

# **The Influence of Service Quality and Price Perception on Brand Image and Their Impact on Purchase Intention (A Study of Bread and Cake Shops in Sinabang)**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the influence of service quality and price perception on brand image and their impact on purchase intention, focusing on bread and cake shops in Sinabang. A non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, was employed. The sample size was determined based on the rule of ten times the number of indicators used in the study. Since the research utilized 21 indicators, the minimum required sample size was 210 respondents ( $10 \times 21 = 210$ ), all of whom were customers of bread and cake shops in Sinabang. Data were measured using a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive analysis was conducted using SPSS, while direct hypothesis testing was performed using the SEM-AMOS method. Indirect hypothesis testing was carried out using the Sobel test. The results indicate that, descriptively, all research variables fall within the “good” category. Regarding direct effects, service quality has a positive influence on brand image, whereas price perception does not have a significant effect on brand image. Purchase intention is positively influenced by both service quality and brand image, while price perception negatively affects purchase intention. Mediation analysis reveals that brand image partially mediates the relationship between service quality and purchase intention; however, brand image does not mediate the relationship between price perception and purchase intention.

**Keyword :** service quality, price perception, brand image, purchase interest

## **Introduction**

The evolution of the business landscape in the era of globalization and digitalization has profoundly impacted market dynamics, particularly within Indonesia's small and medium enterprise (SME) sector. One industry notably affected is the culinary sector, including bakeries and cake shops. Market competition is no longer limited by geographic boundaries but has expanded to regional and national levels due to the rise of digital platforms and e-commerce. Consequently, businesses are increasingly required to develop adaptive marketing strategies that focus on enhancing customer satisfaction and fostering long-term loyalty.

In modern marketing, purchase intention is a crucial indicator of a consumer's willingness to make a buying decision, either directly or indirectly. It reflects the psychological and emotional appeal a product holds for an individual, ultimately motivating the decision to purchase. Purchase intention does not arise spontaneously; rather, it is shaped through a complex process involving perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, past experiences, and social influences.

Consumer purchase intention has become a central focus in contemporary marketing strategies, particularly within the culinary industry, including bakeries and cake shops. It reflects a consumer's mental and emotional readiness to make a purchase, typically influenced by prior experiences, perceptions of product and service quality, and beliefs about the value received from the transaction (V. A. Zeithaml et al., 2020). Rather than being a momentary or impulsive decision, purchase intention results from a complex interplay of rational and emotional factors shaped by elements such as service quality, price perception, and brand image.

In a local business context like Sinabang, consumer purchase interest plays a crucial role in reflecting a bakery's ability to cultivate long-term customer relationships. A high level of purchase interest often leads to repeat purchases, increased customer loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth—factors essential for micro and small enterprises aiming to expand their market reach and sustain business growth.

However, in an era characterized by increasingly open and dynamic competition, sustaining consumer purchase interest presents a significant challenge. Consumers are now exposed to a wide array of choices, not only from local businesses but also from international products readily accessible through digital platforms. Therefore, businesses such as bread and cake shops in Sinabang must provide a compelling shopping experience defined by excellent service quality, fair pricing, and a brand image that fosters an emotional connection. The absence or weakness of any of these elements may lead consumers to shift their preferences to competitors perceived as offering greater value.

The current situation in Sinabang reveals that, despite the increasing number of bread and cake shops, their overall competitiveness remains underdeveloped. A preliminary survey of 30 respondents indicated that consumer interest in products from these establishments is still relatively low, with an average score of 3.37, placing it in the "not good" category. This suggests that many of these businesses have yet to effectively capture consumer attention or create a compelling incentive for both initial and repeat purchases.

Purchase intention is a crucial aspect of consumer behavior, representing an individual's willingness to buy a product based on their perceptions, past experiences, and personal preferences. It is influenced not only by rational factors such as price and product quality but also by emotional elements, including brand attachment and the overall shopping experience. In this context, brand image plays a pivotal role, reflecting how consumers perceive a brand. This perception is developed over time through accumulated experiences, visual communication, and direct interactions with products and services.

Unfortunately, the results of a preliminary survey on brand image indicate that consumer perceptions of bread and cake shops in Sinabang have not yet evolved into a strong and positive brand identity. The average score of 3.38 reflects a limited emotional and rational appeal generated by these brands. This issue is further emphasized by two key indicators that received particularly low ratings: the perceived suitability of products for diverse customer segments and the stores' ability to understand and respond to customer needs. These findings reveal a significant gap between consumer expectations and the actual experiences provided by these businesses.

