

The Dynamics of Skincare Purchasing Decisions: The Mediating Role of Brand Image in the Influence of Product Quality, Price Fairness, and Social Proof

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Abstract

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The expansion of the Korean skincare market has led to increasingly intense competition among brands in attracting Generation Z consumers. This research investigates how product quality, perceived price fairness, and social proof affect purchasing decisions for SKIN1004 skincare products in Surabaya, with brand image positioned as a mediating variable. A quantitative explanatory design was employed using purposive sampling, involving 190 Generation Z respondents aged 17–28 years who had purchased and used SKIN1004 products. Data were processed through the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique. The results indicate that product quality, price fairness, and social proof positively and significantly influence both brand image and purchase decisions. Price fairness emerges as the most influential factor in shaping brand image and driving purchase decisions, while brand image partially mediates these relationships. These findings indicate that Generation Z's purchasing decisions are shaped not only by perceptions of product quality but also by perceptions of price fairness, social influence, and the brand image formed through digital interactions. The study provides managerial implications for skincare brands in designing pricing strategies, strengthening digital engagement, and building a competitive brand image in e-commerce markets.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of globalization and digital technology has accelerated cross-border cultural exchange, particularly through the Korean Wave (Hallyu) phenomenon. The spread of Korean popular culture through social media and entertainment has not only influenced music and lifestyle but has also shaped new beauty trends and standards in various countries, including Indonesia. Nagara & Nurhajati (2022) explain that the Korean Wave plays a role in shaping consumers' perceptions of the ideal beauty through the influence of the media and public figures, thereby driving increased interest in K-Beauty products among the younger generation. This phenomenon is reflected in shifts in the preferences of Indonesian consumers, particularly Generation Z, regarding skincare products. The term Generation Z, which refers to people born between 1997 and 2012, is commonly used to describe a digital native generation highly familiar with social media (Larasati et al., 2025). Their high internet usage makes this group highly responsive to global trends, online reviews, and influencer recommendations. A survey by Partners (2024) shows that the majority of Gen Z in major Indonesian cities have a strong interest in beauty products and are one of the main drivers of the skincare market's growth. However, a Populix (2025) report highlights a discrepancy between product usage preferences and the skincare standards young consumers follow: while 87% of Indonesian Gen Z and Millennial respondents remain loyal to local skincare products and 13% use imported products, 72% of them cite South

Korea as their primary reference for skincare. This trend is reinforced by data from GoodStats (2025), which notes that SKIN1004, a South Korean skincare brand, ranked among the top ten best-selling skincare brands on Shopee in the first quarter of 2025. This achievement demonstrates that K-Beauty brands continue to hold strong appeal in the Indonesian market, particularly through e-commerce platforms.

Table 1. Top 10 Best-Selling Skincare Brands (2025)

Skincare Brand	Market Share
Skintific	4.10%
Wardah	2.97%
Glad2Glow	2.51%
Hanasui	1.52%
Maybelline NY	1.47%
Ms Glow	1.36%
Somethinc	1.23%
SKIN1004	0.98%
Make Over	0.98%
Garnier	0.85%

Source: GoodStats, 2025

According to Santika (2025), estimates that in 2024, the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) produced by e-commerce operations throughout Southeast Asia was almost US\$128.4 billion. Of this total, Shopee dominates the market with a GMV of US\$66.8 billion, equivalent to a 52% market share. This dominance makes e-commerce a key part of digital commerce activities. It makes it easier for consumers to find product information, changes how they search for products and compare options, and affects how they make decisions about what to buy.

