

THE INFLUENCE OF ATMOSPHERE, PRICE, AND PRODUCT QUALITY ON GELATO PURCHASE DECISIONS THROUGH BRAND IMAGE

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Abstract

This study analyzes the effects of product quality, price, and store atmosphere on brand image and the subsequent effect of brand image on the purchase decisions of Gelato X consumers. The research was conducted at a gelato outlet in the Blok M area from August to December 2025. Primary data were collected through questionnaires distributed to consumers who had purchased Gelato X products, while secondary data were obtained from relevant articles and scientific journals. Purposive sampling produced 112 valid respondents. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. Product quality had a positive and significant effect on brand image (coefficient 0.314; $p = 0.005$). Price also had a positive and significant effect on brand image (coefficient 0.327; $p = 0.001$), as did store atmosphere (coefficient 0.303; $p = 0.021$). Brand image had the strongest positive effect on purchase decisions (coefficient 0.791; $p < 0.001$). Product quality, price, and atmosphere explained 75.1% of the variance in brand image, while brand image explained 62.6% of purchase decisions. The findings emphasize consistent product quality, value-based pricing and promotions, and a comfortable store environment as the basis for strengthening the brand and increasing purchases.

Keywords: Atmosphere; Gelato; Price; Product quality; Purchase decision.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and the development of technology and information have changed many aspects of human activity. The food and beverage industry has grown alongside these changes, while the increasing diversity of brands and products has intensified competition. Consumers now have more alternatives that can be matched to their needs and preferences. Under these conditions, food and beverage businesses must attract consumers quickly and create reasons for them to select one brand over another (Zulaicha & Irawati, 2016). The Asia-Pacific region recorded the fastest growth in consumer expenditure on food and beverages, with average annual growth of 9.8% between 2006 and 2016. The Middle East and Africa followed at 7.4%, while the United States and Canada reached 6.1%. Europe, as a more mature retail market, recorded the lowest growth at 4.2% (Jin, 2017). The development of the sector is also associated with Industry 4.0, which promotes automation, data exchange, cyber-physical systems, the Internet of Things, cloud computing, and cognitive computing. These technologies can strengthen productivity and operational efficiency in food and beverage businesses (Mahardika, 2018).

In Indonesia, the food and beverage sector is supported by rising income, the growth of the middle class, changes in lifestyle, and easier access to products through information technology. The 2024 survey of the Central Statistics Agency reported 4.85 million food and beverage business actors in 2023, an increase of 21.13% from 4.01 million in 2016. West Java had the largest number, with approximately 1.23 million businesses or 25.36% of the national total. Food and beverage businesses were grouped into restaurants, catering providers, mobile or non-permanent sellers, and food or beverage stalls, traditional medicine stalls, cafes, bars, and similar businesses. The last group was the largest, comprising 2.78 million businesses or 57.21% of the total.

Gelato is an Italian frozen dessert that differs from ordinary ice cream in fat content and overrun. The ingredients generally include milk, sugar, water, and fruit. Its fat content is below 10%, generally between 2% and 8%, and its air content is about 15%, compared with up to 50% for conventional ice cream. These characteristics make gelato denser, softer, and more stable when exposed to temperature changes. In Indonesia, ice cream sales reached approximately IDR 6 trillion in 2021 and IDR 15.86 trillion in 2022, indicating a substantial market and continued business growth.