One of the key factors influencing brand image formation is service quality. According to the SERVQUAL model proposed by (Parasuraman et al., 1988), service quality is determined by five core dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. A preliminary survey revealed that several aspects such as cleanliness, store layout, staff responsiveness, and personalized attention to customers were perceived as suboptimal. Specifically, the scores for tangibles (3.23), responsiveness (3.07), and empathy (3.33) indicate that service performance fell short of consumer expectations. This gap between expectations and actual service delivery has contributed to negative brand perceptions, ultimately leading to a decline in consumer purchase interest.

Another important factor influencing consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions is price perception. This concept extends beyond a simple evaluation of whether a product is cheap or expensive; it encompasses consumers' judgments regarding the fairness and appropriateness of the price relative to the benefits received. In this study, the average score for price perception was 3.38, with specific indicators such as perceived price fairness (3.27), value for benefits (3.07), and price-to-quality ratio (3.19) suggesting that some consumers perceive a mismatch between the price paid and the quality or value obtained. Such discrepancies can contribute to negative brand perceptions, which may, in turn, reduce consumers' willingness to purchase or recommend the product to others.

These findings indicate that bread and cake shops in Sinabang have not yet achieved an optimal integration of service quality, price perception, and brand image as foundational elements for enhancing

consumer purchase intention. Challenges such as limited human resources, inadequate customer service training, lack of transparency in pricing information, and weak digital marketing communication pose significant barriers to building a strong and sustainable brand image. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, a well-developed brand image is a critical differentiator for attracting and retaining customers.

Therefore, it is essential to conduct in-depth research on the influence of service quality and price perception on brand image, as well as the mediating role of brand image in shaping purchase intentions. The findings of this study are expected to provide a foundation for developing business strategies that align with consumer needs and expectations, thereby promoting customer loyalty and ensuring long-term sustainability in the local culinary sector.

## **Literature Review**

### **Purchase Intention**

An individual's tendency to respond positively to a product before ultimately making a purchase decision (Amartuvshin et al., 2021). (B. Lin & Shen, 2023) state that purchase intention is a consumer's subjective tendency to choose a product. It consists of consumer attitudes toward a particular product and brand, as well as external factors. As a type of consumer psychological activity, it refers to a consumer's willingness and likelihood to purchase a particular product. Meanwhile (Zhang et al., 2022) define purchase intention as a consumer's psychological tendency to purchase a product or service based on an evaluation of the information received. They emphasize that opinion interactions, such as online reviews, can influence changes in consumer purchase intention. Purchase intention is always associated with a company's ability to approach customers through brand image, commercial activities, and superior service to increase customer satisfaction and the probability of purchase intention for subsequent products (Princes et al., 2020).

From these various definitions, it can be concluded that purchase intention is a form of consumer psychological intention or plan to make a purchase that is influenced by product evaluation, information received, price perception, service quality, and brand image. Purchase intention not only reflects an individual's preference for a particular product but is also influenced by external factors, including social recommendations and online reviews. Additionally, external factors such as online reviews, promotions, and social recommendations play a significant role in shaping purchase intention. In today's digital age, consumer opinions on online platforms significantly influence product perception. For example, positive reviews can strengthen trust and increase purchase intention, while negative reviews tend to decrease purchase intention. Therefore, companies need to pay attention to customer experience and maintain their online reputation to ensure a positive perception in the market.

Purchase intention is also often used by companies as a predictive indicator of actual purchasing decisions. When consumers have high purchase intention, their probability of making a purchase also increases. This encourages companies to design effective marketing strategies, such as improving product quality, strengthening brand image, and expanding promotions through digital media to drive stronger purchase intention.

Consumer purchasing intention indicators can be explained through several important components (Amartuvshin et al., 2021) First, interest in seeking information about a product, which arises when a consumer's need is triggered, thus encouraging them to dig deeper. Second, consideration to purchase, which occurs after consumers gather information and compare various brands and product characteristics offered. Third, interest in trying the product, which arises after consumers evaluate the benefits of available products to meet their needs. Fourth, the desire to learn more about the product, which arises as a continuation of initial interest, where consumers want to understand the product details before making a purchase. Finally, the desire to own the product, which indicates consumers' attention to product attributes that are perceived to be able to provide benefits according to their expectations.

## **Brand Image**

(Kotler et al., 2022) define brand image as a consumer's impression of a brand, formed from information received and assessments of the brand's quality, value, and identity. This brand image is influenced by advertising, promotions, consumer reviews, personal experiences, and market reputation. Factors such as logos, product design, and communication styles also contribute to this perception. A positive brand image will increase consumer trust and purchase intention, while a negative or inconsistent image can decrease purchase intention. A strong brand image can provide a sense of security and encourage consumer purchasing decisions.