A purchase decision is the result of a consumer's evaluation of various alternative options, influenced by product assessments and external information from the social environment (Fernanda & Nainggolan, 2024; Sulistiyani, 2025). Brand image serves as a representation of consumer trust in a brand and acts as a bridge between consumer perceptions and purchase decisions (Wuryan & Wahid, 2025). Thus, factors such as perceived product quality, price fairness, and social proof are key elements that can shape brand image while simultaneously influencing purchase decisions. However, previous research findings have been inconsistent. Several studies have found that product quality, price fairness, and social proof have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions, both directly and through brand image (Maulidina et al., 2025). However, other studies show different results, where brand image or social proof does not have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions (Aruna et al., 2024; Christiana et al., 2025). These differing findings indicate a research gap that warrants further investigation, particularly in the context of Korean skincare products marketed through the Shopee Official Store. Given this phenomenon, this study is considered important to conduct in order to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing purchasing decisions, particularly for the Korean skincare brand SKIN1004. The research focuses on Generation Z consumers in Surabaya, considering the city's characteristics of urban communities with high levels of digital consumption and purchasing power (DetikJatim, 2025). This study aims to examine the influence of product quality, price fairness, and social proof on purchasing decisions. What distinguishes this research from previous studies is its emphasis on the mediating role of brand image in linking these variables to purchasing

decisions for Korean skincare products among Generation Z consumers in Surabaya. By investigating these relationships within the context of digital marketing and e-commerce platforms, the study contributes to the development of consumer behavior literature while also offering practical insights for K-Beauty brands competing in Indonesia's online marketplace.

METHODS

This research employed a quantitative explanatory design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the relationships among the proposed variables. The study involved Generation Z consumers in Surabaya who had purchased and used the Korean skincare SKIN1004 through the Shopee Official Store. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and were limited to individuals who met predetermined criteria, namely: (1) Consumers who have purchased and used SKIN1004 skincare products, (2) Aged 17–28 years, and (3) Residing in Surabaya. The sample size was determined by referring to the guideline commonly discussed in PLS-SEM literature, which suggests that the minimum sample size should be at least ten times the total number of indicators or structural paths in the model (Hair et al., 2021). Considering that this study used 19 indicators, a minimum of 190 respondents was deemed sufficient to ensure stable and reliable estimation results. Data were gathered through an online questionnaire distributed to participants who met the selection criteria. Each statement was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing respondents' perceptions of each construct to be quantified systematically.

Table 2. Operational Definition and Measurement of Variables

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicators	Source
Product Quality (X_1)	Product quality describes the total attributes and inherent characteristics of a product that enable it to meet or exceed consumers' needs and expectations.	Durability; Aesthetics; Features; Conformance	Kotler & Keller (2012); Marham et al., (2023); Andriana et al., (2024)
Price Fairness (X_2)	Price fairness reflects consumers' perception that the price charged for a product is appropriate, acceptable, and aligned with the benefits obtained, including comparisons with relevant reference prices.	Price competitiveness; Price affordability; Value for money; Comparative price information	Martín-Consuegra et al., (2007); Marisa & Rewena (2020); Fernanda & Nainggolan (2024)
Social Proof (X_3)	Social proof refers to an individual's inclination to consider and rely on other people's opinions, experiences, and recommendations when making decisions, particularly in situations characterized by uncertainty.	Awareness of product reviews; Frequency of using product reviews and ratings; Comparison among reviews; Influence of others' recommendations	Cialdini, (2009); Mia & Maulana (2025)
Brand Image (Z)	Brand image denotes the collection of perceptions and brand-related associations stored in consumers'	The level of physical attributes; The level of functional implication;	Kotler & Keller (2012); Ramli et al., (2024)

Variable	Operational Definition	Indicators	Source
	memory, which are formed through prior experiences and information exposure.	The psychosocial implication	
Purchase Decision (Y)	Purchase decision refers to the point within the consumer decision-making process at which individuals determine their choice and proceed with purchasing a product after considering available alternatives.	Problem recognition; Information search; Purchase decision; Post purchase evaluation	Kotler & Keller (2012); Grewal et al., (2021); Wuryan & Wahid (2025)

Source: Developed by the researcher based on the literature review, 2025

Data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the assistance of SmartPLS version 4. The evaluation began with an assessment of the measurement model to ensure the constructs met the required standards of validity and reliability. Subsequently, the structural model was analyzed to examine the relationships among the constructs. Hypothesis testing was performed by assessing both direct and indirect effects to determine whether brand image acts as a mediating variable within the proposed research model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

The measurement model was evaluated to determine how well the indicators represent their respective latent constructs. This step ensures that each indicator reliably and accurately represents its respective construct.