Gelato X is a food and beverage business focused on dessert gelato. The business uses quality raw materials and a small-batch production system. Its flavors are seasonal and may change weekly according to ingredient availability. Products are sold in small cups, regular cups, and waffle cones. This operating concept offers differentiation, but it also creates a continuing product-development challenge. The business must maintain variety so that its offerings do not appear monotonous and can continue to stimulate consumer interest. The outlet is located in the Blok M area, where the number of food and beverage businesses has continued to increase. Gelato X was initially the only specialized gelato store in the area, but new competitors have appeared as the market expanded. The competitive challenge is accompanied by less favorable indicators in the broader ice cream industry. The thesis notes that Unilever Indonesia's ice cream business contributed 9.5% of revenue in 2023, recorded negative growth of 2% compound annual growth from 2019 to 2023, experienced a decline in market share from 69.2% in 2019 to 61.9% in 2024, and saw profitability decrease from 11.1% to 7.2% over the same period. The thesis also identifies a declining trend in purchase interest for another ice cream outlet after 2023. These conditions indicate that market growth does not automatically ensure stable demand for every brand. Purchase decision is treated in this study as a consumer problem-solving process. Consumers use related mental and psychological processes when choosing a product or brand (Dewi & Sutanto, 2018; Pangkey et al., 2016). Previous research cited in the thesis indicates that price and product quality can influence purchase decisions, while interior design and restaurant atmosphere can influence customer loyalty. Brand image is positioned as a mediator because it reflects the perceptions and associations formed from consumer information and previous experience. A positive brand image can strengthen confidence in the product and increase the likelihood of purchase.

Research Objectives

The study has three objectives. First, it analyzes the effects of product quality, atmosphere, and price on brand image. Second, it examines the effect of brand image on purchase decisions. Third, it formulates recommendations for increasing gelato product sales. Academically, the study is expected to become a reference for further research in food and beverage marketing. Practically, it is expected to provide guidance for Gelato X and other business actors in designing strategies before and during business operation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purchase Decision

Purchase decision refers to a problem-solving process undertaken by consumers, whether individuals or organizations, to determine the product or brand that will be selected. Cognitive and emotional influences, including family, advertising, friends, role models, mood, and situational conditions, may affect this process (Pangkey et al., 2016). Purchase decisions therefore involve more than the final act of buying. The process includes need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, the decision to purchase, and the outcome or impression that follows product use. In the present study, these five stages form the basis for measuring purchase decisions. The purchase-decision process is especially important in food and beverage markets because customers can compare many brands with relatively low switching costs. Product attributes, promotional information, store experience, and prior consumption can all enter the evaluation. Research on bakery, cafe, bubble tea, and other food and beverage businesses shows that product and price variables are relevant to consumer decisions (Zulaicha & Irawati, 2016; Dewi & Sutanto, 2018; Lubis et al., 2020).

Brand Image

Brand image is the collection of perceptions, beliefs, and associations held by consumers regarding a brand. It includes elements that can be recognized but are not necessarily expressed verbally, such as symbols, typography, color, and design, as well as the broader impression of the product or service (Surachman, 2008). In the thesis, brand image is measured through brand symbols, letter or typography design, and customer perception. These elements allow consumers to distinguish the brand and interpret the quality and meaning attached to it. A strong brand image is relevant to purchase decisions because consumers often use brand associations as a concise evaluation of expected quality. When a brand is familiar, positively evaluated, and associated with a favorable experience, consumers face less uncertainty. Research in the thesis context also indicates that product quality, service quality, and brand image are associated with customer satisfaction (Poha et al., 2021).

Store Atmosphere

Store atmosphere is the deliberate design of a physical environment to create an emotional effect that can increase the probability of purchase. It is perceived through visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile cues. In restaurants and cafes, atmosphere also captures consumers' feelings and shopping or dining experience, although these responses are not directly visible. The study measures atmosphere through visual appearance, sound, aroma, and touch or physical comfort. Prior research found that interior design and restaurant atmosphere contribute to customer loyalty, while social media marketing, product quality, and store atmosphere can influence purchase intention through brand image (Antonia, 2022; Soefhwan & Kurniawati, 2022).

Product Quality

Product quality is the capacity of a product to meet or exceed consumer expectations. In a food product, quality is experienced through portion size, product form, color, consistency, texture, taste, presentation, and packaging. High-quality products are more attractive to consumers and may create stronger loyalty than products selected only because of price. Producing poor-quality goods can generate complaints, returns, corrective costs, and damage to company image. For Gelato X, product quality is particularly important because the small-batch and seasonal-flavor concept requires consistency across repeated purchases.

