

## **Impact of Product Quality and Brand Perception on Consumer Purchase Choices With Consumer Satisfaction Serving as a Mediating Variable in Thrift Merchandise**

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### **Abstract**

*The increased attention of the thrift products indicates that investigating purchase behavior of consumers on product quality, brand reputation and customer satisfaction is substantial. This research attempts to investigate the influences of product quality and brand image to purchasing behavior, as well as mediating variable of customer satisfaction. A statistician method with SEM-PLS approach is used involving 176 respondents to have bought thrift items in Klaten Regency. The findings demonstrate that product quality and brand image have a significantly positive effect on customer satisfaction and purchase behavior. Also, customer satisfaction is found to moderate the relationship between product quality and brand perception towards purchase decision. This suggests that thrift shoppers weigh both a product's functional features as well as the symbolic meaning and emotional connection linked to brand in the purchasing decision. Practical implications The findings of this study have significant practical implications suggesting that enhancing product quality, brand perception and customer experience may stimulate repurchase intention which lead to long term loyalty.*

**Keywords:** Product Quality, Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, Purchase Decision, Thrift Market

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## **INTRODUCTION**

With the increasing of youth consuming fashion, the relationship between them becomes more and more complicated as their desire to be fashionable, follow the trend and express their individual identity get stronger. This change in tastes is not only a consequence of financial constraints forcing some teenagers to look for alternatives from branded clothes at lower price levels. Thus the thrifting become a feasible solution, to balance both lifestyle aspiration with economic capability, and it is continuing trend since the occurrence of thrift shopping in 20th century that have driven by mass production which has greatly changed behavior of clothing consumption (Jacobson & Harrison, 2022). It doesn't take a genius to realise the preloved culture has rocketed in Indonesia in the past few years, where those old items are believed to have their own value and charm aside from being sustainable and giving access to rare fashion pieces. Under these circumstances, the thrifty market has become a generation-style consumption subculture (Saifuddin & Rahmayanti, 2021).

Increasing Trend of Popular Thrift in Many Regions, Such as Klaten Regency  
The increasing interest towards popular thrift markets in various regions, including Klaten Regency, shows the change in people's consumption pattern becoming more selective (picky), although they want to maintain fashionable. Thrift Store Located thrift shops selling quality used fashion, clothes and accessories to meet your productjunkie needs at great prices is a way to be ecologically minded - appreciate the original wear again and again. The condition has been further stimulated with the global usage of social media platform primarily Instagram as a marketing medium, this enables sellers as they can showcase their product catalogs, foster engagements and influence visual preference of consumers (Rombe et al., 2023). The social media element not only makes buying and selling easier; it also connects the community of users that is contributing to this ever-expanding thrifting phenomenon. It is precisely price concerns, digital convenience and visual vividness that make the thrift market a fascinating case to study in light of the contemporary theory of marketing (Noor et al., 2020).

In the consumer behavior literature, product purchase decision has been explained as an interaction between psychological factors that directly and indirectly affect individuals' decisions in examining competing options. There are two key elements for preloved fashion in this regard: product quality and brand image, the former being an important element influencing value perception and consumer trust. Product quality refers to the degree of performance matching with customers' expectations and the brand image relates to mental associations stored in customer's memory (Shabina et al., 2024). The combination of those factors can provide increased confidence that a product is worth buying, even second-hand. Quality perception and a strong brand can improve the intention to purchase, and may reduce uncertainty when deciding (Trisnayani et al., 2023). This is of particular significance for second-hand markets-for you to keep your consumer trust in product's condition and the credibility of the seller.

The primary objective of this research is to carry out a comprehensive examination of how product quality and brand image influence consumer purchasing decisions regarding thrift fashion items, with consumer satisfaction acting as the mediating variable in this relationship. The study specifically targets the inhabitants of Klaten Regency, who represent engaged consumers in the thrift market influenced by social media platforms. By identifying consumer satisfaction as a mediating element, the research seeks to determine whether the perceived value stemming from product quality and brand image indirectly affects purchasing choices through perceived consumption experiences. This goal also addresses the need to investigate consumer behavior patterns within the increasingly competitive preloved fashion sector, while simultaneously providing an empirical analysis of the psychological factors that underpin purchasing decisions in unique product categories such as thrift fashion.