Brand image emerges as a result of consumers' interpretation of the information they receive, which can be influenced by a company's symbols, logos, and visual elements (Kotler et al., 2022). Logos and symbols not only serve to differentiate them from competitors but also represent the quality, vision, and mission of the company. A brand is more than just a name or symbol; it is a crucial element in the relationship between a company and its consumers, reflecting their perceptions and feelings about the product and its performance (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Brands play a role in building emotional connections, conveying the value, quality, and experience consumers expect. Through branding, companies can communicate the message, uniqueness, and values they want to associate with their products.

A strong brand has the ability to influence consumer purchasing decisions, increase their loyalty, and build lasting, positive relationships between the company and its customers. Over time, through consumers' evolving experiences with the product and their interactions with the company, the brand can grow into a symbol of trust and quality. This provides a significant competitive advantage for companies, especially in markets increasingly saturated with product choices. A strong brand not only plays a role in driving initial purchases but also in maintaining consumer loyalty to the product. The relationship built between a company and consumers through positive experiences creates deep trust in the brand. Over time, the brand becomes a symbol of more than just a product; it represents consistent quality and value that consumers value. In a competitive marketplace, having a trusted brand provides a distinct advantage that differentiates a company from its competitors, makes it easier for the company to maintain market share, and attracts more consumers.

According to (Kotler & Keller, 2018) Brand Image can be measured using the following indicators: (a) Professionalism: reflects the competence, reliability, and experience of a brand in carrying out its operations. (b) Modern: Modern brands are synonymous with innovation, the latest technology, and an understanding of market trends. (c) Serving All Segments of Society: Brands that serve various segments of society reflect high inclusivity and accessibility. (d) Customer Orientation: A customer-oriented brand image reflects concern for consumer needs and satisfaction. (e) Popularity: Popular brands have a strong image in the public eye, indicating that many consumers recognize and choose them because of quality, positive experiences, or dominance in the market.

## **Service Quality**

(Kotler et al., 2022) state that service quality is defined as a customer's assessment of the general superiority or distinctiveness of a product or service. Service quality is a dominant variable in increasing customer trust. Companies must pay attention to every aspect that influences the customer service experience to build good relationships with customers (Hidayat & Sulistyani, 2022). According to (Sulistiyowati, 2018), service quality is all efforts focused on meeting customer needs and expectations with accuracy in delivery, thus creating a balanced match with customer desires. According to Zeithaml, (2013) service quality is a key element in customer evaluation, which includes physical products and important factors for customer satisfaction. Consumers assess service quality based on technical findings, implementation procedures, and the quality of the physical environment where the service is provided.

According to Kasim, (2017) service is any form of individual or organizational effort to provide

satisfaction to customers, employees, and leaders. According to Rusydi, (2017) service quality reflects a company's ability to provide superior service compared to competitors. Gronroos in Harrison, (2019), defines service quality as a series of intangible activities formed through positive interactions between a company and its customers.

From the definitions above, service quality can be defined as a customer's assessment of the superiority or uniqueness of a product or service, related to efforts to meet customer needs and expectations appropriately and appropriately. This quality involves various elements, such as the physical product, the implementation process, and the physical environment in which the service is delivered. Good service is created through positive interactions between the company and the customer, which rely not only on technical aspects but also on the accuracy in delivering services according to customer expectations. Superior service quality reflects a company's ability to meet customer expectations and provide satisfaction beyond competitors

According to (Parasuraman et al., 1988) in (Kuo et al., 2018) stated that there are several indicators to measure the quality of service contained in the SERVQUAL elements, namely as follows: (a) Reliability: This refers to the company's ability to provide promised services accurately and consistently. (b) Responsiveness: Responsiveness refers to the company's willingness and ability to help customers and respond to their requests or problems. (c) Assurances: Assurances relate to the sense of trust given by the company to customers, that they will receive safe and reliable service. (d) Empathy: Empathy refers to the personal attention given by the company to its customers. (e) Tangibles: This includes physical aspects that are visible to customers, such as facilities, equipment, employees, and communications used to deliver the service.