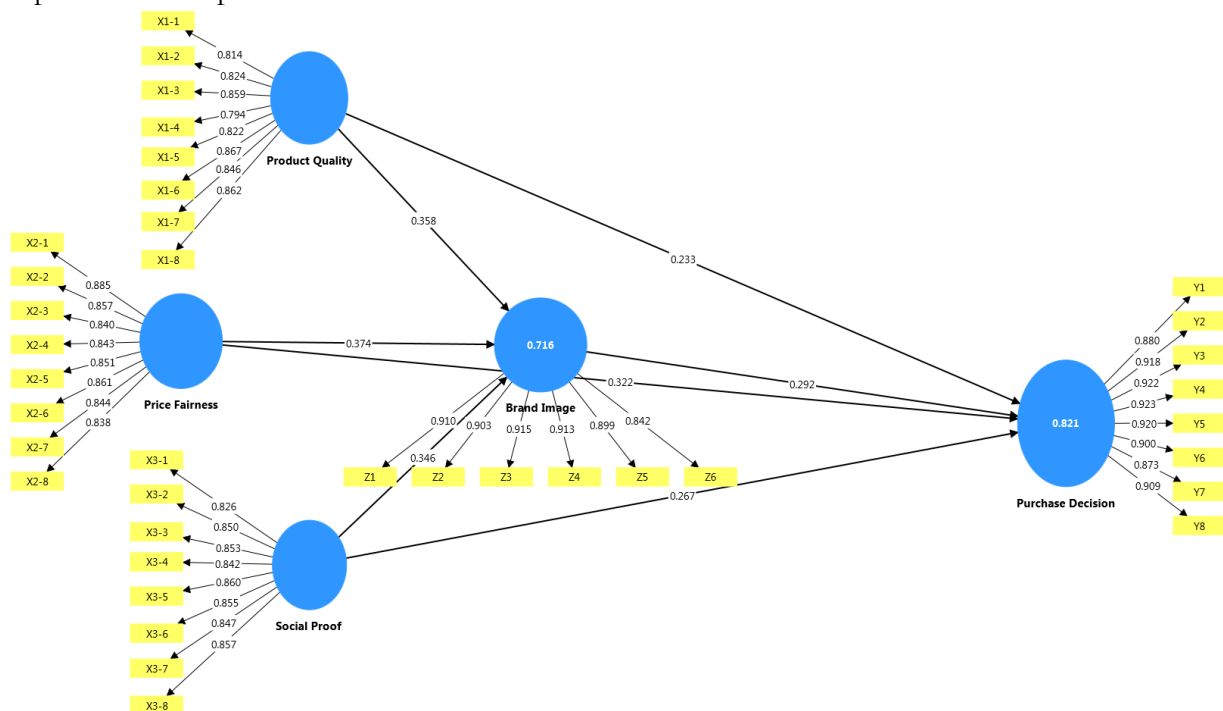


Figure 1. Outer Model (SmartPLS)

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity tests are used to assess the degree of correlation among indicators within a single variable based on criteria of factor loadings ≥ 0.70 and AVE values ≥ 0.50 .

Table 3. Convergent Validity

Variable	Loading Factor Value Range	AVE
Product Quality	0.794 – 0.867	0.699
Price Fairness	0.838 – 0.885	0.727
Social Proof	0.826 – 0.860	0.720
Brand Image	0.842 – 0.915	0.805
Purchase Decision	0.873 – 0.923	0.821

Source: Researchers' Data, 2025

Based on Table 3, the results of the validity tests indicate that all indicators for each variable have factor loadings of ≥ 0.70 and AVE values of ≥ 0.50 , indicating that all constructs meet the criteria for convergent validity and exhibit a high level of validity.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was examined to confirm that each construct in the model is empirically distinct from the others. A construct is considered to demonstrate adequate discriminant validity when its indicators show stronger associations with their own construct than with any other construct in the model. In this study, discriminant validity was evaluated using cross-loadings and the Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Fornell-Larcker

Variable	Brand Image	Price Fairness	Product Quality	Purchase Decision	Social Proof
Brand Image	0.897				
Price Fairness	0.675	0.852			
Product Quality	0.677	0.470	0.836		
Purchase Decision	0.837	0.731	0.693	0.906	
Social Proof	0.638	0.384	0.414	0.673	0.849

Source: Researchers' Data, 2025

The cross-loading results indicate that every indicator is more strongly correlated with its designated construct than with other constructs in the model. This suggests that the indicators appropriately capture the variables they are intended to measure. In addition, the Fornell–Larcker analysis shows that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeds its correlations with other constructs. Taken together, these findings confirm that the model satisfies the requirements of discriminant validity, indicating clear distinctions among the variables and no substantial overlap in measurement.