The motivation for this research arises from the discrepancies noted in empirical findings regarding the impact of product quality and brand image on purchasing decisions. While some studies have reported significant and positive correlations, others have produced conflicting results. Angelina et al. (2022) contend that brand image significantly influences purchasing decisions; however, the insights provided by Juan & Indrawati (2023) present a differing viewpoint, suggesting the existence of contextual factors that may modify either the direction or intensity of this influence.

This variation in findings highlights the necessity for reassessment across different market contexts, especially within the thrift market, which has a unique character defined by the sale of preloved items with diverse quality that largely depend on visual perception. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of research that incorporates consumer satisfaction as a mediating variable within the preloved fashion domain, thus creating substantial opportunities for both theoretical and practical contributions to the comprehension of consumer behavior in this field.

This study aims to make a significant contribution toward clarifying the mechanisms by which product quality and brand image affect purchasing decisions by integrating consumer satisfaction as an emotional and cognitive intermediary. By understanding the interactions among these variables, this research not only enhances the marketing literature but also provides practical insights for stakeholders in the thrift market, assisting in the development of more effective business strategies, particularly in building consumer trust, strengthening quality perceptions, and nurturing lasting relationships with consumers. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this study will serve as a valuable resource for scholars, practitioners, and future researchers interested in investigating consumer behavior within similar product categories. In conclusion, this investigation addresses the urgent need for a deeper understanding of consumer preferences and the dynamics of purchasing decisions within the rapidly growing preloved fashion market.

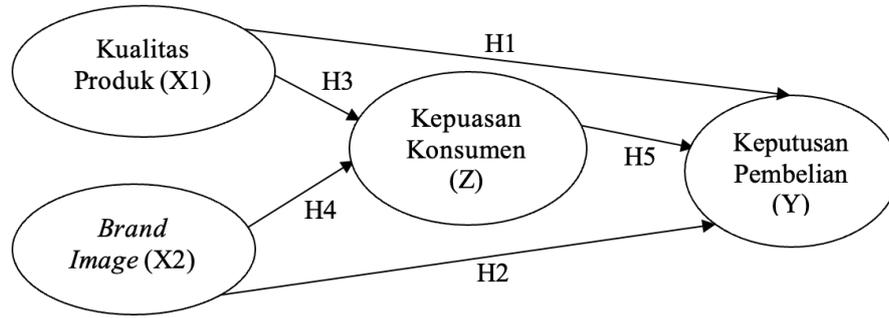
## **METHOD**

The study utilized a quantitative methodology characterized by an exploratory design, specifically aimed at investigating the causal relationships between product quality and brand image concerning purchasing behaviors, with consumer satisfaction acting as a mediating factor. This methodology was chosen to facilitate the analysis of structural models that encompass both direct and indirect interactions among variables, along with the evaluation of respondents' perceptions through instruments employing the Likert scale.

The focus of the study was on adolescents and residents of Klaten Regency who had previously purchased second-hand items. In alignment with the study's established criteria, the sample was drawn using non-probability sampling through the purposive sampling technique, specifically targeting participants aged 18 to 25 years who had engaged in the acquisition of pre-owned goods. A total of 176 respondents were surveyed through an online questionnaire. This sampling strategy was implemented to meet the study's requirements, which demanded respondents with specific and relevant characteristics pertaining to the phenomenon under investigation.

The research incorporated four latent variables: Product Quality (X1), evaluated through five indicators: the physical condition of the product, absence of flaws, consistency of descriptions, consumer satisfaction, and durability; Brand Image (X2), assessed via five indicators including brand endorsements, packaging condition, quality assurance, lifestyle alignment, and trend adaptability; Consumer Satisfaction (Z), measured through five indicators reflecting value relative to price, reputation-based recommendations, price impact on decision-making, personalized suggestions, and shopping convenience; and Purchasing Decisions (Y), which were gauged through indicators of needs fulfillment, adherence to quality benchmarks, price

accessibility, shopping experience, and fairness in policies. All indicators within this study were assessed using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5.



