

The Influence of Country of Origin, Brand Image and Product Price on Customer Satisfaction Through Purchasing Decisions for Chinese Skincare Products

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of Country of Origin (COO), brand image, and price perception on customer satisfaction, with purchase decision as the mediating variable, in the context of Chinese skincare products in the Indonesian market. Products such as Skintific, The Originote, and YOU represent Chinese brands that have successfully penetrated the perceptions of Indonesian consumers who previously tended to be negative towards Chinese-made products. This study uses a quantitative approach with the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method to test causal relationships between variables. Data collection was conducted through an online survey using a structured questionnaire, which successfully obtained 325 valid responses from consumers who fit the research criteria. The results of the analysis show that COO, brand image, and price perception have a significant effect on purchasing decisions, which in turn mediate the indirect effect of these three variables on customer satisfaction. Purchasing decisions are shown to play the role of a partial mediator in this research model. The findings provide important managerial implications for manufacturers and marketers of skincare products, particularly in building effective brand positioning strategies through enhancing perceptions of country of origin, strengthening brand identity, and offering competitive prices. In addition, this study enriches the literature related to consumer behavior and marketing strategies in dynamic emerging markets such as Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the beauty industry has experienced rapid growth, especially in the skincare category. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among young generation, especially the emerging adulthood age group (18-29 years old), who are starting to have a high awareness of the importance of self-care and appearance. Along with the development of information and globalization, consumers in Indonesia no longer only consider product quality, but are also more selective in choosing brands based on the country of origin, brand image, and price.

A report from Statista notes that the market value of the cosmetics and personal care industry in Indonesia is expected to reach more than USD 7 billion by 2025, with skincare as the fastest growing segment. Amidst this growth, trends show that Indonesian consumers are increasingly interested in skincare products from South Korea, Japan, and European countries. This reinforces the influence of perceptions of country of origin in purchasing decisions. On the other hand, local brands are also ground by building a strong brand image through digital marketing strategies, collaborations with influencers, and product innovations that suit the skin needs of Indonesians.

However, purchasing decisions are not only determined by perceptions of country of origin or brand image. Product price is still a major consideration, especially for younger age groups who are just entering the phase of financial independence and have limited purchasing power. In many cases, the final decision is influenced by the extent to which consumers are satisfied with the products they have used. User satisfaction plays an important role as a mediating factor between external elements such as country of origin, brand image, and product price on purchase decision.

Based on the author's experience in marketing and observations of young consumer behavior on digital platforms, it is found that skincare purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by previous user experiences, both in person and through online testimonials. Consumers tend to look for products that are not only known to come from a certain country or have a certain brand name. The brand image is attractive, but it has also been proven to deliver satisfactory results.

This research has its own urgency, especially in the context of Indonesia as a developing country with a large young population and high growth of the cosmetics industry. The emerging adulthood generation is the main target for skincare marketing, but in-depth studies on how elements such as country of origin, brand image, and price influence purchase decisions through user satisfaction are limited.

By considering this background, the author took the initiative to conduct this research. It is hoped that the results of this study can not only make an academic contribution to the development of consumer behavior theory, but also become a reference source for cosmetics industry players, marketers, and policy makers. This research is expected to provide strategic insights in designing a more effective marketing approach, as well as encouraging the improvement of

the quality of skincare products that are oriented towards the satisfaction and needs of Indonesian consumers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Country of Origin (COO)

Country of Origin (COO) refers to the nation where a product is manufactured, designed, or associated, and has long been recognized as a critical extrinsic cue in consumer decision-making processes. It plays a particularly vital role in product evaluation when consumers lack sufficient intrinsic product information (Fife et al., 2024). COO functions as a heuristic shortcut that allows consumers to make judgments about quality, trustworthiness, safety, and innovation based on the perceived reputation of the country.