Reliability

Reliability testing was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the indicators within each construct. This assessment was based on Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, where coefficients of 0.70 or higher indicate acceptable reliability.

Table 5. Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Product Quality	0.949	0.938	Reliable
Price Fairness	0.955	0.946	Reliable
Social Proof	0.954	0.945	Reliable
Brand Image	0.961	0.951	Reliable
Purchase Decision	0.973	0.969	Reliable

Source: Researchers' Data, 2025

As presented in Table 5, all constructs demonstrate composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold. These results suggest that the measurement items consistently represent their respective variables. Accordingly, the constructs used in this study can be regarded as reliable.

Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

Once the measurement model satisfied the required standards, the structural model was evaluated to analyze the relationships among constructs and determine the direction, magnitude, and significance of the proposed hypotheses.

R-Square (Coefficient of Determination)

The explanatory power of the model was assessed using the coefficient of determination (R^2). According to the guidelines commonly cited in PLS-SEM literature Hair et al., (2021), R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 can be interpreted as substantial, moderate, and weak levels of explanatory power, respectively.

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted	Interpretation
Brand Image (Z)	0.716	0.712	Moderate-Substantial
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.821	0.817	Substantial

Source: Researchers' Data, 2025

The R^2 value obtained for brand image is 0.716, indicating that 71.6% of its variance can be explained by the variables included in the model, while the remaining 28.4% is influenced by factors beyond the scope of this study. This value approaches the substantial category, suggesting that the model provides strong explanatory support for brand image. Meanwhile, the R^2 value for purchase decision reaches 0.821. This means that 82.1% of the variation in purchasing decisions is accounted for by the constructs examined, whereas 17.9% is associated with other variables not included in the framework. Based on the established criteria, this figure falls within the substantial

range, indicating that the model has a high capability in explaining purchasing decisions related to SKIN1004 skincare products.

Effect Size (f^2)

The magnitude of each predictor's contribution to the endogenous constructs was evaluated using effect size (f^2). Based on the reference provided by Hair et al., (2021), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are generally interpreted as small, medium, and large effects, respectively.

Table 7. Effect Size

Variable	Brand Image (Z)	Interpretation	Purchase Decision (Y)	Interpretation
Product Quality	0.323	Medium	0.164	Medium
Price Fairness	0.364	Large	0.313	Medium
Social Proof	0.331	Medium	0.233	Medium
Brand Image	–	–	0.135	Small

Source: Researchers' Data, 2025

Regarding brand image, price fairness demonstrates a large effect size ($f^2 = 0.364$), indicating that it is the most dominant factor in shaping brand image. Meanwhile, product quality ($f^2 = 0.323$) and social proof ($f^2 = 0.331$) show medium effects, suggesting that both variables substantially contribute to the formation of brand image, although not as strongly as price fairness. For purchase decision, product quality ($f^2 = 0.164$), price fairness ($f^2 = 0.313$), and social proof ($f^2 = 0.233$) each exhibit medium effect sizes, indicating that purchasing decisions are influenced by a combination of functional evaluation, price perception, and social information. Among these variables, price fairness has the strongest relative influence. In contrast, brand image shows a small effect ($f^2 = 0.135$) on purchase decision. This finding suggests that although brand image contributes to purchasing behavior, Generation Z consumers tend to rely more heavily on rational and informational considerations such as price, product characteristics, and user reviews when making purchase decisions.

