

Personal branding, product quality, and price as determinants of purchase decisions: the mediating role of marketing strategy in local culinary smes

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh *personal branding*, kualitas produk, dan harga terhadap keputusan pembelian dengan strategi pemasaran sebagai variabel mediasi pada bisnis kuliner di Kota Pangkalpinang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode survei terhadap 100 konsumen yang dipilih melalui teknik *purposive sampling*. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner skala Likert lima poin dan dianalisis dengan *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)* berbantuan *SmartPLS*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *personal branding* dan kualitas produk berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap keputusan pembelian, sedangkan harga tidak berpengaruh signifikan. Selain itu, *personal branding* dan harga berpengaruh signifikan terhadap strategi pemasaran, namun kualitas produk tidak. Strategi pemasaran juga tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap keputusan pembelian serta tidak mampu memediasi hubungan antara variabel independen dan keputusan pembelian. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa keputusan pembelian konsumen lebih dipengaruhi oleh kekuatan identitas pelaku usaha dan kualitas produk dibandingkan faktor harga maupun strategi pemasaran. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam pengembangan model keputusan pembelian pada UMKM kuliner dengan menegaskan keterbatasan peran strategi pemasaran sebagai variabel mediasi.

Kata Kunci: *personal branding*; kualitas produk; strategi pemasaran; keputusan pembelian; bisnis kuliner

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of personal branding, product quality, and price on purchasing decisions with marketing strategy as a mediating variable in culinary businesses in Pangkalpinang City. The study used a quantitative approach with a survey method of 100 consumers selected through a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) assisted by SmartPLS. The results showed that personal branding and product quality had a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions, while price did not have a significant effect. In addition, personal branding and price had a significant effect on marketing strategy, but product quality did not. Marketing strategy also had no significant effect on purchasing decisions and was unable to mediate the relationship between the independent variables and purchasing decisions. These findings indicate that consumer purchasing decisions are more influenced by the strength of business actor identity and product quality than by price or marketing strategy. This study contributes to the development of purchasing decision models in culinary MSMEs by emphasizing the limited role of marketing strategy as a mediating variable.

Keyword: *personal branding*; product quality; marketing strategy; purchasing decisions; culinary business

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1. INTRODUCTION

The culinary industry is one of the fastest-growing business sectors and is characterized by intense competition, particularly among micro and small enterprises in urban areas. The growth of culinary businesses is driven by changes in consumer lifestyles, the rapid development of digital technology, and increasing consumer preferences for unique and personalized consumption experiences. In increasingly competitive market conditions, culinary business owners are required to understand the factors influencing consumers' purchase decisions to sustain business performance. Purchase decisions represent a consumer evaluation process involving multiple alternatives influenced by perceived value, experience, brand image, and marketing communication strategies implemented by businesses (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Rather, 2020).

One factor that has become increasingly relevant in culinary businesses is *personal branding*. Personal branding reflects the ability of business owners to build a unique, authentic, and credible identity in the minds of consumers. In local culinary businesses, the business owner often represents product quality, service, and brand value. Strong personal branding enhances consumer trust, creates emotional connections, and strengthens product differentiation in highly competitive markets. Previous studies indicate that personal branding significantly influences brand perception, consumer trust, and purchase decisions, particularly in experience-based businesses (Labrecque et al., 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Rather & Hollebeek, 2021).

In addition to personal branding, product quality is a primary determinant of consumers' purchase decisions in culinary businesses. Product quality in the culinary sector includes not only taste but also consistency, presentation, cleanliness, and overall consumption experience. Consumers tend to repurchase products when product quality meets or exceeds their expectations. High product quality enhances customer satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth recommendations, which are crucial in the culinary industry. Several studies indicate that product quality positively influences customer satisfaction, perceived value, and purchase decisions (Ryu et al., 2012; Konuk, 2018; Ali et al., 2021).

Another important factor is price. Price represents the economic value consumers must pay to obtain a product. In culinary businesses, price often becomes a rational consideration compared with product quality and consumption experience. Consumers tend to select products that provide optimal value for money. However, price sensitivity may vary depending on perceived quality, brand image, and marketing strategy. Previous studies indicate that price influences perceived value, purchase intention, and consumer purchase decisions (Zeithaml, 1988; Monroe, 2003; Konuk, 2019).