Price

Price is the monetary value exchanged by consumers to obtain the benefits of owning or using a product or service. It can differentiate an offer from competitors and is evaluated in relation to the utility received. The thesis uses two basic dimensions: the suitability of price to the product and discounts. In the empirical questionnaire, these dimensions are represented through affordability, willingness to pay for added value, discounts, cashback, and buy-one-get-one promotions. Research in food and beverage settings shows that price can influence purchase decisions when consumers perceive that the amount paid is consistent with product quality and benefits (Anwar & Satrio, 2015; Brata et al., 2017; Zulaicha & Irawati, 2016).

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Product Quality and Brand Image

Product quality provides direct evidence about the performance of a brand. Taste, texture, appearance, packaging, portion, and consistency shape the consumer's experience. When these attributes meet expectations, the experience is stored as a favorable brand association. The thesis therefore proposes that better product quality strengthens brand image. This relationship is also consistent with the role of product quality in store-based purchase-intention models that include brand image as a mediating construct (Soefhwan & Kurniawati, 2022).

- H1: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on brand image.

Price and Brand Image

Consumers interpret price as both a sacrifice and a signal of value. A price that is consistent with product quality can reinforce the perception that the brand is credible and fairly positioned. Promotions can also create a positive impression when they increase value without weakening the expected quality of the product. The thesis consequently expects price suitability and promotional programs to strengthen brand image.

- H2: Price has a positive and significant effect on brand image.

Store Atmosphere and Brand Image

The atmosphere of a gelato outlet contributes to the customer experience before, during, and after the transaction. An attractive layout, comfortable interior, appropriate music, pleasant aroma, suitable facilities, and opportunities to taste the product can create emotional responses that become associated with the brand. The thesis therefore assumes that a better store atmosphere produces a more favorable brand image. This proposition is consistent with evidence that store atmosphere can contribute to purchase intention through brand image (Soefhwan & Kurniawati, 2022).

- H3: Store atmosphere has a positive and significant effect on brand image.

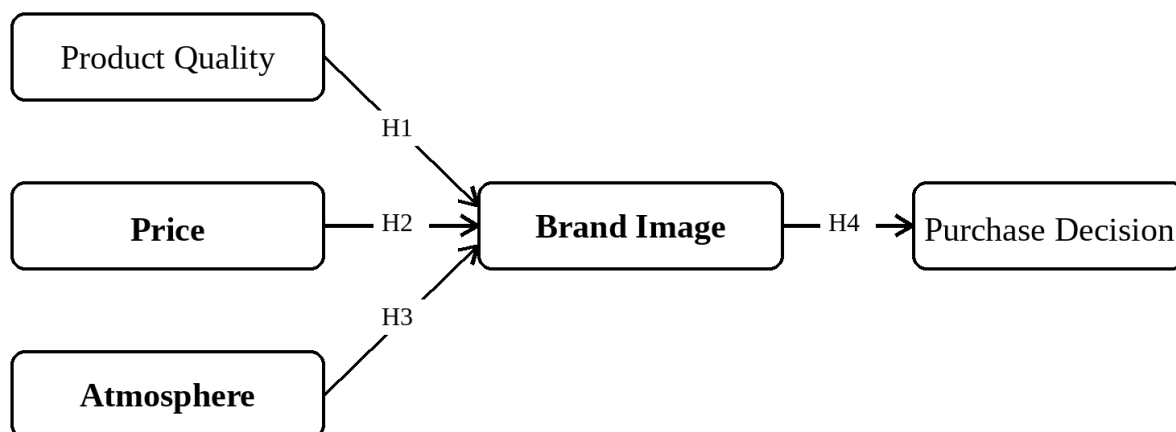
Brand Image and Purchase Decision

Brand image can simplify consumer evaluation by summarizing past information, visual identity, and perceived quality. A recognizable logo, readable typography, consistent design, and a positive overall perception can reduce uncertainty and strengthen confidence in the purchase. The thesis therefore positions brand image as the direct

predictor of purchase decisions and as the link through which product quality, price, and atmosphere support consumer choice.