According to Kotler and Keller, COO creates mental associations and perceptions that impact brand credibility and product evaluation. These associations may include stereotypes or previously formed beliefs about a country's industrial competence, cultural strengths, or technological advancement. d'Astous et al. (2008) emphasized that these perceptions are not limited to the product itself but extend to the entire brand narrative, impacting long-term consumer attitudes.

Chow et al. (2024) and Qu et al. (2023) further argue that COO contributes to minimizing perceived risk and reducing information asymmetry, especially in online and global marketplaces. Consumers in such contexts are less likely to have direct experience with a brand or product, making COO a salient differentiator. For instance, South Korea is strongly associated with innovation in skincare and cosmetics, while Germany is linked to precision and engineering excellence. These associations often transfer directly into consumer expectations. Nevertheless, the effect of COO is not always linear or universally positive. As noted by Darmawan et al. (2021) and Kumar & Gautam (2021), its influence can be moderated by factors such as consumer ethnocentrism, brand familiarity, or the strength of the domestic market. In some cases, COO may even invoke negative connotations, particularly if the country is perceived as having poor labor standards or inferior product quality. This highlights the importance of context in COO research: demographic, socio-political, and cultural variables often mediate how COO information is processed and valued.

Moreover, modern globalization has blurred the clarity of COO as products are often designed, assembled, and distributed across multiple countries. This has led to the rise of hybrid COO cues (e.g., "Designed in France, Made in China"), which add complexity to consumer interpretations and require marketers to strategically emphasize favorable origin associations.

Brand Image

Brand image is a long-term perception formed through experience, marketing communications, and product quality (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Setiadi, 2003). A strong brand image contributes to the formation of consumer loyalty and preference. Brand associations include strength, favorability, and uniqueness, all of which play a role in influencing purchasing decisions (Aaker, 2020; Caputo, 2021). COO can also strengthen brand image, especially when the country of origin has a positive reputation for certain products (Liu & Zhuying, 2023).

Product Price

Product price is a key determinant in marketing strategy, influencing perceptions of product value and quality (Renneboog & Spaenjers, 2013). In the skincare industry, consumers often assume that high prices reflect high quality, especially in the young consumer segment (Monika et al., 2023). However, price sensitivity also varies depending on the market context (Tuán et al., 2020).

Purchase Decision

The purchase decision is a complex process of evaluating product alternatives based on attributes such as quality, price, and brand image (Kausuhe, 2021). COO, brand image, and price have different contributions to the formation of such decisions, depending on individual perceptions and preferences.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the result of a post-purchase evaluation comparing expectations with actual experience (Mubarok et al., 2023; Suchánek & Králová, 2019). Satisfaction plays a role in shaping long-term loyalty and lifetime customer value (Cattapan & Pongsakornrungrungsilp, 2022). Factors such as brand image, product quality, and pricing strategy affect the level of customer satisfaction in the skincare industry (Saragih et al., 2023; Paludi & Nurchorimah, 2021).

Relationships Among Variables

1. COO and Purchase Decision: COO significantly affects how consumers perceive the reliability and quality of a product. Especially in categories with perceived risk or limited trialability – like skincare – COO serves as a proxy for trust. Research has shown that COO has a stronger influence on consumers with high ethnocentrism or national identity, as they are more likely to favor products from culturally proximate or reputed countries (Bernard et al., 2020; Aiello et al., 2009).
2. Brand Image and Purchase Decision: A strong, positive brand image reduces perceived risk and increases purchase confidence. When consumers associate a brand with positive attributes such as innovation, credibility, or effectiveness, they are more inclined to purchase it (Saputri & Guritno, 2021). In emotionally charged categories like beauty and skincare, the symbolic and psychological value of brand image can often outweigh functional attributes (Wydyanto & Ilhamalimy, 2021).
3. Price and Purchase Decision: Pricing plays a dual role in influencing purchase decisions: as a monetary cost and as a signal of quality. While high prices may indicate premium positioning and suggest higher

efficacy, they may also deter cost-sensitive consumers. Conversely, lower prices can increase trial rates but may undermine perceived value. Thus, contextualizing price strategy with the brand's equity and target market is essential (Tuán et al., 2020; Monika et al., 2023).