Although personal branding, product quality, and price influence purchase decisions, these relationships are not always direct. Marketing strategy plays a role as a mechanism linking product value with consumer perception. Marketing strategy includes communication activities, digital promotion, brand positioning, and customer relationship management aimed at increasing purchase intention. In culinary businesses, effective marketing strategies strengthen personal branding, highlight product quality, and communicate competitive pricing to consumers. Several studies indicate that marketing strategy functions as a mediating variable that strengthens the relationship between product attributes and consumer purchase decisions (Morgan et al., 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Research on purchase decisions in culinary businesses has largely focused on product quality and price as primary determinants without comprehensively considering the role of personal branding. Furthermore, studies examining marketing strategy as a mediating variable between personal branding, product quality, and price on purchase decisions remain limited, particularly in the context of local culinary SMEs. In increasingly competitive business environments, the integration of personal branding, product quality, price, and marketing strategy becomes essential in creating competitive advantage. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of personal branding, product quality, and price on purchase decisions with marketing strategy as a mediating variable in culinary businesses in Pangkalpinang City. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of SME marketing literature and provide practical implications for culinary business owners in improving consumer purchase decisions sustainably (Hanaysha, 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Melović et al., 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Personal Branding and Purchase Decision*

Personal branding refers to a strategic process of developing a unique, credible, and consistent individual identity to create a positive perception in the minds of consumers. In the context of culinary businesses, the personal branding of business owners often becomes a direct representation of product quality, brand value, and the overall experience offered to consumers. Consumers tend to trust products associated with strong personal identities because they are perceived as more authentic, transparent, and emotionally engaging. Personal branding also plays an important role in enhancing brand awareness, brand trust, and brand attachment, which ultimately influence consumers' purchase decisions. Previous studies indicate that personal

branding has a positive relationship with consumer trust, customer engagement, and purchase intention across experience-based industries (Labrecque et al., 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Rather & Hollebeek, 2021).

In local culinary businesses, personal branding can be implemented through direct interaction with customers, product storytelling, and digital marketing activities that highlight the identity of the business owner. Strong personal branding enhances product differentiation in highly competitive markets and encourages consumers to make purchase decisions based on trust and emotional attachment. Furthermore, consumers tend to be more loyal to brands associated with recognizable and trustworthy figures. Therefore, personal branding is predicted to have a positive effect on consumers' purchase decisions (Labrecque et al., 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Rather, 2020).

H1: Personal branding has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

B. Product Quality and Purchase Decision

Product quality refers to the ability of a product to meet consumer needs and expectations. In the culinary industry, product quality includes not only taste but also cleanliness, consistency, presentation, and overall consumption experience. High product quality increases customer satisfaction, strengthens perceived value, and encourages repeat purchases. Consumers typically evaluate food quality based on direct experience; therefore, product quality becomes a primary determinant of success in culinary businesses. Previous studies have shown that product quality significantly influences customer satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase decisions (Ryu et al., 2012; Konuk, 2018; Ali et al., 2021).

Product quality also contributes to creating higher perceived value compared to the price paid. Consumers are willing to pay higher prices when product quality is perceived as superior. In culinary businesses, consistency of taste, quality ingredients, and appealing presentation enhance consumption experience and influence purchase decisions. Therefore, product quality is predicted to positively influence consumers' purchase decisions (Hanaysha, 2018; Konuk, 2019; Jeaheng et al., 2020).

H2: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

C. Price and Purchase Decision

Price is an important element of the marketing mix that reflects the economic value of a product. Consumers typically compare price with perceived benefits before making a purchase decision. In culinary businesses, price often becomes an important consideration, particularly in price-sensitive market segments. However, the effect of price on purchase decisions is also influenced by perceived quality, brand image, and consumption experience. Competitive pricing can increase perceived value and encourage purchase decisions, whereas excessively high prices may reduce purchase intention. Previous studies indicate that price influences perceived value, customer satisfaction, and purchase decisions in service and culinary sectors (Zeithaml, 1988; Monroe, 2003; Konuk, 2019).