**Graph 1. Research Model**

Data analysis was performed utilizing Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SmartPLS software. This undertaking comprised multiple stages, starting with the assessment of the outer model, which included evaluating convergent validity through outer loading (>0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE >0.50) indicators, along with construct reliability measured by Composite Reliability (CR >0.70) and Cronbach's Alpha (>0.70). Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, cross-loading analysis, and the HTT MT threshold (<0.90). Following this, the inner models were scrutinized to explore the interconnections among variables via direct effect analysis, employing path coefficients, t-statistics (>1.96), and p-values (<0.05), alongside mediation analysis carried out through bootstrapping to ascertain the significance of indirect paths. The model's explanatory power was evaluated using R-square, with predictive relevance measured by Q-square, and the impact of variables analyzed through effect size ( $f^2$ ). The PLS-SEM approach was chosen for its suitability for models featuring latent variables, complex indicators, and moderate sample sizes, thereby enabling the extraction of reliable and accurate estimates.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Result**

**Table 1. Outer Loading**

Variable	Indicator	Value
Produk Quality (X1)	X1.1	0.791
	X1.2	0.799
	X1.3	0.738
	X1.5	0.725
	X2.2	0.768
Brand Image (X2)	X2.3	0.798
	X2.4	0.781
	X2.5	0.838
	Y1	0.773
Buying Decision (Y)	Y2	0.711
	Y3	0.814

	<b>Y4</b>	0.802
	<b>Z1</b>	0.801
	<b>Z2</b>	0.705
<b>Customer Satisfaction (Z)</b>	<b>Z3</b>	0.778
	<b>Z4</b>	0.764

In alignment with the research conducted by Hair & Alamer (2022), loading values between 0.5 and 0.6 are considered adequate for confirming convergent validity. Analyzing the results of the outer loading examination displayed in Table 1, it is clear that all indicators associated with the four variables demonstrate outer loading values surpassing 0.7; consequently, they are acknowledged as valid.

**Table 2.** Composite Reliability

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>
<b>Produk Quality (X1)</b>	0.763	0.766
<b>Brand Image (X2)</b>	0.812	0.827
<b>Buying Decision (Y)</b>	0.778	0.780
<b>Customer Satisfaction (Z)</b>	0.760	0.759

In alignment with the results of the reliability evaluation detailed in Table 2, it can be inferred that every variable within the model – namely Product Quality, Brand Image, Purchase Satisfaction, and Purchase Decision – meets the established criteria for composite reliability, as the construct value for each variable is greater than 0.7. Additionally, the results from the Cronbach's alpha analysis reveal that the Cronbach's alpha value for every variable in the model is considered reliable, since it exceeds 0.7, thus affirming compliance with the composite reliability benchmarks.

**Table 3.** R<sup>2</sup>

<b>Variable</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>
Buying Decision (Y)	0.895	0.893
Customer Satisfaction (Z)	0.865	0.863

Based on the data presented in Table 3, the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) for the Consumer Satisfaction variable (Z) is determined to be 0.865. This implies that 86.5% of the variability in this variable is explained by the independent variables included in the model, whereas the remaining 13.5% is influenced by external factors that fall outside the model's parameters. Simultaneously, the Purchase Decision variable (Y) shows an R<sup>2</sup> of 0.895, indicating that 89.5% of the fluctuations in ongoing consumption behavior can be clarified by the factors accounted for in the model, while 10.5% are affected by additional variables. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> values, which closely align with the R<sup>2</sup>, imply that the model remains robust and does not suffer from overfitting, even when alterations are made to the quantity of variables incorporated into the model.

**Table 4. Direct Effect**

	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>t-stat</b>	<b>p-values</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>X1 -&gt; Y</b>	0.510	8.011	0.000	Significant
<b>X1 -&gt; Z</b>	0.604	4.198	0.000	Significant
<b>X2 -&gt; Y</b>	0.173	3.703	0.000	Significant
<b>X2 -&gt; Z</b>	0.387	3.562	0.000	Significant
<b>Z -&gt; Y</b>	0.602	4.070	0.000	Significant