4. Purchase Decision and Customer Satisfaction: Decisions informed by credible sources and aligned with personal needs are more likely to result in satisfaction. Consumers who feel confident and justified in their purchase—especially through influencer validation or peer recommendation—are generally more satisfied with their choice (Liu, 2023; Darmatama & Erdiansyah, 2021).
5. COO and Customer Satisfaction: COO contributes to initial consumer expectations. When these expectations are fulfilled or exceeded, satisfaction follows. If, for example, a skincare product from a country known for high-quality beauty standards delivers expected results, it reinforces both satisfaction and brand credibility (Abraham & Patro, 2014). However, if COO signals are misleading or overpromise, they can result in dissonance and dissatisfaction.
6. Brand Image and Customer Satisfaction: Consumers are more likely to be satisfied with brands they perceive as trustworthy, reputable, and aligned with their values. Positive brand image fosters emotional attachment and increases the probability of post-purchase satisfaction, particularly when the perceived brand promise is consistently delivered (Sharma et al., 2022; Sheikh et al., 2014).
7. Price and Customer Satisfaction: Pricing strategies that reflect fairness and perceived value contribute to satisfaction. Overpricing can lead to disappointment, while underpricing may raise doubts about quality. A well-calibrated price that matches performance can elevate perceived value and lead to higher satisfaction and loyalty (Ahmed, 2019; Subawa, 2016).

Here are the hypotheses we have for this research:

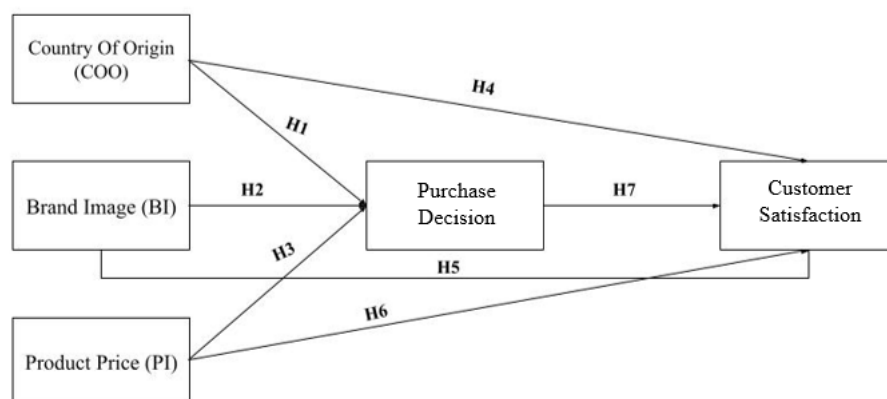


Figure 1. Hypothesis

Based on the picture above, the following is the hypothesis of this research.

H1: Country Of Origin (COO) has a significant influence on the decision to purchase Skincare products.

H2: Brand Image has a significant influence on the decision to purchase Skincare products.

H3: Product price has a significant influence on the decision to purchase Skincare products.

H4: Country Of Origin (COO) has a significant influence on Skincare product customer satisfaction.

H5: Brand Image has a significant influence on Skincare product customer satisfaction.

H6: Product price has a significant influence on customer satisfaction Skincare product

H7: Purchasing decisions have a significant influence on customer satisfaction Skincare products.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to collect data on the effect of Country of Origin, Brand Image, and Product Price on Purchase Decision through User Satisfaction. The research instrument was a questionnaire prepared using a five-point Likert ordinal scale, consisting of five levels of agreement ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. (1) to Strongly Agree (5), as stated by Sekaran and Bougie (2016).