In the context of local culinary businesses, consumers evaluate not only absolute price but also the congruence between price and product quality. When consumers perceive price as appropriate relative to quality, purchase decisions tend to increase. Conversely, a mismatch between price and quality may reduce purchase intention. Therefore, price is predicted to influence consumers' purchase decisions (Konuk, 2019; Hanaysha, 2018; Rather, 2020).

H3: Price has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

D. Personal Branding and Marketing Strategy

Strong personal branding enhances the effectiveness of marketing strategies. A clear personal identity of business owners facilitates marketing communication because consumers can easily recognize the brand and its values. In culinary businesses, personal branding is often integrated into digital marketing strategies such as social media marketing, influencer marketing, and product storytelling. Strong personal branding increases brand awareness and consumer engagement, thereby improving marketing strategy effectiveness. Previous studies indicate that personal branding significantly influences marketing communication effectiveness, brand engagement, and digital marketing strategy (Labrecque et al., 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Melović et al., 2020).

H4: Personal branding has a positive and significant effect on marketing strategy.

E. Product Quality and Marketing Strategy

Product quality serves as the foundation for developing marketing strategies. High-quality products are easier to promote because they provide clear value propositions that can be effectively communicated to consumers. Effective marketing strategies often emphasize product quality as a key differentiating factor. In culinary businesses, promotions highlighting taste, cleanliness, and product uniqueness can enhance consumer attractiveness. Previous studies indicate that product quality influences marketing strategy effectiveness and brand communication (Hanaysha, 2018; Konuk, 2019; Ali et al., 2021).

H5: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on marketing strategy.

F. Price and Marketing Strategy

Price is an essential component of marketing strategy because it can be used as a positioning tool in the market. Pricing strategies such as discounts, bundling, and promotional pricing are commonly used to attract consumers. Appropriate pricing also helps businesses determine their target market segment and communicate value effectively. Previous studies indicate that price influences marketing strategy, particularly in shaping product positioning and value communication (Kotler et al., 2019; Monroe, 2003; Konuk, 2019).

H6: Price has a positive and significant effect on marketing strategy.

G. Marketing Strategy and Purchase Decision

Marketing strategy refers to an approach used by firms to attract and retain consumers. Effective marketing strategies enhance brand awareness, strengthen perceived value, and encourage purchase decisions. In culinary businesses, marketing strategies may include digital promotions, influencer marketing, visual content, and customer loyalty programs. Previous studies indicate that marketing strategy significantly influences consumers' purchase decisions (Morgan et al., 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Melović et al., 2020).

H7: Marketing strategy has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

H. The Mediating Role of Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy functions as a mechanism linking product attributes to consumers' purchase decisions. Personal branding, product quality, and price must be communicated through marketing strategies to influence consumer perceptions. Without effective marketing strategies, product value is difficult to translate into purchase decisions. Previous studies indicate that marketing strategy mediates the relationship between product attributes and consumer purchase decisions (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Morgan et al., 2018; Melović et al., 2020).

H8: Marketing strategy mediates the effect of personal branding on purchase decisions.

H9: Marketing strategy mediates the effect of product quality on purchase decisions.

H10: Marketing strategy mediates the effect of price on purchase decisions.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among *personal branding*, product quality, and price on purchase decisions, with marketing strategy serving as a mediating variable in culinary businesses in Pangkalpinang City. The quantitative approach was selected because it focuses on testing previously formulated hypotheses and measuring relationships among variables objectively through statistical analysis. The explanatory design was used to analyze both direct and indirect effects within a structural model grounded in marketing and consumer behavior theories (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The population of this study consisted of consumers who had purchased products from culinary businesses in Pangkalpinang City. Since the population size was unknown and dynamic, a non-probability sampling technique using *purposive sampling* was employed. Respondents were selected based on specific criteria: (1) at least 17 years old, (2) having purchased culinary products in Pangkalpinang at least twice, and (3) willingness to complete the questionnaire. This technique is appropriate for consumer behavior research as it ensures respondents have relevant experience with the research object (Hair et al., 2019; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The sample size was determined based on the *ten-times rule* in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which suggests that the minimum sample size should be ten times the largest number of indicators or structural paths directed at an endogenous construct. With five indicators per construct, the minimum required sample size was 50 respondents. However, to enhance statistical power and estimation accuracy, this study used 100 respondents, which is considered adequate for analyzing complex structural models (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed both offline and online. All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), as it effectively captures perceptions and attitudes for quantitative analysis (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The measurement indicators were adapted from prior studies. *Personal branding* was measured through credibility, uniqueness, consistency, reputation, and consumer closeness. Product quality included taste, consistency, presentation, cleanliness, and raw material quality. Price was measured through affordability, price-quality suitability, competitiveness, perceived value, and price transparency. Marketing strategy included digital promotion, communication effectiveness, content attractiveness, promotional programs, and customer interaction. Purchase decision was measured through need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and repeat purchase.