- H4: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions.

Figure 1. Research Model



The model places product quality, price, and atmosphere as exogenous constructs. Brand image is an endogenous mediating construct, while purchase decision is the final endogenous construct. The analytical sequence begins with the identification of problems faced by Gelato X, continues with testing the relationships among the constructs, and concludes with recommendations intended to increase purchase decisions.

METHOD

Research Location, Time, and Data Sources

The research was conducted at the Gelato X outlet in the Blok M area. The location was selected because the outlet is relatively new and faces product-development and competitive challenges. Data collection was carried out from August to December 2025. The study used primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through a questionnaire distributed to consumers who had purchased Gelato X products. Secondary data were obtained by reviewing relevant articles, journals, and other sources used in the thesis.

Sampling and Respondents

A non-probability purposive-sampling technique was used. Respondents were required to have purchased Gelato X. The methodology chapter planned a minimum sample of 100 respondents based on the range commonly used in Partial Least Squares analysis, while the final empirical dataset contained 112 valid respondents. This final sample was used in the descriptive and PLS-SEM analyses.

Variables and Measurement

All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The study used product quality, price, and atmosphere as independent variables; brand image as a mediating variable; and purchase decision as the final dependent variable. The indicators were adapted from the conceptual sources identified in the thesis and operationalized through multiple questionnaire items.

Table 1. Variables and Measurement Dimensions

Variable	Definition in the Thesis	Item Codes	Measurement Dimensions	Reference
Purchase decision	Consumer problem-solving process for selecting a product or brand	KP40-KP54	Product recognition; information search; alternative evaluation; purchase decision; outcome	Zulaicha & Irawati, 2016
Brand image	Consumer perceptions, beliefs, and associations regarding a brand	BI31-BI39	Symbol; typography or letter design; customer perception	Surachman, 2008
Atmosphere	Environmental design that creates emotional effects and may encourage purchase	AM21-AM30	Visual; sound; aroma; touch and physical comfort	Kotler, 1974, as cited in the thesis
Product quality	Product characteristics that can be accepted by consumers and meet expectations	KO1-KO15	Size; form; color; consistency; texture; taste	Potter & Hotchkiss, 2011, as cited in the thesis
Price	Monetary value exchanged for a product or service	H16-H20	Price-product suitability; discount and promotional value	Gitosudarmo, 2012, as cited in the thesis

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and the distribution of questionnaire responses. The structural relationships were tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. PLS-SEM combines measurement and structural analysis and is suitable for estimating relationships among latent constructs and observed indicators (Garson, 2016; Hair et al., 2021). The measurement model was assessed through loading factors, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and cross-loadings. The structural model was assessed through path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and coefficients of determination. A loading factor above 0.50 was accepted, reliability values above 0.70 indicated adequate consistency, and an AVE above 0.50 indicated convergent validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

A total of 112 respondents participated in the study. Women represented 58.0% of the sample, while men represented 42.0%. Most respondents lived in the Jabodetabek area, accounting for 65.2%, while 34.8% lived outside the region. The sample was dominated by younger consumers: 42.0% were 17-25 years old and 42.9% were 26-35 years old. Together, these groups comprised 84.9% of respondents.