The respondents were users of Chinese skincare products in Indonesia from the Generation Z and Millennial age groups (17-43 years old). Because the population size is not known with certainty, the sample determination uses the Cochran formula:

$$n = \frac{(z^2 pq)}{e^2}$$

n = minimum sample size

z = value in the normal curve for a 5% deviation with a value of (1.96)

p = maximum estimate or 50% probability of correctness = (0.5)

q = (1-p) 50% probability of error = (0.5)

With a minimum yield of 96 respondents. To increase the reliability of the results, the study involved 325 respondents obtained through a nonprobability purposive sampling technique, according to criteria established through screening questions.

Primary data were collected through questionnaires distributed online, while secondary data were obtained from literature, scientific articles, and other reliable sources. Testing the validity and reliability of the instrument is carried out at the measurement model stage using the loading factor indicator, AVE, Cronbach's Alpha, and Composite Reliability in accordance with the provisions of Hair et al. (2019) and Ghazali & Latan (2015).

Data analysis was performed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method via SmartPLS 4.0 software. The analysis involved two stages: (1) the measurement model was evaluated for convergent and discriminant validity using loading factors (≥ 0.70), Average Variance Extracted ($AVE \geq 0.50$), and reliability measures including Cronbach's Alpha

(≥ 0.60) and Composite Reliability (≥ 0.70); and (2) the structural model was assessed using R-square (R^2) to measure explanatory power, and Q-square (Q^2) to assess predictive relevance. Hypothesis testing was conducted through the bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples. A path coefficient was deemed statistically significant if the t-statistic > 1.96 and the p-value < 0.05 , indicating meaningful causal relationships between the constructs in the proposed model.

RESULT

In this study, the questionnaire was distributed through social media in about 1 month, starting from September 1, 2024 to October 2, 2024. The author managed to collect 430 respondents with the following results:

1. Respondents with female gender dominated the filling with a percentage of 76.6%.
2. Respondents aged 23-34 years dominated the questionnaire filling with a percentage of 51.4%.
Respondents with income $< \text{Rp. } 5,000,000,000$ dominated the questionnaire filling with a percentage of 44.6%
Respondents with Diploma & Bachelor's education dominated filling out questionnaires with a percentage of 61.2%.
Respondents with a monthly expenditure value of less than Rp. 250,000 per month dominated the questionnaire filling with a percentage of 49.2%.

Measurement (Outer) Model

- Construct Validity Uses Convergent Validity (Loading Factor) and Discriminant Validity (Cross Loading)

The AVE value for all variables shows a value > 0.5 (Ghozali, 2021), so it is considered valid. In addition, the cross loading value also shows that each indicator has a higher correlation with its construct than other constructs (> 0.5), thus fulfilling discriminant validity.

DISCUSSION

This section allows you to describe your research findings academically. You may not enter figures related to your statistical tests here; instead, you should explain those numbers here. You should structure your discussion with academic support for your studies and a good explanation according to the specific area you are investigating.

Table 1. Measurement (Outer) Model

Variables	Number of Indicators	AVE	Loading Factor	Reliability (CA/CR)	Discriminatory Validity
Country of Origin	6	0.638	0.719 - 0.846	0.886 / 0.913	Fulfilled
Brand Image	8	0.729	0.727 - 0.915	0.946 / 0.955	Fulfilled
Product Price	7	0.575	0.713 - 0.814	0.877 / 0.904	Fulfilled
Purchase Decision	9	0.634	0.737 - 0.846	0.928 / 0.940	Fulfilled
Customer Satisfaction	11	0.634	0.722 - 0.839	0.942 / 0.950	Fulfilled

Table 1 summarizes the main findings from the measurement of validity, reliability, and conceptual contribution of each construct in the research model. In general, all constructs - namely Country of Origin, Brand Image, Product Price, Purchase Decision, and Customer Satisfaction showed good statistical performance, indicated by AVE values > 0.5, met discriminant validity based on Fornell- Larcker analysis, and high reliability with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability above 0.7.