Data analysis was conducted using *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)* with SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was chosen because it is suitable for analyzing complex relationships among latent variables, testing mediation effects, and does not require strict normality assumptions (Hair et al.,

2019; Henseler et al., 2016). The analysis consisted of two stages: outer model evaluation and inner model evaluation.

The outer model evaluation assessed validity and reliability. Convergent validity was evaluated using factor loadings (>0.70) and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE > 0.50$). Reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha (>0.70). Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading analysis to ensure construct distinctiveness (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021).

The inner model evaluation examined relationships among latent variables. Hypothesis testing was conducted using path coefficients, t -statistics, and p -values through bootstrapping, with significance determined at $p < 0.05$. The model's explanatory power was assessed using R^2 , where values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicate substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively. Additionally, effect size (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) were evaluated to assess model contribution and predictive capability (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Mediation effects were tested using indirect effect analysis through bootstrapping procedures. A mediating effect was considered significant when the indirect effect had a p -value less than 0.05. This approach enabled the identification of both direct and indirect relationships among variables within the proposed research model (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2016).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The measurement model evaluation was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs prior to testing the structural model. Convergent validity was evaluated using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results indicate that all indicators have loading values above 0.70, satisfying the criteria for convergent validity. In addition, the AVE values for all variables exceed 0.50, indicating that each construct adequately explains the variance of its indicators. These findings confirm that all indicators appropriately represent the latent variables being measured (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. The results show that all variables have values above 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability. This suggests that the indicators for each variable possess good internal consistency and are suitable for further analysis. Therefore, the measurement model is considered both valid and reliable and can be continued to structural model evaluation.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading analysis. The results show that the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than its correlations with other constructs, indicating adequate discriminant validity and the absence of multicollinearity issues. Consequently, the measurement model meets the required criteria and is appropriate for further analysis (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2016).

B. Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The structural model evaluation was conducted to examine the relationships among latent variables. The R^2 value was used to assess the explanatory power of the independent variables. The results show that the R^2 value for purchase decisions falls within the moderate category, indicating that personal branding, product quality, price, and marketing strategy sufficiently explain the variance in purchase decisions. Similarly, the R^2 value for marketing strategy is also categorized as moderate, suggesting that personal branding, product quality, and price adequately explain marketing strategy. These findings indicate that the model has acceptable predictive capability (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Table 1. The path coefficient direct and indirect effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Price → Purchase Decision	0.015	0.002	0.111	0.132	0.895
Price → Marketing Strategy	0.270	0.270	0.115	2.360	0.018
Product Quality → Purchase Decision	0.448	0.445	0.121	3.716	0.000
Product Quality → Marketing Strategy	0.140	0.145	0.133	1.056	0.291
Personal Branding → Purchase Decision	0.351	0.351	0.110	3.175	0.002
Personal Branding → Marketing Strategy	0.437	0.430	0.105	4.170	0.000
Marketing Strategy → Purchase Decision	0.073	0.078	0.110	0.665	0.506
Price → Marketing Strategy → Purchase Decision	0.020	0.027	0.038	0.526	0.599
Product Quality → Marketing Strategy → Purchase Decision	0.010	0.012	0.025	0.403	0.687

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Personal Branding → Marketing Strategy → Purchase Decision	0.032	0.029	0.045	0.702	0.483

Hypothesis testing was conducted using path coefficients and *p*-values obtained through the bootstrapping procedure. The results indicate that *personal branding* has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. This suggests that stronger personal branding enhances consumer trust and emotional attachment, leading to higher purchase decisions. This finding is consistent with previous studies highlighting the role of personal identity in influencing consumer behavior (Labrecque et al., 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Rather & Hollebeck, 2021).