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents (n = 112)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	47	42.0
Gender	Female	65	58.0
Domicile	Jabodetabek	73	65.2
Domicile	Outside Jabodetabek	39	34.8
Age	17-25 years	47	42.0
Age	26-35 years	48	42.9
Age	36-45 years	9	8.0
Age	46-55 years	6	5.4
Age	More than 55 years	2	1.8
Education	Senior high school	15	13.4
Education	Diploma 1	1	0.9
Education	Diploma 2	1	0.9
Education	Diploma 3	5	4.5
Education	Diploma 4/Bachelor	77	68.8
Education	Master	13	11.6
Occupation	Not employed	12	10.7
Occupation	Private employee	80	71.4
Occupation	Civil servant	5	4.5
Occupation	Entrepreneur	15	13.4
Monthly income	Below IDR 5,000,000	31	27.7
Monthly income	IDR 5,000,000-6,999,999	31	27.7
Monthly income	IDR 7,000,000-9,999,999	25	22.3
Monthly income	Above IDR 10,000,000	25	22.3

The education profile was concentrated at the Diploma 4 or bachelor level, which accounted for 68.8% of respondents. Master's graduates represented 11.6%, senior-high-school graduates 13.4%, Diploma 3 graduates 4.5%, and Diploma 1 and Diploma 2 graduates 0.9% each. In occupational terms, 71.4% of respondents were private employees, followed by entrepreneurs at 13.4%, respondents who were not employed at 10.7%, and civil servants at 4.5%. Monthly income was distributed relatively evenly. Respondents earning below IDR 5 million and those earning IDR 5-6.99 million each represented 27.7%, while the IDR 7-9.99 million and above-IDR 10 million groups each represented 22.3%.

These characteristics show that the empirical results mainly reflect urban, working-age consumers with tertiary education and regular private-sector employment. The income distribution indicates that the sample includes both price-sensitive consumers and consumers with greater purchasing capacity. This profile is relevant to interpreting the strong response to promotional programs and the simultaneous importance of quality, store experience, and brand perception.

Descriptive Evaluation of the Research Variables

Respondents gave favorable evaluations to all five constructs. Mean scores were generally above 4.00, indicating agreement or strong agreement with the positive statements used in the questionnaire. The descriptive results also identify specific attributes that can be maintained and attributes that require managerial attention.

Table 3. Summary of Descriptive Responses

Variable	Highest-Rated Indicator	Mean	Lowest-Rated Indicator	Mean
Product quality	Variety of toppings prevents the gelato texture from becoming monotonous	4.29	Texture differs from ordinary ice cream	4.08
Price	Buy-one-get-one promotion increases interest in purchasing	4.36	Willingness to pay more for added value	4.01
Atmosphere	Possibility of a taste test encourages purchase	4.25	Store noise does not reduce purchase interest	3.88
Brand image	The respondent has a good perception of the brand	4.36	The brand has not been associated with a poor experience	4.13
Purchase decision	The respondent does not regret purchasing the product	4.30	The respondent considers alternative brands before purchase	4.04

Product Quality

All product-quality indicators had mean scores above 4.00. The highest evaluations concerned topping variety and attractive presentation, both with means of 4.29. Other favorable responses concerned packaging quality, flavor attractiveness, taste consistency, and the correspondence between taste and price. The lowest score, 4.08, was recorded for the distinction between gelato texture and ordinary ice cream, but this score remained in the good category. These findings indicate that consumers positively evaluate the product's taste, texture, visual presentation, packaging, and consistency.

Price

The price variable also received very good evaluations. The buy-one-get-one program recorded the highest mean of 4.36, followed by price discounts at 4.32 and cashback at 4.31. Willingness to pay more for a product with additional value received the lowest mean of 4.01. The pattern indicates that respondents recognize the value of the product but remain highly responsive to promotional incentives. Promotions therefore function as an important mechanism for increasing perceived value and purchase interest.

Atmosphere

The atmosphere indicators ranged from good to very good. The possibility of tasting the product before purchase obtained the highest mean of 4.25. Interior comfort and attractive layout also received high evaluations. The lowest result concerned the effect of store noise, with a mean of 3.88. Although this score remained positive, it identifies noise management as the clearest area for improvement. Aroma, music, seating, display presentation, and the physical condition of the outlet were otherwise evaluated favorably.

