair et al. 2014).

Respondent demographics

This study included 200 Samsung smartphone users as participants. Gender, age, occupation, status, and length of ownership of a smartphone were the characteristics of the respondents. Table 2 reveals that the majority of respondents are women who are not married and are still young because the majority of respondents are between the ages of 25 and 35. According to the data, 27.0% are students, 26% are entrepreneurs, and 44.5% are workers. According to Table 2, respondents had been using Samsung smartphones for more than two years. As a result of this condition, respondents are particularly familiar with Samsung brand handsets.

Validity and reliability Test

According to the validity test results, the loading factor value for each indicator is more than 0.5, as is the AVE (average variances extracted) value. As a result, the research variable convergent validity fits the criteria. The value in the diagonal block is greater than the value in the same block, according to the results of the discriminant validity test. As a result, all variables satisfy the discriminant validity criterion. The reliability test of the research variables was evaluated using Alpha and Cronbach composite reliability. The Cronbach alpha value for each variable was greater than 0.6, according to the test results. Furthermore, the composite reliability value is greater than 0.7. As a result, all of the variables created have met the requirements (Table 3).

WrapPLS has three fit indicators: average path coefficient (APC), average R-Squared (ARS), and average variance inflation factor (AVIF). The fit indices model test yielded APC with a P value of 0.001 and

ARS with a P value of 0.05. APC and ARS values less than 0.05 indicate that the model is fit (according to or supported by data). The AVIF score is less than 5, suggesting that the data is not multicollinear. The study results show that the APC value is = 0.245, the ARS value is = 0.274, and the AVIF value is = 1.149. Where AVIF and APC demonstrate the independent variables' multicollinearity and connections. The results of this evaluation indicate that the model is suitable (Table 4).

In this inquiry, SEM analysis is used. This study is carried out to ascertain the predictor's influence on the predicted variable. Product quality (X1), brand image (X2), and pricing perception (Z) were the predictors in this study, whereas purchase interest (Y) was the predicted variable. The data is then coded and further processed with WarpPLS. By comparing the projected significant value of the research model parameters in Table 4 to the actual significant value, the hypothesis was evaluated. Figure 2 shows the path coefficient values between research variables (B= coefficient; p= probability)

Table 2. Respondent demographics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	76	38
	Famale	124	62
Age	17-24 years	78	39,0
	25-35 years	97	48,5
	Greater than 35 years	25	12,5
Occupation	Student	54	27
	Businessman	52	26
	Employee	89	44.5
	Other	5	2.5
Status	Mate	91	45.5
	Single	109	54.5
Have had a smartphone for a long time	Less than1 years	24	12,0
	1 – 2 years	69	34,5
	Greater than 2 years	107	53,5

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Cut Off Value		X1	X2	Z	Y	Notes
Cronbach's Alpha	> 0.6	0.660	0.715	0.712	0.759	All items meet the requirements
Composite Reliability	> 0.7	0.773	0.780	0.823	0.750	

Table 4. Goodness of fit model

Title	Result	Criteria	Description
Average path coefficient	0.245	> 0.100	Supported
Average R-squared	0.274	> 0.100	Supported
Average block VIF	1.149	< 5.000	Supported

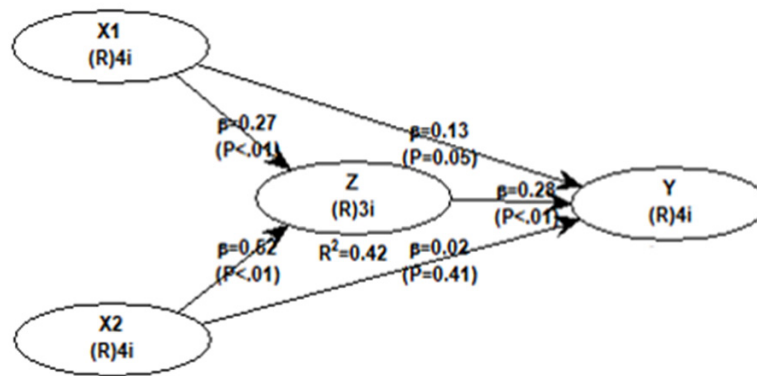


Figure 2. Research model path coefficients (X1: Product quality; X2: Brand image; Z: Price perception; Y: Buying interest)

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is used to determine the significance of the effect of the predictor variable on the predicted variable and whether price perception is an effective intermediary variable between product quality, brand image, and buying interest. Based on Table 5, it is known that the coefficient value between product quality and price perception is 0.274, with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This shows that product quality has a positive and significant effect on price perceptions. The coefficient value between product quality and buying interest is 0.133, with a p-value of 0.018 ($p < 0.05$). This shows that product quality has a positive and significant effect on buying interest.