Hypothesis Testing (Bootstrapping)

A bootstrapping procedure was applied to evaluate the statistical significance of both direct and indirect relationships among the constructs in testing the proposed hypotheses. Statistical significance was determined using a t-value threshold of 1.96 and a p-value of 0.05. The direction and magnitude of each relationship were interpreted based on the path coefficient values (original sample). A positive coefficient reflects a positive association, whereas a negative coefficient indicates an inverse relationship. Furthermore, a larger absolute coefficient value represents a stronger effect between variables.

Table 8. Direct Effect and Indirect Effect

Hypothesis	Structural Path	Original Sample	t-statistics	P-Values	Interpretation
H1	Product Quality → Brand Image	0.358	7.741	0.000	Significant
H2	Price Fairness → Brand Image	0.374	8.892	0.000	Significant

Hypothesis	Structural Path	Original Sample	t-statistics	P-Values	Interpretation
H3	Social Proof → Brand Image	0.346	8.288	0.000	Significant
H4	Product Quality → Purchase Decision	0.233	5.087	0.000	Significant
H5	Price Fairness → Purchase Decision	0.322	7.628	0.000	Significant
H6	Social Proof → Purchase Decision	0.267	6.223	0.000	Significant
H7	Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.292	5.060	0.000	Significant
H8	Product Quality → Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.104	3.996	0.000	Significant
H9	Price Fairness → Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.109	4.394	0.000	Significant
H10	Social Proof → Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.101	4.508	0.000	Significant

Source: Researchers' Data, 2025

The results presented in Table 8 demonstrate that all proposed hypotheses are supported. Product quality, price fairness, and social proof show significant direct effects on both brand image and purchase decisions. Among the direct predictors of purchase decision, price fairness exhibits the strongest path coefficient, indicating its relatively greater contribution compared to the other variables. In addition, the indirect effect results confirm that brand image partially mediates the relationships between product quality, price fairness, social proof, and purchase decisions. These findings underscore the combined role of rational evaluation and brand perception in shaping consumer decision-making behavior.

DISCUSSION

Effect of Product Quality on Brand Image

The findings reveal that higher perceived product quality is associated with a stronger brand image, with a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.323$). This suggests Generation Z consumers develop favorable brand perceptions when SKIN1004 products are perceived as conforming to established quality standards, including safety assurance, regulatory compliance, and BPOM approval. In the skincare context, product quality is evaluated not only based on functional performance but also on the product's conformity to safety regulations and transparent quality certification. These elements strengthen cognitive associations related to the brand's physical attributes, particularly its identity as a Centella Asiatica based natural skincare product, thereby enhancing overall brand image.

Effect of Price Fairness on Brand Image

The analysis shows that perceptions of fair pricing contribute substantially to the formation of brand image, reflected in a relatively strong effect size ($f^2 = 0.364$). This indicates that price fairness contributes the most in shaping brand image compared to other variables. The

findings reveal that among the dimensions of price fairness, affordability emerges as the most salient aspect for Generation Z consumers. When SKIN1004 products are perceived as financially accessible and reasonable relative to consumers' purchasing power and the benefits received, the brand tends to be evaluated positively in terms of value positioning and competitiveness. In digital marketplace environments where price comparison is highly transparent, the perception that a price is fair and acceptable becomes an important reference in forming brand evaluations. The findings are consistent with Stiawan & Jatra (2022), which demonstrates that price fairness can enhance brand image through appropriate product pricing and effective promotional strategies via advertisements and social media.

Effect of Social Proof on Brand Image

Social proof has a positive and significant effect on brand image, with a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.331$). This finding indicates that consumers' awareness of product reviews available through the SKIN1004 Shopee Official Store plays a central role in shaping favorable brand perceptions. The visibility and accessibility of user-generated evaluations function as an initial cognitive reference in forming perceptions regarding product quality and brand evaluation. When consumers recognize that numerous reviews and shared experiences are available, uncertainty is reduced and evaluations become more structured. This structured evaluation process strengthens positive perceptions toward the brand. In digital commerce environments, where direct product evaluation is limited, awareness of collective user opinions becomes a critical basis for forming brand image. Consistent and predominantly positive social signals reinforce cognitive associations stored in consumers' memory, thereby strengthening a favorable brand image.