Brand Image and Purchase Decision

Brand image was assessed very positively. The highest score was the respondent's favorable overall perception of the brand, with a mean of 4.36. The identity design was perceived to indicate product quality, the logo was easy to recognize, and menu typography was easy to read. Purchase-decision responses were similarly positive. The strongest item was the absence of regret after purchase, with a mean of 4.30. Satisfaction, perceived benefits, and confidence that the decision was correct also received high scores. The lowest score, 4.04, concerned consideration of alternative brands, suggesting that consumers did compare options but remained confident in choosing Gelato X.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated to determine whether each indicator measured its intended construct consistently and validly. Convergent validity was assessed through loading factors and average variance extracted,

while internal consistency was assessed through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Discriminant validity was examined through cross-loadings.

Table 4. Convergent Validity and Reliability Results

Construct	Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Atmosphere	0.735-0.896	0.948	0.950	0.956	0.685
Brand image	0.735-0.860	0.937	0.938	0.947	0.667
Price	0.687-0.869	0.859	0.865	0.900	0.643
Purchase decision	0.684-0.842	0.949	0.951	0.955	0.586
Product quality	0.720-0.842	0.959	0.959	0.963	0.637

Convergent Validity

The indicator loadings ranged from 0.684 to 0.896. Every loading exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50, and most were above 0.70. The atmosphere indicators ranged from 0.735 to 0.896, brand-image indicators from 0.735 to 0.860, price indicators from 0.687 to 0.869, purchase-decision indicators from 0.684 to 0.842, and product-quality indicators from 0.720 to 0.842. The results indicate that all indicators were acceptable measures of their assigned constructs. Average variance extracted ranged from 0.586 to 0.685. All values exceeded the minimum of 0.50, indicating that each construct explained more than half of the variance in its indicators. Atmosphere had the highest AVE at 0.685, followed by brand image at 0.667, price at 0.643, product quality at 0.637, and purchase decision at 0.586. Convergent validity was therefore satisfied for the entire measurement model.

Internal Consistency Reliability

Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.859 to 0.959, while composite reliability values ranged from 0.900 to 0.963. All constructs exceeded the 0.70 standard. Product quality had the highest alpha and composite reliability, followed by purchase decision and atmosphere. The values indicate strong internal consistency among the items forming each construct.

Discriminant Validity

Cross-loading analysis showed that each indicator had its highest loading on the construct it was designed to measure. For example, atmosphere items loaded more strongly on atmosphere than on brand image, price, purchase decision, or product quality. The same pattern occurred for the brand-image, price, purchase-decision, and product-quality indicators. The cross-loading results therefore support discriminant validity, indicating that the five constructs were empirically distinguishable.

Taken together, the validity and reliability results show that the measurement model was adequate for testing the structural relationships. No indicator was removed from the reported final model because all indicators met the acceptance criteria used in the thesis.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was assessed through bootstrapping. Hypotheses were evaluated using the direction and magnitude of the path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. A relationship was treated as significant when the p-value was below 0.05. All four proposed relationships were positive and significant.

Table 5. Structural Path Results

Relationship	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	t-statistic	p-value	Decision
Atmosphere -> Brand image	0.303	0.311	0.132	2.301	0.021	Accepted
Brand image -> Purchase decision	0.791	0.794	0.034	23.038	<0.001	Accepted
Price -> Brand image	0.327	0.320	0.096	3.394	0.001	Accepted
Product quality -> Brand image	0.314	0.314	0.113	2.778	0.005	Accepted

Coefficient of Determination

Table 6. R-Square Results

Endogenous Construct	R-square	Adjusted R-square
Brand image	0.751	0.744
Purchase decision	0.626	0.623

Brand image had an R-square of 0.751 and an adjusted R-square of 0.744. Product quality, price, and atmosphere jointly explained 75.1% of the variation in brand image, while 24.9% was associated with factors outside the model. Purchase decision had an R-square of 0.626 and an adjusted R-square of 0.623. Brand image therefore explained 62.6% of the variation in purchase decisions, while the remaining 37.4% was attributable to variables not examined in this study. These values indicate that the model has good explanatory ability.