These findings are consistent with prior studies that employed Structural Equation Modeling in consumer behavior research. For example, Hanaysha (2018) also demonstrated high reliability and validity of constructs such as Brand Image and Price in predicting purchase intentions in the cosmetics sector.

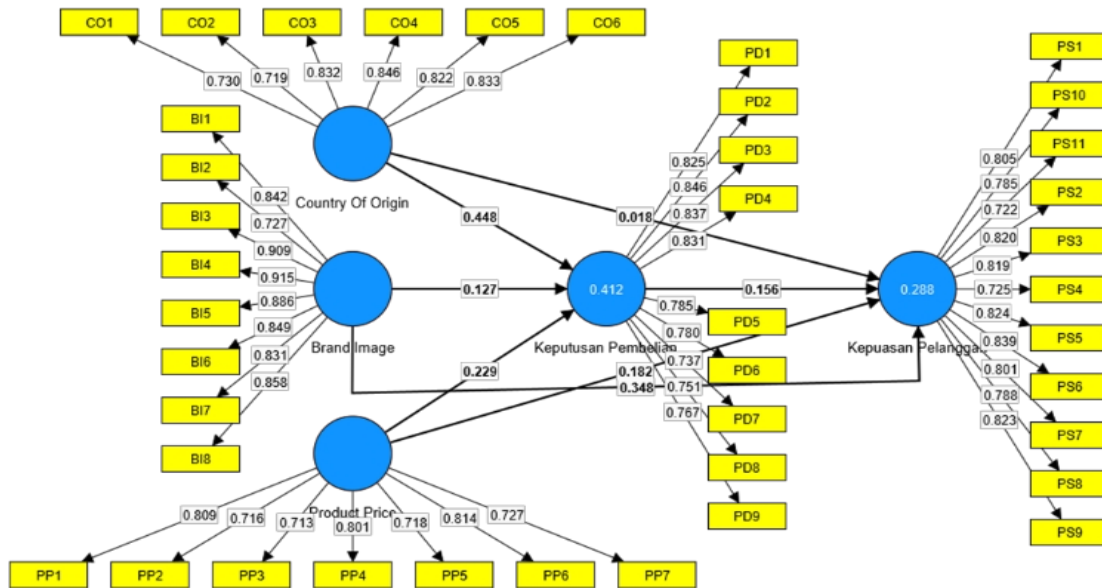


Figure 2. Measurement (Outer) Model

The Country of Origin (COO) variable proved to be valid and reliable, but interestingly, this variable has no direct effect on customer satisfaction. This suggests that although consumers have a fairly favorable perception of skincare products from China, COO influences rational considerations when making purchasing decisions, rather than post-purchase perceptions. In a managerial context, this emphasizes the importance of strategic home country repositioning or rebranding campaigns. Country of Origin (COO) was statistically valid and reliable, yet it exhibited no direct effect on Customer Satisfaction. This aligns with Ahmed & d’Astous (2008), who noted that COO often plays a stronger role in pre-purchase evaluation than post-purchase assessment.

Meanwhile, Brand Image emerged as the most powerful construct in the model, with the highest loading value (up to 0.915) and very high internal reliability. This confirms that brand image plays a central role in creating perceived value and quality in skincare consumers. This finding is in line with the literature placing brand image as a key determinant in product categories with high emotional engagement such as cosmetics and skincare. Brand Image emerged as the most influential factor, corroborating the works of Keller (1993) and Ko et al. (2019), who highlight the centrality of brand perception in high-involvement products like skincare.

The Product Price variable also shows a significant influence in shaping purchasing decisions and customer satisfaction. The AVE value of 0.575 and the loading factor range of 0.713-0.814 indicate that consumer perceptions of price - especially in the context of value for money - remain an important dimension. In the case of Chinese products, the success of the affordable yet quality strategy is key to penetrating the Indonesian market.