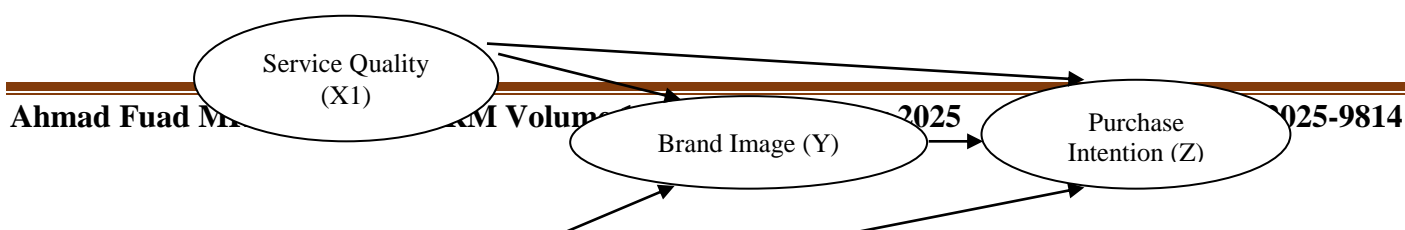
## Price Perception

According to (Kotler et al., 2022), price perception is a consumer's subjective assessment of the price of a product or service, and is not only based on the absolute price, but also on the perceived value they receive. Price perception is defined as the process by which consumers interpret the value of a price and associate it with the goods or services they desire. In other words, price is a factor that determines the level of consumer purchasing intention. If the price is perceived as more affordable, consumer purchasing intention tends to increase (Anas et al., 2023). (Monroe, 2003) explains that price perception can be determined by the perceived cost and quality perceived by consumers when purchasing a product. Price perception reflects the monetary value and non-monetary sacrifices made by customers to obtain a product.

The definitions above show that price perception is a multidimensional concept that encompasses both the cognitive and emotional aspects of consumers in assessing the value of a product or service. A deep understanding of price perception can help companies design effective pricing strategies to attract and retain customers. According to (Kotler et al., 2022), measuring price perception can be done using the following indicators: (a) Price Fairness: Consumers assess price fairness based on the benefits received and comparison with competitors' prices. (b) Perceived Value: The more commensurate the price is with the quality, benefits, and service, the more positive the consumer's perception. (c) Price-Quality Inference: Consumers tend to associate high prices with better quality. (d) Price Consciousness: Price-conscious consumers are highly sensitive to price changes and tend to compare before purchasing. (e) Reference Price: Consumers' comparison prices are based on experience or external information, such as the prices of similar products in other stores. (f) Price Transparency: The ability of consumers to easily understand price structures and compare them.

## Research Model and Hypothesis

The framework of thought in this research is as shown in Figure





**Figure 1. Research Model**

**Descriptive Hypothesis**

H<sub>1</sub> : Service Quality, Price Perception, Brand Image, Purchase Interest of Bread and Cake Shop customers in Sinabang are good.

**Direct Effect**

H<sub>2</sub> : Service Quality influences Brand Image

H<sub>3</sub> : Price Perception influences Brand Image

H<sub>4</sub> : Service Quality influences Purchase Intention

H<sub>5</sub> : Price Perception influences Purchase Intention

H<sub>6</sub> : Brand Image influences Purchase Intention

**Indirect Effect**

H<sub>7</sub> : Brand Image Mediates the Influence of Service Quality on Purchase Intention

H<sub>8</sub> : Brand Image Mediates the Influence of Price Perception on Purchase Intention.

**Novelty**

This research focuses on a specific and contextual subject: a bread and cake shop in Sinabang. Sinabang is an island region with limited access to transportation and logistics compared to urban areas, resulting in distinct market characteristics and consumer behavior. Studies examining the relationship between service quality, price perception, brand image, and purchase intention in remote areas such as Simeulue remain scarce in the marketing literature. Therefore, this research offers a valuable contribution to the understanding of marketing strategies in geographically constrained regions.

The next innovation lies in incorporating brand image as a mediating variable within the research model. Most previous studies have examined only the direct effects of service quality and price perception on purchase intention, without exploring how brand image may strengthen or weaken these relationships. By adopting this approach, the study identifies the strategic role of brand image in shaping positive consumer perceptions, particularly in the bakery and cake industry in regions relatively distant from economic centers. This is significant because a strong brand image is believed to enhance consumer loyalty and trust, especially when access to information and product options is limited.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the development of locally based business strategies, particularly for MSMEs in island regions. The strategic insights derived from this study are expected to assist similar MSMEs in formulating competitive pricing and improving service quality to foster a positive brand image among consumers. Additionally, this research has the potential to promote the optimization of digital marketing strategies, including social media and local e-commerce platforms, to expand market access and sustainably enhance product competitiveness.

Overall, this research not only contributes to academic understanding of the influence of service quality and price perception on brand image and purchase intention but also offers strategic guidance for the development of MSMEs in remote areas. By adopting a local context-based approach, this study enriches the marketing literature related to the bakery and cake industry, particularly in regions with limited access, such as Sinabang.

**Research methods**

This research was conducted at a bread and cake shop in Sinabang, Aceh. The location was selected due to the bakery's popularity as a well-known culinary establishment in the area. The study focused on

consumers shopping at the bakery, examining how service quality and price perceptions influence brand image and, subsequently, purchase intention.

According to (Sugiyono, 2017) and (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019), an infinite population is one whose number of members cannot be determined with certainty because it continuously changes over time. Therefore, this study employs a non-probability sampling technique using purposive sampling, which involves selecting samples based on specific criteria, such as shopping experience at the store.