Hypothesis Decisions

H1 was accepted because product quality had a positive coefficient of 0.314, a t-statistic of 2.778, and a p-value of 0.005. H2 was accepted because price had a coefficient of 0.327, a t-statistic of 3.394, and a p-value of 0.001. H3 was accepted because atmosphere had a coefficient of 0.303, a t-statistic of 2.301, and a p-value of 0.021. H4 was accepted because brand image had a coefficient of 0.791, a t-statistic of 23.038, and a p-value below 0.001.

Among the three predictors of brand image, price had the largest coefficient, followed by product quality and atmosphere. Their magnitudes were relatively close, showing that brand image was not formed by one operational factor alone. The brand-image effect on purchase decisions was substantially larger than the other coefficients, demonstrating that brand image is the central mechanism in the proposed model.

Discussion: Product Quality and Brand Image

Product quality had a positive and significant effect on brand image. The coefficient of 0.314 indicates that improvements in perceived product quality were associated with a stronger brand image. The statistical result is supported by the descriptive findings. Every product-quality item obtained a mean above 4.00, with the highest scores assigned to topping variety and attractive presentation. Consumers also evaluated packaging, flavor variation, color, consistency, texture, and taste positively. For a gelato brand, product quality is experienced directly and repeatedly. Taste and texture are core consumption attributes, while presentation and packaging influence the first impression. Consistency is particularly important because Gelato X uses a small-batch system and seasonal ingredients. The concept can generate novelty, but inconsistent results across batches could weaken confidence. The findings show that consumers currently perceive the quality as stable enough to support a positive image.

The result is consistent with the thesis argument that high-quality products are more attractive, can increase sales, and may encourage stronger loyalty than products selected only on the basis of price. It is also aligned with research that places product quality as an antecedent of brand image and purchase intention in a store context (Soefhwan & Kurniawati, 2022). Research on product quality and consumer decisions in other food and beverage settings likewise shows that product performance remains a fundamental consideration (Anwar & Satrio, 2015; Brata et al., 2017; Zulaicha & Irawati, 2016). The managerial implication is that Gelato X should maintain standardized production procedures while preserving the innovation expected from seasonal flavors. The product-development process should focus on variations that add novelty without reducing the consistency of taste and texture. The attributes with the strongest descriptive evaluations, including toppings and presentation, can be used as visible

evidence of quality in promotional communication. The lower score for texture differentiation also suggests that the business can explain more clearly how gelato differs from ordinary ice cream.

Discussion: Price and Brand Image

Price had a positive and significant effect on brand image, with a coefficient of 0.327. This was the largest of the three direct effects on brand image. The result indicates that price is not interpreted only as the amount paid. Consumers assess whether the price is reasonable in relation to product quality and whether available promotions increase value. When the exchange is perceived as fair, the brand is evaluated more positively. The descriptive results show a strong response to promotional programs. Buy-one-get-one obtained a mean of 4.36, discounts 4.32, and cashback 4.31. By contrast, willingness to pay more for additional value obtained the lowest price score, although it remained favorable at 4.01. This pattern suggests that respondents appreciate quality but still seek tangible economic benefits. Promotional programs therefore help convert product interest into a favorable brand judgment.

The result complements prior studies showing that price can influence purchase decisions and that price should be considered together with product quality, promotion, and location (Anwar & Satrio, 2015; Brata et al., 2017; Zulaicha & Irawati, 2016). In the present model, price first strengthens brand image, and brand image then supports the purchase decision. This indirect logic is particularly relevant in a competitive location where consumers can compare several dessert brands. Gelato X should therefore avoid a pricing strategy based solely on lowering the nominal price. The more appropriate approach is to maintain a price that signals quality while using targeted promotions to increase perceived value. Buy-one-get-one, cashback, and periodic discounts can be scheduled for selected moments, new-flavor introductions, or low-traffic periods. The business should also communicate the quality of raw materials, small-batch production, and product presentation so that consumers understand the value represented by the price.