Effect of Product Quality on Purchase Decision

The results indicate that product quality directly contributes to purchasing decisions, with a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.164$). This indicates that perceptions of SKIN1004 product quality serve as an important consideration for Generation Z consumers, particularly in regarding conformity with quality standards and regulatory approval prior to purchase. High quality perceptions reduce perceived risk during the information search stage, where consumers actively evaluate product suitability, safety compliance, and adherence to established standards before making a decision. When a product is perceived as meeting regulatory and safety requirements, it is more likely to be selected among available alternatives. This finding aligns with Kotler & Keller (2012) theory, who argue that product quality encompasses the features and characteristics that enable a product to meet consumer needs and expectations, ultimately influencing consumer evaluation and purchasing behavior.

Effect of Price Fairness on Purchase Decision

The analysis reveals that price fairness significantly contributes to purchase decisions, with a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.313$). This suggests that how Generation Z consumers perceive the fairness of a price plays an important role in shaping their final buying decisions. In the context of this study, affordability emerges as the most prominent dimension of price fairness. When SKIN1004 products are viewed as reasonably priced and consistent with the benefits they provide, price is no longer perceived as an obstacle. In online marketplace environments where price comparisons are easily accessible and information is highly transparent, consumers tend to make purchasing decisions when they feel that the price reflects value and matches their financial

capability. Therefore, fairness in pricing becomes not merely a numerical consideration, but a matter of perceived balance between cost and benefit.

Effect of Social Proof on Purchase Decision

The findings demonstrate that social proof contributes significantly to purchase decisions, with a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.233$). This result shows that consumers' awareness of user reviews and ratings available through the SKIN1004 Shopee Official Store serves as a primary reference during the information search and evaluation stages prior to purchase. The recognition that numerous evaluations and shared experiences exist reduces uncertainty and facilitates decision-making. In digital marketplace environments, where direct product testing is limited, the presence and visibility of reviews act as substitute informational cues guiding consumer judgment. The dominant role of review awareness suggests that simply acknowledging the availability of collective evaluations can encourage consumers to proceed toward a purchase decision. This aligns with a study by Siregar & Setiawan (2025), who also observed that social proof contributes positively to purchasing decisions. Their study highlights how reviews, ratings, and recommendations from other consumers can enhance confidence and reduce hesitation before making a purchase.

Effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision

Brand image also demonstrates a meaningful relationship with purchasing decisions, though its effect size is relatively small ($f^2 = 0.135$). This indicates that brand image functions as a supporting factor in influencing purchasing behavior rather than as the primary determinant. The identity of SKIN1004 as a natural skincare brand based on Centella Asiatica contributes to favorable perceptions in consumers' minds. However, among Generation Z consumers, purchase decisions are not driven solely by brand associations but are also shaped by rational evaluations, including product suitability, user reviews, and price–quality comparisons. A similar pattern was observed in the study conducted by Ervina et al., (2025), who emphasize that brand image is formed through accumulated experiences and stored information, which subsequently influence consumer decision-making.

Effect of Product Quality on Purchase Decision through Brand Image

Further analysis suggests that brand image serves as an intervening mechanism between product quality and purchasing decisions, reflecting a partial mediation effect. Although product quality directly influences purchase decisions, its impact becomes stronger when it enhances a favorable brand image. Perceptions of product quality, particularly conformity to safety standards, regulatory compliance, and BPOM approval, reinforce positive cognitive associations related to the brand's physical attributes and natural positioning as a Centella Asiatica based skincare product. A strengthened brand image subsequently supports consumers during the information search and evaluation process, facilitating alternative comparison and final purchase selection. The results of this study align with the research by Ramli et al., (2024), which confirms that a positive brand image acts as a mediator between product quality and purchase decisions, as a good brand image tends to be perceived as a high-quality product, thereby increasing consumer interest and confidence in purchasing it.