According to the findings presented in the aforementioned table, the assessment of the hypotheses is delineated as follows H1 investigates whether Product Quality influences Purchasing Decisions. The table presents a t-static value of 8.011 with an effect size of 0.510 and a p-value of 0.000. Since the t-statistic value is greater than 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05, it can be concluded that H1 indicates a statistically significant effect. H2 explores whether Product Quality impacts Consumer Satisfaction. The table shows a t-static value of 4.198 with an effect size of 0.604 and a p-value of 0.000. As the t-statistic value surpasses 1.96 and the p-value is under 0.05, it can be concluded that H2 demonstrates a statistically significant effect. H3 analyzes whether Brand Image affects Purchase Decisions. The table displays a t-static value of 3.703 with an effect size of 0.173 and a p-value of 0.000. Given that the t-statistic value exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05, it may be concluded that H3 indicates a statistically significant effect. H4 assesses whether Brand Image influences Consumer Satisfaction. The table reveals a t-static value of 3.562 with an effect size of 0.387 and a p-value of 0.000. Since the t-statistic value is higher than 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05, it can be concluded that H4 signifies a statistically significant effect. H5 investigates whether Consumer Satisfaction affects Purchasing Decisions. The table indicates a t-statistic value of 4.070 with an effect size of 0.620 and a p-value of 0.000. Given that the t-statistic value exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05, it may be concluded that H5 demonstrates a statistically significant effect.

**Table 5. Indirect Effect**

	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>t-values</b>	<b>p-values</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>X1 -&gt; Z -&gt; Y</b>	0.364	3.116	0.000	Significant
<b>X2 -&gt; Z -&gt; Y</b>	0.233	5.843	0.000	Significant

In accordance with the findings presented in the aforementioned table, the assessment of the hypotheses is articulated as follows H6 assesses whether Consumer Satisfaction acts as a mediating element between Product Quality and Purchase Decisions. The table mentioned earlier shows a t-statistic value of 3.116, along with an effect size of 0.364 and a p-value of 0.000. Since the t-statistic value surpasses 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05, it can be concluded that H6 has a significant impact. H7 investigates whether Consumer Satisfaction mediates the connection between Brand Image and Purchase Decisions. The table above displays a t-statistic value of 5.843, with an effect size of 0.233 and a p-value of 0.000. Given that the t-statistic value exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is under 0.05, it can be inferred that H7 demonstrates a significant influence.

## Discussion

The quality of products has a significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions, as individuals tend to choose items that meet their expectations regarding performance, durability, and reliability, thus building trust and alleviating the risks associated with buying. Selvia (2022) noted that the quality of Scarlett Whitening products significantly influences purchasing decisions, as consumers view the product as effective and delivering the expected performance results. Similar findings were presented by Satdiah et al. (2023), who explained that quality attributes such as durability, color accuracy, and ease of use directly affect consumer buying preferences at De'Lucent Paint Stores. In the context of thrift goods, consumers evaluate quality not just on physical condition but also on the economic viability and sustainability of the product; therefore, thrift items that maintain usability are considered to offer high value for money. Kumbara (2021) argues that product quality shapes purchasing decisions through the perspective of perceived value and satisfaction derived from design and functionality, while Fasha et al. (2022) demonstrate that product features and performance are crucial factors in cultivating consumer interest that ultimately informs purchasing behavior. In conclusion, product quality fulfills both functional and emotional needs, establishing itself as a critical determinant in consumer purchasing patterns across diverse product categories.

Brand image plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing behavior, as a positive brand image fosters emotional connections that enhance trust and desire. Research by Fasha et al. (2022) reveals that brand image significantly influences buying interest and subsequent purchasing decisions, while Purwati & Cahyanti (2022) illustrate that brand ambassadors can further amplify buying interest in beauty products. Within the thrift sector, factors such as store reputation, product cleanliness, and seller credibility contribute to a favorable brand image, alleviating negative perceptions of second-hand items and enhancing consumer trust. Empirical studies confirm that a strong brand image is positively associated with consumer satisfaction, instilling confidence in product quality and promoting loyalty and likelihood of repurchase.

The quality of a product is paramount in guaranteeing a gratifying consumer experience, meeting or exceeding customer expectations. Tirtayasa et al. (2021) indicated that product quality has an indirect effect on satisfaction via purchasing choices, especially when the performance aligns with consumer expectations. Consistent insights from Ertanto (2024) emphasize that factors such as taste, packaging, and pricing are vital to achieving customer satisfaction, while Dianamurti & Damayanti (2023) pointed out the significance of product quality, pricing, and service in elevating customer satisfaction. In summary, high-quality products act as a crucial component in promoting a positive and lasting customer experience.