Discussion: Atmosphere and Brand Image

Store atmosphere had a positive and significant effect on brand image, with a coefficient of 0.303. The result shows that the physical and sensory environment contributes to consumer perceptions of the brand. The opportunity to taste the product before purchase had the highest atmosphere mean, followed by interior comfort and attractive layout. These elements provide a direct experience that connects the product with the place in which it is purchased. The lowest atmosphere score concerned store noise. Although the mean remained positive, it indicates that crowding or sound conditions can reduce comfort. Because Gelato X is located in a busy food and beverage area, complete control of the external environment may not be possible. Nevertheless, seating arrangements, music volume, queue management, and the placement of service and dining zones can reduce unnecessary disturbance. Aroma, display quality, cleanliness, and physical maintenance should also be kept consistent because these cues become part of the brand image. The finding is aligned with research showing that restaurant interior and atmosphere affect customer loyalty and that store atmosphere can influence purchase intention through brand image (Antonia, 2022; Soefhwan & Kurniawati, 2022). The practical implication is that atmosphere should be managed as a marketing resource rather than treated only as decoration. The store environment communicates the positioning of the brand and influences how consumers interpret the product before tasting it.

Discussion: Brand Image and Purchase Decision

Brand image had the strongest effect in the model. The coefficient of 0.791, t-statistic of 23.038, and p-value below 0.001 show that a positive image substantially increases the likelihood of purchase. The descriptive results support this relationship. Respondents reported a favorable overall perception of the brand, recognized the logo, evaluated the design as consistent with product quality, and found menu typography easy to read. Purchase-decision items also showed confidence, satisfaction, perceived benefit, and low regret.

Brand image functions as a summary of consumer experience. Product quality, pricing value, and store atmosphere provide separate signals, but consumers combine these signals into a broader judgment of the brand. Once that judgment is positive, it reduces uncertainty and supports choice. This explains why the brand-image coefficient is substantially larger than the direct paths leading to brand image. The result also corresponds with the role of brand image in consumer satisfaction and purchase-intention research (Poha et al., 2021; Soefhwan & Kurniawati, 2022).

Managerial Implications

The empirical model supports an integrated strategy. Product quality must be maintained through consistent taste, texture, portion, presentation, and packaging. Pricing should reflect quality and be supported by promotions that respondents value. Store atmosphere should provide comfort, recognizable visual identity, sensory appeal, and convenient product sampling. These three operational areas should use a consistent brand message so that each customer encounter reinforces the same image. Brand image should become the central performance focus because it directly explains a large proportion of purchase decisions. Communication through menus, packaging, social media, and in-store displays should emphasize the distinctive qualities of small-batch gelato, seasonal flavor innovation, and the overall customer experience. Promotions should be designed to attract trial while preserving the image of quality.

CONCLUSION

Product quality, price, and store atmosphere each had a positive and significant effect on brand image. Product quality produced a coefficient of 0.314, price 0.327, and atmosphere 0.303. Brand image had a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions, with a coefficient of 0.791, making it the dominant relationship in the model. The three antecedents explained 75.1% of brand image, while brand image explained 62.6% of purchase decisions. The results confirm that stronger purchase decisions depend on the combined management of product quality, value-oriented pricing, store experience, and a consistent positive brand image.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Gelato X should maintain product quality through periodic menu innovation while preserving the consistency of taste and texture in every production batch. Promotional programs that received the strongest consumer response, particularly buy-one-get-one, cashback, and discounts, should be optimized for selected periods. The outlet should improve noise control and sustain the interior, layout, aroma, display, seating, cleanliness, and taste-test experience. Future research should add variables such as service quality, digital promotion, location, customer satisfaction, customer experience, and customer loyalty. A larger sample and wider geographical coverage are also recommended to improve generalizability.

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