The sample size for this study was determined based on the approach proposed by (Sugiyono, 2017), which recommends a minimum sample size of 5 to 10 times the number of research indicators. Since this study employs 21 indicators, the minimum required sample size is 210 respondents ( $10 \times 21 = 210$ ). This sample size is considered sufficient to yield reliable and accurate data for statistical analyses, such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Using purposive sampling and a representative sample, this study aims to examine the influence of service quality and price perception on brand image, as well as their impact on customer purchasing intentions at a bread and cake shop in Sinabang.

## Results and Discussion

### Descriptive Hypothesis

Descriptive hypothesis testing was conducted using a one-sample test with a cutoff value of 3.41, yielding the following results:

**Table 1. One Sample T Test**

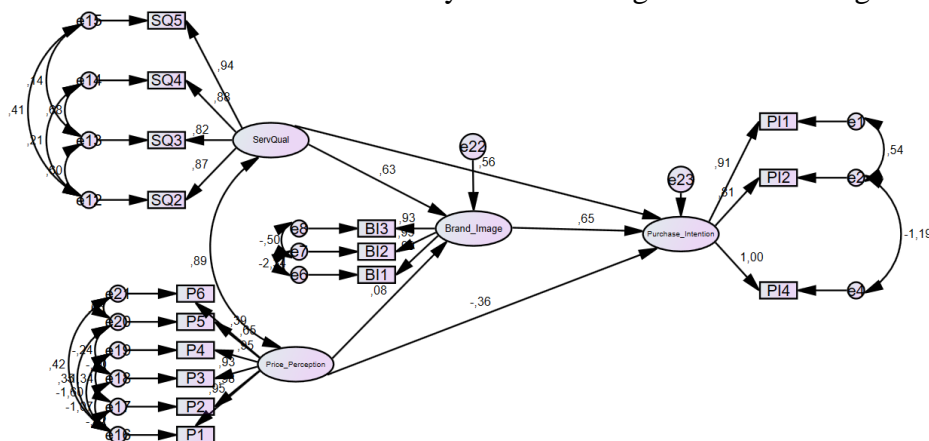
One-Sample Test							
	Test Value = 3.41						
	Mean of Respondent	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Purchase Intention	3.91	54.137	209	.000	16.16143	15.5729	16.7499
Brand Image	3.75	48.964	209	.000	15.34238	14.7247	15.9601
ServQual	3.69	48.996	209	.000	15.05190	14.4463	15.6575
Price Perception	3.42	47.056	209	.000	17.09476	16.3786	17.8109

Source: Processed data (2024)

Based on the results of the analysis of respondents' perceptions of each variable, the average value obtained was greater than 3.41. Furthermore, the results of the one-sample t-test as shown in Table 4.8 above show that all variables in this study obtained a sig value (2-tailed) smaller than 0.05. This result proves that all variables in this study have been running well at the bread and cake shop in Sinabang. This value also proves that the test of hypothesis 1 is accepted where  $H_{a1}$  is accepted and  $H_{01}$  is rejected.

### Direct Hypothesis

The results of the SEM-AMOS full model analysis data testing are shown in Figure 2 below:



**Figure 2 Full SEM Model**

The full SEM model test above shows the results of direct hypothesis testing. Direct hypothesis testing aims to demonstrate the direct influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables and to validate theoretical studies and previous research. Based on the full SEM model image above, the results of direct hypothesis testing are presented in Table 2 below

**Table 2: Regression Weight Structural Equation Model**

Endogen	Eksogen	Estimate		S.E.	C.R.	P
		Std	Ustd			
Brand_Image	<-- ServQual	.631	.858	.172	4.973	***
Brand_Image	<-- Price_Perception	.080	.080	.117	.689	.491
Purchase_Intention	<-- Brand_Image	.645	.537	.055	9.810	***
Purchase_Intention	<-- ServQual	.562	.636	.134	4.748	***
Purchase_Intention	<-- Price_Perception	-.364	-.303	.083	-3.677	***

Source: Processed data (2024)

Based on the results of the direct hypothesis testing analysis in table 4.15 above, the statistical equation can be formulated as follows:

Brand Image = 0,631 Service Quality + 0,080 Price Perception

Purchase Intention = 0.562 Service Quality + -0.364 Price Perception + 0,645 Brand Image

The results of the direct hypothesis testing, as shown in Table 4.17 above, indicate that the path coefficient and significance values support the acceptance of Hypothesis 2. Specifically, the Critical Ratio (CR) value is 4.973, which is greater than 1.96, and the Probability (P) value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. These values demonstrate that  $H_{a2}$  is accepted and  $H_{02}$  is rejected, meaning that service quality has a positive effect on brand image. Conversely, the results of Hypothesis 3 testing show that price perception does not affect brand image; therefore,  $H_{a3}$  is rejected and  $H_{03}$  is accepted. This conclusion is supported by a CR value of 0.689, which is less than 1.96, and a P value of 0.491, which is greater than 0.05.