The coefficient value between goods image and price perception is 0.515, with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This shows that goods image has a positive and significant effect on price perceptions. The coefficient value between goods image and buying interest is 0.018, with a p-value of 0.412 ($p > 0.05$). This shows that brand image has a positive and insignificant effect on buying interest. The coefficient value between price perception and buying interest is 0.284, with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This shows that price perception has a positive and significant effect on buying interest. The coefficient value between product quality and buying interest through price perception is 0.078, with a p-value of 0.047 ($p < 0.05$). This shows that the indirect effect of product quality on buying interest is positive and significant. The coefficient value between brand image and buying interest through price perception is 0.146, with a p-value of 0.005 ($p < 0.05$). This shows that the indirect effect of brand image on buying interest is positive and significant.

Effect of product quality on price perceptions

The results showed that there was a positive and significant effect of product quality on price perceptions. This evidence shows that the product quality of Samsung smartphones in Surabaya is of good quality, meets expectations, and is liked by users. Product quality Samsung smartphone in accordance with the price offered. Explanations regarding product quality stated by respondents that Samsung smartphones can help long-distance communication, use of the internet, social media, and others. Safe and comfortable when used, has features that attract attention, and can be used for a long time. With good product quality, and prices that are comparable to quality, the consumer response to Samsung smartphone products is positive. These results are consistent with the findings of Retnowulan's research (2017) which states that product quality and price perceptions affect purchase intention. Furthermore, Kotler and Keller (2016), emphasized that price is the sum of the values exchanged by consumers for the benefits of having or using a product or service. In the results of this study, it was also found that there was a positive and significant indirect effect between product quality and purchase intention, through price perceptions. Thus, to increase consumer buying interest in Samsung smartphone products, this can be done through improving product quality accompanied by appropriate price adjustments. This means that with good product quality, it will increase price perceptions, and in turn encourage increased consumer buying interest. Thus, perceived price is a mediating variable in the relationship between product quality and purchase intention.

Table 5. Hypothesis testing

Influence between variables	Standardized Coefficient	P-Value	Conclusion
Product quality → Price perception	0.274	0.000	Significan
Product quality → Buying interest	0.133	0.018	Significan
Brand image → Price perception	0.515	0.000	Significan
Brand image → Buying interest	0.018	0.412	Not Sig
Price perception → Buying interest	0.284	0.000	Significan

The impact of product quality on buying intent

The second hypothesis confirms that product quality has a positive and significant effect on consumer buying interest. This shows that one of the triggers for consumer buying interest in Samsung smartphones is product quality. Thus an increase in product quality will ensure an increase in buying interest. Further explanation by Lien et al. (2015), revealed that product quality, perceived price, and perceived value are three important determinants that directly influence purchase intention. This is also reflected in the statements of respondents who stated that respondents bought Samsung smartphones because they believed the quality was good, and would also refer Samsung smartphones to others. These results are consistent with the findings of Tonce et al. (2020), and Cuong (2022), which state that product quality influences purchase intention.

The influence of brand image on price perception

The results of the research show that the third hypothesis is accepted. This evidence shows that the Samsung smartphone brand image has a positive and significant effect on price perceptions, meaning that smartphone users choose to use the Samsung smartphone brand because the price is affordable. Users prefer Samsung smartphones because of the features available, according to their needs and longevity. Respondents also mentioned choosing a smartphone that uses advanced technology and is easy to use. The results of this study also prove that the higher the brand image of a product, the higher the perceived price of the product. The results of this study are in accordance with the findings of Erlitna and Soesanto (2018), which show that product quality has a positive and significant effect on brand image. Benhardy et al. (2020), shows that there is a relationship between brand image and price perception. In the results of this study, it was also found that there was a positive and significant indirect effect between brand image and purchase intention, through perceived price. This indicates

that price perception is a good mediating variable in the relationship between brand image and consumer buying interest. Thus, to increase consumer buying interest in Samsung smartphone products, this can be done through increasing brand image accompanied by reasonable prices. This means that a good brand image will increase price perceptions and will further encourage increased consumer buying interest.