A positive brand image fosters heightened consumer expectations regarding product quality and advantages, profoundly influencing satisfaction levels. Febriani et al. (2022) noted that brand image has a direct impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty within local retail environments, highlighting its importance in enhancing perceived product value. Likewise, Handayani & Zuraida (2021) illustrated that a strong brand image cultivates realistic expectations, thus increasing consumer satisfaction with traditional Wedang Uwuh halal beverages. This effect also applies to the digital services industry, where brand image fosters emotional trust, improving user comfort and satisfaction, as demonstrated by Syah et al. (2021) and Juan &

Indrawati (2023). Therefore, brand image functions not solely as a marketing asset but as a strategic factor that influences consumer perception, experience, and satisfaction across various product and service arenas.

Customer satisfaction is essential in shaping buying decisions, promoting both repeat purchasing and enduring loyalty. Tirtayasa et al. (2021) established that customer satisfaction, influenced by product excellence and trust, acts as a significant determinant of purchasing decisions among consumers of electronic goods. Furthermore, Saputra & Sumantyo (2023) noted that consumer satisfaction with the Blibli.com application notably affects buying choices through efficient information systems and service accessibility. In the digital landscape, satisfaction remains vital, as content consumers are more likely to engage in repurchase and offer recommendations. Studies by Kadi et al. (2021) and Utomo et al. (2023) support the notion that various elements, such as e-promotion and digital marketing, significantly shape satisfaction, ultimately guiding purchasing decisions on online platforms.

Customer satisfaction functions as a critical mediating factor in the relationship between product quality and purchasing decisions, as superior products cultivate positive post-consumption perceptions, resulting in increased satisfaction and subsequent recommendations or repurchases. Research by Manggala & Adirinekso (2022) suggests that product quality indirectly influences purchasing decisions through satisfaction among supermarket shoppers, while Tirtayasa et al. (2021) indicate that the effect of product quality on purchasing decisions is heightened by levels of satisfaction in consumers of electronic products. Within this mediation framework, customer satisfaction serves as a psychological link between quality evaluations and actual purchasing actions. Sisrahmayanti & Muslikh (2022) confirm that among local fashion consumers, the effect of quality is intensified when mediated by satisfaction, as consumers assess product performance against their initial expectations, thereby encouraging repeat purchases when outcomes surpass those expectations. In conclusion, both in physical and online retail environments, customer satisfaction stands out as a crucial psychological factor connecting quality perceptions with purchasing behaviors.

According to the SEM-PLS analysis, product quality exerts a considerable influence on purchasing decisions ( $\beta = 0.46$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), while brand image has a positive impact on consumer satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.39$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), underscoring their crucial roles in the buying behavior of thrift consumers. These findings validate that product quality is vital for improving satisfaction and purchase choices, as consumers prefer high-quality, dependable, and visually appealing thrift products, which is consistent with prior studies. Moreover, a robust brand image enhances consumer comfort and confidence, bolstering trust and intentions for repurchase, in accordance with the results of numerous research efforts.

## CONCLUSION

The results suggest that both product quality and brand perception significantly and positively influence consumer satisfaction and purchasing choices. Additionally, consumer satisfaction has been identified as a mediating element that strengthens the relationship between product quality, brand perception, and purchasing behavior. These findings affirm that thrift consumers consider not only the physical attributes of the product but also the perceived value, symbolic meaning, and emotional connections associated with the brand. Consequently, product quality, brand

perception, and consumer satisfaction constitute fundamental components that impact purchasing behavior, intentions for repeat purchases, and advocacy for thrift products.

Nonetheless, the study does have certain limitations, as it focuses solely on two independent variables along with one mediating variable, thereby omitting other potential influences on purchasing decisions. The limited sample size and specific scope of the investigation further restrict the applicability of the findings to other industries. For future research, it would be prudent to include additional variables such as brand loyalty, customer experience, or pricing perceptions, as well as to expand the industry context and enlarge the sample size. For thrift enterprises, improving product quality, strengthening brand perception, and ensuring consumer satisfaction are critical strategies for shaping purchasing choices and cultivating long-term loyalty.

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