Effect of Price Fairness on Purchase Decision through Brand Image

The analysis demonstrates that brand image plays an important intermediary role in linking price fairness to purchasing decisions. This pattern suggests a partial mediation effect, as price fairness still exerts a direct influence on purchase decisions. Consumers who perceive the price of SKIN1004 skincare products as fair, affordable, and commensurate with the benefits received tend to form a favorable evaluation of the brand. This positive evaluation strengthens the brand image, which subsequently facilitates consumers in evaluating available alternatives before making purchase decisions. These findings align with the theory proposed by Martín-Consuegra et al., (2007), which asserts that perceptions of price fairness and acceptability based on specific standards shape positive consumer evaluations, which are subsequently reflected in brand image and purchasing decisions.

Effect of Social Proof on Purchase Decision through Brand Image

The analysis indicates that brand image serves as an intervening factor in the relationship between social proof and purchasing decisions. Consumers' awareness of reviews from other users on e-commerce platforms serves as an initial source of information in shaping perceptions of product characteristics and overall brand evaluation. This awareness contributes to the formation of a positive brand image of SKIN1004 as a natural skincare product with clear market positioning. A favorable brand image subsequently facilitates consumers in filtering and evaluating available information before making a purchase decision. The mediating role of brand image is partial, as social proof still exerts a direct influence on purchase decisions; however, this influence becomes stronger when supported by a positive brand image. This interpretation resonates with the perspective introduced by Cialdini (2009), which explains that individuals tend to rely on the opinions and behaviors of others when making decisions under conditions of uncertainty.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The overall pattern of findings suggests that product quality, price fairness, and social proof play a role in shaping brand image and influencing purchasing decisions regarding SKIN1004 skincare products among Generation Z consumers in Surabaya. Accordingly, all proposed hypotheses were empirically supported. Positive perceptions of product quality, related to the alignment of claims with standards such as ingredient safety information and product legality, foster the formation of a positive brand image, in line with the high digital literacy of consumers that makes Generation Z more critical in evaluating information. Price reasonableness is the most dominant factor influencing consumer perception, reflected by the highest effect size compared to other variables. This effect size indicates that consumers are highly sensitive to the alignment between price and perceived value, particularly on e-commerce platforms that facilitate easy price comparisons. Social proof through other users' reviews serves as the primary reference source for mitigating purchase risk. Reviewing information regarding perceptions of product quality, usage characteristics, and perceived outcomes helps consumers compare various alternatives before making a decision. Furthermore, brand image was found to partially mediate the relationships between product quality, price fairness, social proof, and purchase decision. This indicates that these variables influence purchasing decisions both directly and indirectly through the formation of a positive brand image. The findings also suggest that Generation Z consumers integrate information search and alternative evaluation simultaneously within the purchase decision process. Although the structural model demonstrates strong explanatory power, a

portion of purchase decision variance remains influenced by factors beyond the proposed framework. In line with Purwanto (2021), digital consumer behavior may also be shaped by influencer-related psychological mechanisms, such as celebgram trustworthiness, para-social interaction (PSI), and possession envy. However, these variables were not incorporated into the present study. Therefore, the remaining unexplained variance reflects the multidimensional nature of consumer behavior rather than a limitation of the model. Overall, these findings reflect the characteristics of Generation Z as rational, critical, and digitally integrated consumers.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that product quality, price fairness, and social proof have a positive and significant effect on brand image and purchase decisions. Price fairness emerges as the most dominant factor, indicating that Generation Z consumers are highly sensitive to the alignment between price and perceived value. Additionally, brand image acts as a partial mediator, strengthening the influence of these variables on purchase decisions. Overall, purchasing decisions for SKIN1004 skincare products are shaped by the interaction between rational evaluation, usage experience, and digital social influence.

From a practical perspective, Generation Z consumers are encouraged to be more selective when choosing skincare products by considering product quality, BPOM approval, and suitability for their skin type, rather than relying solely on online reviews or being easily influenced by social media. For SKIN1004 brand managers in Indonesia, it is important to maintain transparency regarding product information, implementing fair pricing strategies, and effectively managing digital review interactions to strengthen the brand's image. Although this study offers empirical insights, it is limited to the variables examined and the specific respondent scope. Future research may broaden the analytical framework by incorporating additional variables such as celebgram trustworthiness, parasocial interaction (PSI), and possession envy, as well as using a broader sample and a mixed-methods approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior.

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