The impact of brand image on purchasing intent

The results showed that the fourth hypothesis was rejected. This confirms that brand image does not strengthen consumer buying interest in Samsung smartphones. This evidence shows that consumer buying interest arises because respondents believe that the quality of Samsung brand electronic products is definitely good. As also mentioned by Schiffman and Kanuk (2013), that image is only one of the factors that triggers consumer buying interest, and there are other factors such as product quality, price, usability, reliability and risks related to profit and loss experienced by consumers. . The results of this study are in accordance with the findings of Fatmalawati and Andriana (2021) and Wijayasari and Mahfudz (2018) which state that brand image has no effect on repurchase intention. While the results of this study are different from the findings of Peronika et al. (2020), and Ahmad et al. (2020) which states that brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

Price perceptions and purchase intent

The fifth hypothesis confirms that price perceptions affect consumer buying interest. This shows that consumer buying interest in Samsung smartphones will increase in line with rising consumer price perceptions. This is in accordance with the statement of Peter and Olson (2014), that price perception has a strong influence on consumer buying interest. This is also reflected in the answers of respondents who stated that the prices given for Samsung smartphones are in

accordance with the quality and benefits received. Thus it can be said that the emergence of consumer buying interest in Samsung smartphone products, one of which is because consumers perceive affordable product prices. The results of this study are in accordance with the findings of Naami et al. (2017), Suarjana and Suprapti (2018). Meanwhile, the research results are different from the findings of Al Togar and Al Hakim (2022), Kusumawati and Saifudin (2020), who found that perceived price has no significant effect on purchase intention. Of the three variables that are hypothesized to influence consumer buying interest, the dominant influence is price perception. Thus it can be stated that respondents are very sensitive to price fluctuations of Samsung smartphones.

Managerial implications

The results of this research provide implications for the Samsung smartphone industry to always improve the quality of its products, by setting appropriate prices which leads to increased consumer buying interest. Consistency in maintaining brand image and affordable prices will also have a positive impact on consumer buying interest, which will ultimately make Samsung smartphones the first choice. Product quality and price perception are key factors in growing consumer buying interest. Therefore, increasing consumer buying interest can be done by improving product quality and adjusting prices to quality. However, the mediating effect of price perception can increase the function of product quality and brand image to encourage increased purchasing interest among consumers using Samsung smartphones. This research model is a new model that is effective in increasing price perceptions and consumer buying interest. The research results can be a guideline for increasing consumer buying interest in Samsung smartphones, by examining all the factors that influence it.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study builds a model of product quality, price perceptions, and brand image which are associated with buying interest in Samsung smartphones in the city of Surabaya, and price perceptions become a mediating variable. It is concluded that the model is very important for the study of consumer buying

interest. These findings will contribute to a conceptual model that combines product quality, brand image, price perception, and consumer buying interest in the global smartphone industry. The research is based on the theory of consumer behavior for smartphone marketing and consumer buying interest. This study found that the majority of consumers were women, aged 25 to 35 years, employed, single, and had owned a smartphone for more than 2 years. This illustrates that respondents are smartphone users, who believe that Samsung products are of good quality and durable. Product quality and brand image have a significant positive effect on price perceptions. Product quality, price perception has a significant positive effect on purchase intention, while brand image has no significant effect. Perceived price mediates a positive and significant relationship between product quality, brand image and consumer buying interest, and has a dominant effect on buying interest.

Recommendation

Even though Samsung smartphones are still able to retain their customers and have a good variety of products at affordable prices, the company should also consider improving product quality and brand image, by keeping up with today's increasingly advanced technological developments. In this way, Samsung smartphones will still be able to compete with similar products, so consumer buying interest will remain high. This research was conducted only on Samsung smartphone users in the city of Surabaya, therefore it is recommended that future researchers expand the scope of their research area, for example to other cities in the province of East Java, also considering other variables that have not been the topic of research, which of course have an impact on consumer buying interest.

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