Purchase Decision serves as the main mediating variable, significantly linking COO, BI, and PP with Customer Satisfaction. The reliability of this construct is very high (CR = 0.940), indicating that the decision-making process by consumers is influenced by various complex considerations, and has a knock-on

effect on the experience and final evaluation of the product. Purchase Decision showed strong mediating power and excellent reliability, in line with Kotler & Keller (2016) who argue that complex purchase behavior in cosmetics often mediates the path from perception to satisfaction.

Finally, Customer Satisfaction shows very solid construct performance with 11 indicators, all of which are valid. These results reinforce the position of customer satisfaction as a dependent variable that is not only influenced by the intrinsic quality of the product, but also by the decision-making process and previously formed brand perceptions.

Measurement (Inner) Model

Table 2. Measurement (Inner) Model

Variable	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Q-Square
Customer Satisfaction	0.288	0.279	0.175
Purchase Decision	0.412	0.406	0.253

The coefficient of determination test results show that the Purchase Decision construct has an R² value of 0.412, which indicates that 41.2% of the variability in purchasing decisions can be explained by the Country of Origin, Brand Image, and Product Price variables. This value is in the moderate category according to Chin (1998). Meanwhile, The Customer Satisfaction construct has an R² value of 0.288, which is classified as weak, but still shows that there is a real influence from the independent variables, namely Brand Image, Product Price, Country of Origin, and Purchase Decision.

The Q-Square (Q²) values for both constructs also show adequate results, with a Q² value of Purchase Decision= 0.253 and Satisfaction = 0.175. Both values are above 0, which means that the model has predictive relevance to endogenous variables. Thus, this structural model has a strong enough statistical relevance to explain consumer behavior towards purchasing skincare products.

Table 3. Coefficient

Relationship between Variables	Path Coefficient	Description
Country of Origin → Purchase Decision	0.448	Significant
Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.127	Significant
Product Price → Purchase Decision	0.229	Significant
Country of Origin → Customer Satisfaction	0.018	Not Significant
Brand Image → Customer Satisfaction	0.348	Significant
Product Price → Customer Satisfaction	0.182	Significant
Purchase Decision → Customer Satisfaction	0.156	Significant

These results mirror the structure proposed by Aaker (1996), where Brand Image significantly shapes both behavioral intention and satisfaction. The insignificance of COO on satisfaction is also supported by Lee & Lee (2009), who note that COO tends to fade in post-purchase evaluation, especially when brand trust or satisfaction mechanisms dominate. The path coefficient test results show that all relationships between constructs have a positive direction, but with varying degrees of influence:

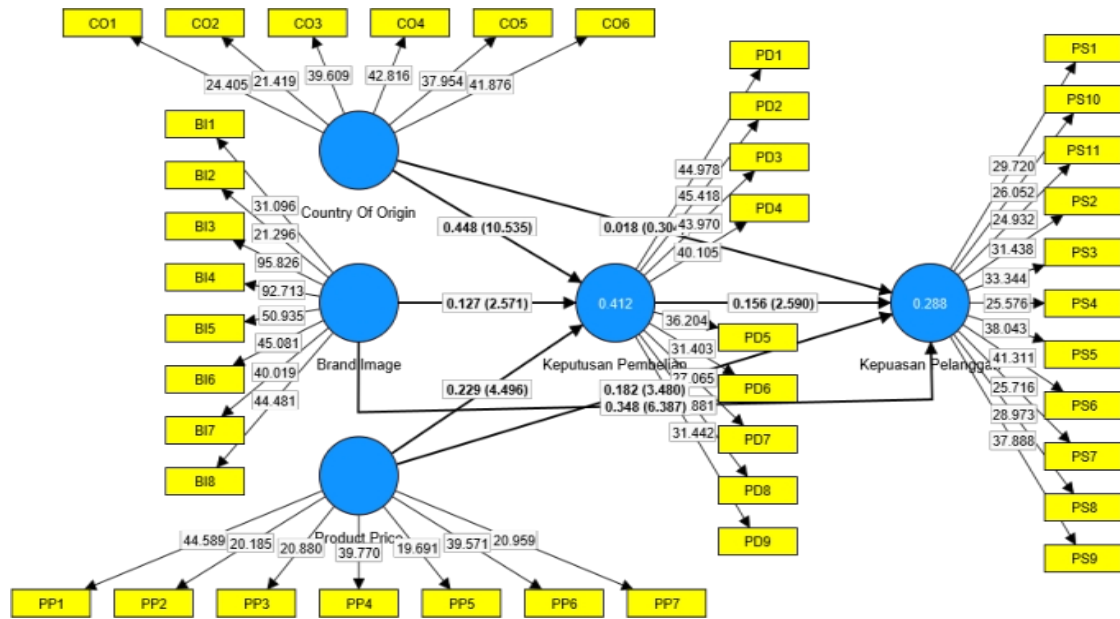


Figure 3. Path Coefficient Test

1. Country of Origin (COO) has a strong and significant effect on Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.448$; $p < 0.001$), but not significant on Customer Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.018$; $p = 0.761$). This finding indicates that COO is more instrumental in triggering purchase intention than shaping post-purchase satisfaction.
2. Brand Image (BI) has a good significant positive effect on Purchasing Decisions ($\beta = 0.127$; $p = 0.010$) or Customer Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.348$; $p < 0.001$). This emphasizes the position of Brand Image as the most strategic variable that creates perceived value and triggers loyalty.
3. Product Price (PP) also has a significant effect on Purchasing Decisions ($\beta = 0.229$) and Customer Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.182$), reflecting that price perception remains an important rational consideration factor, especially in the competitive skincare market segment.
4. Purchase Decision (PD) is proven to be a significant mediating variable in bridging the influence of external constructs on Customer Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.156$; $p = 0.010$). This strengthens the consumer behavior model where satisfaction is not solely determined by external stimuli, but through internal experiences and justifications in the buying process.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The conclusion of this study is to measure how Country of Origin, Brand Image, and Product Price variables affect customer satisfaction with purchase decision as a mediating variable in the context of Chinese skincare products in Indonesia. In hypothesis testing, the Country of Origin variable shows insignificant results on customer satisfaction, which indicates that the perception of the country of origin of the product does not necessarily create a satisfying post-purchase experience. This could be due to various other factors not directly examined in this study, such as the actual quality of the product, consumers' personal expectations, or the subjective and contextual experience of use.

However, the results of measuring the indirect effect show that Country of Origin has an indirect effect on customer satisfaction through purchasing decisions. In other words, a positive perception of the product's country of origin will have an impact on satisfaction only if it affects the purchase decision first. This means that the value of Country of Origin must first be converted into a positive purchasing decision before it can produce a sense of satisfaction in consumers.

Meanwhile, the Brand Image and Product Price variables are proven to have a positive influence both directly on purchasing decisions and on customer satisfaction. These results confirm that brands that have a strong image and prices that reflect fair value or even exclusivity, will be more effective in building loyalty and a pleasant experience for consumers. In this context, the purchase decision becomes an important bridge between expectations and reality, which ultimately forms the final perception of the product.

Other findings show that purchasing decisions play a significant role in bridging the relationship between external factors (COO, BI, PP) and customer satisfaction. This means that consumers will feel satisfied when their purchasing decisions are based on appropriate rational and emotional considerations, such as price perception, brand image, and even the origin of the product. Therefore, it is not enough for a communication and marketing strategy to build an image and set a price, but it must also lead consumers towards making decisions that are believed to be right.

The author hopes that the results of this study can contribute to the development of marketing strategies for skincare products, especially for foreign brands such as China, in order to manage COO perceptions more strategically, build a strong and authentic brand image, and set competitive prices while still reflecting quality. In addition, for consumers, this research is expected to increase awareness in making wise purchasing decisions, as these decisions are proven to have a significant impact on their own satisfaction.

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