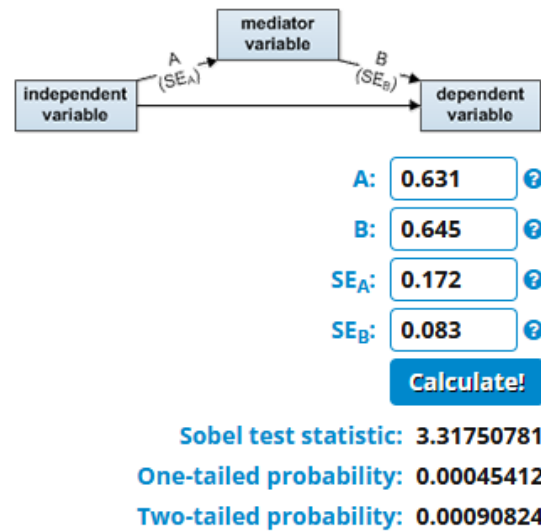
The results of testing hypothesis 4 indicate that  $H_{a4}$  is accepted and  $H_{04}$  is rejected. This is supported by a CR value of 4.748 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. These values demonstrate that service quality has a positive and significant effect on increasing consumer purchasing intention in bread and cake shops in Sinabang. Conversely, hypothesis 5 is rejected, with  $H_{a5}$  rejected and  $H_{05}$  accepted. This finding shows that price perception has a negative effect on consumer purchasing intention in these shops, as evidenced by a CR value of -3.677 (which is less than 1.96) and a p-value of 0.000. Finally, the results of hypothesis 6 testing confirm that brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchasing intention in bread and cake shops in Sinabang, with a CR value of 9.810 and a p-value of 0.000. Therefore,  $H_{a6}$  is accepted and  $H_{06}$  is rejected.

### Indirect Hypothesis

The explanation of the mediation hypothesis in this study can be explained as follows:

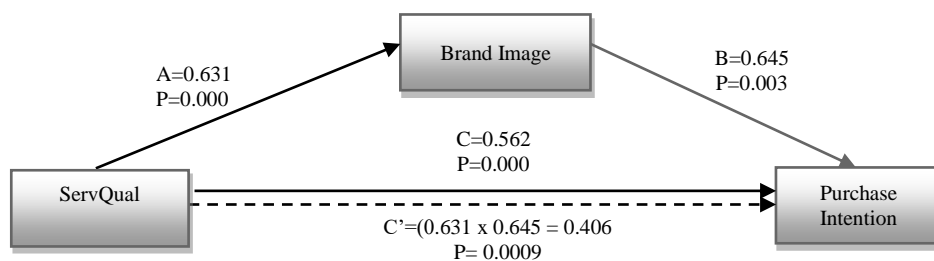
The results of testing using the Sobel calculator for testing hypothesis 7 in this study are as shown in Figure 4.5 below





**Figure 3 Results of Sobel Analysis of Hypothesis 7**

From the results of testing Hypothesis 7, which examines the effect of service quality on purchase intention through brand image, a t-statistic value of 3.317 ( $>1.96$ ) and a p-value of 0.000 ( $<0.05$ ) were obtained. These results indicate that Hypothesis 7 is accepted, with Ha7 supported and H07 rejected. This demonstrates that brand image partially mediates the effect of service quality on purchase intention. Based on the significance calculation for path C' using the Sobel test, as shown in the following figure 4,



**Figure 4. Diagram of the Mediation Effect of Hypothesis 7**

From the chart above, it can be seen that the significant role of brand image in mediating the influence of service quality on purchasing intention is 0.406. This means that an increase in brand image can enhance the effect of service quality on purchasing intention by 40.6%.

Next, we test hypothesis 8 (H8), which examines the influence of price perception on purchasing intention through brand image, using the Sobel test calculator, as shown in Figure 5 below.