Product quality also shows a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions, indicating that consistent and high-quality products play a crucial role in influencing consumer choices. Consumers tend to prioritize quality even when prices are relatively higher, reinforcing the importance of product experience in culinary businesses (Ryu et al., 2012; Konuk, 2018; Ali et al., 2021).

Conversely, price does not have a significant effect on purchase decisions. This suggests that consumers in Pangkalpinang prioritize experiential value and product quality over price considerations. This finding aligns with studies indicating that price sensitivity decreases when perceived quality and brand value are strong (Konuk, 2019; Hanaysha, 2018; Rather, 2020).

The results further show that personal branding has a positive and significant effect on marketing strategy. This indicates that strong personal identity enhances marketing communication effectiveness and consumer engagement, particularly in digital contexts (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Melović et al., 2020; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). In contrast, product quality does not significantly influence marketing strategy, suggesting that product excellence alone is insufficient without structured marketing efforts.

Price, however, has a positive and significant effect on marketing strategy, indicating its role in positioning and promotional tactics such as discounts and bundling strategies (Kotler et al., 2019; Monroe, 2003; Konuk, 2019). Meanwhile, marketing strategy does not significantly affect purchase decisions, implying that consumers rely more on direct product experience and personal branding than on promotional activities.

The mediation analysis indicates that marketing strategy does not mediate the relationship between personal branding, product quality, and price on purchase decisions. This suggests that the effects of personal branding and product quality on purchase decisions are direct rather than indirect. Consumers tend to evaluate product quality and business identity without relying heavily on marketing communication.

Overall, the findings indicate that the dominant factors influencing purchase decisions are product quality and personal branding. Both variables directly affect purchase decisions, while price and marketing strategy act as supporting factors. These results suggest that the success of local culinary businesses is primarily driven by consistent product quality and strong personal branding rather than promotional strategies.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of *personal branding*, product quality, and price on purchase decisions, with marketing strategy as a mediating variable in culinary businesses in Pangkalpinang City. Based on the analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the findings indicate that *personal branding* and product quality have a positive and significant effect on consumers' purchase decisions. This suggests that consumers place greater emphasis on the strength of the business owner's identity and the quality of the products offered. Strong personal branding enhances consumer trust and emotional attachment, while consistent product quality creates a positive consumption experience and encourages repeat purchases.

The results further reveal that price does not have a significant effect on purchase decisions, indicating that consumers prioritize experiential value and product quality over price considerations. In addition, *personal branding* and price significantly influence marketing strategy, whereas product quality does not. Marketing strategy itself does not significantly affect purchase decisions, suggesting that promotional activities implemented by culinary business owners have not directly driven consumer purchasing behavior.

The mediation analysis shows that marketing strategy does not mediate the relationship between *personal branding*, product quality, and price on purchase decisions. This indicates that the effects of *personal branding* and product quality on purchase decisions are direct. Consumers tend to rely more on actual product experience and the identity of business owners rather than on marketing communication. These findings confirm that product quality and *personal branding* are the dominant factors influencing purchase decisions in local culinary businesses.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the marketing literature by developing a purchase decision model that integrates *personal branding*, product quality, price, and marketing strategy as a mediating variable

in the context of culinary SMEs. The findings highlight that marketing strategy does not always function as a mediator, particularly in businesses that rely heavily on direct consumer experience. Practically, the results imply that business owners should prioritize strengthening *personal branding* and maintaining consistent product quality as key strategies to enhance purchase decisions.

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted only in Pangkalpinang City, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, the use of a cross-sectional quantitative approach restricts the ability to capture dynamic changes in consumer behavior over time. Third, the study focuses only on *personal branding*, product quality, price, and marketing strategy, without considering other potential variables such as customer experience, service quality, brand image, or electronic word of mouth. Fourth, the relatively limited sample size may affect the robustness of the model.

Future research is recommended to expand the study to different regions to enhance generalizability. Increasing sample size is also suggested to improve statistical power. Additionally, future studies may incorporate variables such as brand image, customer experience, service quality, electronic word of mouth, and digital marketing to develop a more comprehensive model. The use of longitudinal approaches and mixed methods is also encouraged to provide deeper insights into consumer behavior in culinary businesses.

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