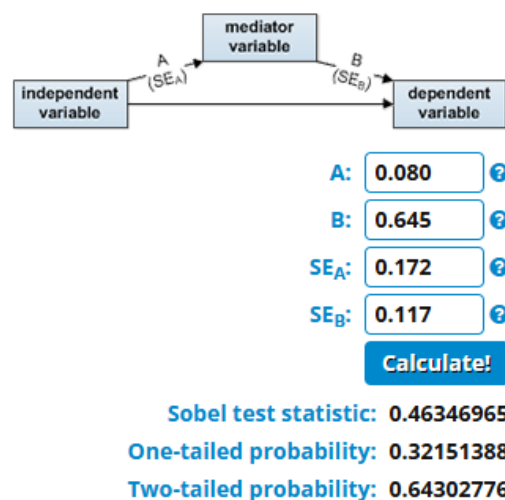


Figure 5. Sobel Calculator Hypothesis Testing 8

The results of testing Hypothesis 8, which examined the influence of price perception on purchasing intention through brand image, yielded a t-statistic value of 0.463 (less than 1.96) and a p-value of 0.643 (greater than 0.05). These findings indicate that Hypothesis 8 was rejected; thus, the alternative hypothesis (Ha8) was not supported, and the null hypothesis (H08) was accepted. This demonstrates that brand image does not mediate the effect of price perception on consumer purchasing intention in bread and cake shops in Sinabang.

## **Discussion**

### **The Influence of Service Quality on Brand Image**

The results of direct hypothesis testing using the SEM AMOS statistical tool demonstrate that service quality has a positive influence on improving the brand image of bread and cake shops in Sinabang. This is evidenced by a C.R. value of 4.973, which is greater than 1.96, and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Erpurini et al., 2023), (Y.-H. Lin et al., 2021), (Ali et al., 2022), and (Nugraha, 2018), which also showed that service quality positively impacts brand image. Therefore, the results support the acceptance of hypothesis 2, with Ha2 accepted and H02 rejected.

The analysis results indicate that the standardized estimate value is 0.631. This figure suggests that service quality is the primary factor influencing brand perception in consumers' minds, meaning that improved service quality can enhance the brand image of the bread and cake shop by 63.1%. This represents a relatively strong effect and demonstrates that service quality is a key determinant in shaping positive consumer perceptions of a culinary business brand. In other words, the better the service quality perceived by customers whether in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, or physical evidence the more favorable their perception of the store's brand.

These findings have significant implications for bread and cake shop owners in Sinabang: maintaining and enhancing service quality should be a top priority in establishing and sustaining a strong brand image in the minds of customers. An excellent service strategy not only attracts customers but also serves as the foundation for building loyalty and achieving a long-term competitive advantage.

(Erpurini et al., 2023) highlighted that service aspects such as friendliness, punctuality, and professionalism from MSMEs can create a positive perception of their business in the eyes of customers. This is especially important for small businesses that lack large promotional budgets, making service a primary means of building brand image. Furthermore, (Y.-H. Lin et al., 2021) emphasized that high-quality service can foster an emotional connection between customers and brands. The trust that develops from consistent and satisfying service experiences directly impacts customer loyalty, making the brand more memorable and valued, even in highly competitive markets. (Ali et al., 2022) found that service quality not only increases customer satisfaction but also enhances the brand's reputation over the long term. Their study underscores that brand reputation is shaped not only by advertising or products but also by customers' actual experiences when interacting with service providers. When customers feel valued, heard, and well-served, they develop a positive perception of the brand and are more likely to recommend it to others, ultimately strengthening the brand's market position.

Based on the results of the respondent perception analysis, it is crucial for bread and cake shop managers in Sinabang to focus on enhancing service quality across five key dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance. To strengthen brand image, stores should improve the physical appearance of both the store and products (tangibility) to make them more attractive and hygienic, ensure consistent and accurate service delivery (reliability), increase the speed and responsiveness of staff when attending to customers both in person and through online platforms (responsiveness), and demonstrate personalized attention to customer needs and preferences (empathy). Furthermore, it is essential for stores to build trust through product quality assurance and professional service, including comprehensive staff training and clear communication (assurance). By optimizing these five dimensions, the brand image will be enhanced in the eyes of consumers, fostering loyalty and positioning the store as a leader in the local market competition.

### **The Influence of Price Perception on Brand Image**

The results of testing hypothesis 3 obtained a CR value of 0.689 <1.96 and a P value of 0.491 >0.05. These results prove that hypothesis 3 is rejected where  $H_{a3}$  is rejected and  $H_{03}$  is accepted, which means that price perception does not have a significant influence on the brand image of bread and cake shops in Sinabang. These results also confirm that there is no significant relationship between price perception and brand image in bread and cake shops in Sinabang. The results of this study are in line with the results of research conducted by (Hartanti et al., 2024) and (Kristiani & Keni, 2022) and reject the results of research (Nugraha, 2018).

These findings indicate that consumer perceptions of price, including fairness, perceived value, and price transparency, do not significantly contribute to brand image formation. In the context of a bread and cake shop in Sinabang, consumers likely prioritize other aspects such as product quality, service, and store atmosphere over price. This finding is supported by research by (Hartanti et al., 2024) and (Kristiani & Keni, 2022), which found that in the small-to-medium food industry, price is not the sole or primary factor in brand image formation.

Although the results of this study indicate that price perception does not have a significant impact, this does not mean that the price aspect can be completely ignored. In an effort to improve brand image, bread and cake shop managers in Sinabang still need to pay attention to the six price perception indicators used, as all of them have the potential to be supporting factors in strengthening consumer loyalty and trust, such as maintaining reasonable prices. Consumers will feel valued when product prices are considered reasonable and not excessive compared to similar products on the market. Therefore, shop owners need to periodically benchmark prices against local competitors to ensure prices remain competitive.

Furthermore, the perceived value of the product must be optimized. While the product may not be cheap, brand image can be strengthened if consumers feel they are getting more than just the product, such as friendly service, exclusive packaging, or a pleasant shopping experience. The balance between price and quality is also crucial. Brand image can be enhanced if consumers perceive the quality of the product's taste, ingredients, and appearance as equal to or even higher than the price paid. Therefore, it is crucial for stores to maintain consistent product quality.

Price sensitivity can be used as input into promotional strategies. Stores can take advantage of specific periods to offer discounts, bundles, or loyalty programs without altering the brand's perception of "cheap." This will actually convey the impression that the store is attentive to its consumers' needs. Reference prices must be managed strategically. Consumers typically have price benchmarks based on previous experiences or from other brands. Therefore, stores must adjust prices to stay within a reasonable reference range for the local market, without compromising the image of premium or quality products. Price transparency can increase trust and create a positive brand perception. Stores should ensure that price lists are clear, not misleading, and free of hidden additional costs. This openness will foster positive perceptions of business integrity and strengthen the brand image.

Overall, although the research results indicate that price perception does not significantly influence brand image, these six indicators still need to be improved and synergized with other elements such as service quality, store visuals, social media branding, and product innovation. A comprehensive approach will provide a greater opportunity to build a strong, memorable brand image and differentiate the bread and cake shop in Sinabang from other competitors.

### **The Influence of Service Quality on Purchase Intention at Bread and Cake Shops in Sinabang**

The results of testing hypothesis 4, namely the effect of service quality on purchasing intention at a bread and cake shop in Sinabang, obtained a CR value of 4.748 and a P value of 0.000 <0.05. These results prove that service quality has a positive and significant effect on purchasing intention, or  $H_{a4}$  is accepted and  $H_{04}$  is rejected. This means that the higher the quality of service provided, the greater the likelihood of consumers having an interest in purchasing products at the bread and cake shop.

These findings corroborate previous research by (Rahayu et al., 2023) and (Ali et al., 2022) which demonstrated that service quality plays a significant role in driving consumer purchase intention. However, these findings contradict research by (Tarmuji & Gemilang, 2023), which found that service quality had no significant effect on purchase intention. This difference may be due to variations in consumer preferences, geographic context, and service standards applied at each business. In the context of a bread and cake shop in Sinabang, these findings confirm that local consumers place a high value on service quality as a key factor in their purchasing decisions.

Based on the results of the respondent perception analysis, to increase consumer purchasing intention, the management of the bread and cake shop in Sinabang needs to improve and strengthen its services based on five main dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Improvements in the tangible aspect can be made by maintaining store cleanliness, beautifying product displays, and creating a comfortable and visually appealing store atmosphere. Regarding reliability, the store needs to ensure consistency in taste quality and product availability, as well as fulfilling service promises such as timely serving. Furthermore, the responsiveness aspect can be improved by training employees to be alert, responsive, and proactive in responding to customer questions, complaints, and requests.

Furthermore, assurance can be built through the professionalism and knowledge of staff in explaining products, as well as providing consumers with a sense of security and confidence that the products offered are hygienic and high-quality. Meanwhile, empathy can be demonstrated by showing personal attention to customers, such as greeting customers in a friendly manner, remembering regular orders, or providing special service on special days. (Ali et al., 2022) emphasized that emotional attention provided by staff significantly influences the formation of purchase intentions.

Furthermore, the use of technology can also support services, such as providing online ordering systems, digital payments, and personalized promotions through social media, all of which provide convenience and comfort for consumers. (Rahayu et al., 2023) showed that integrating conventional and digital service quality can strengthen customer loyalty and increase purchase frequency. Therefore, an innovative, technology-adaptive, and emotional-focused service approach can be an effective strategy for increasing purchasing intention.

Thus, improving service quality not only serves as a driving factor for purchasing intention but also serves as a crucial strategy for creating customer satisfaction and loyalty. Continuous efforts to improve service quality will strengthen the brand image and position the bakery and cake shop in an increasingly competitive market.

### **The Influence of Price Perception on Purchase Intention at Bread and Cake Shops in Sinabang**

The results of testing hypothesis 5, namely the influence of price perception on purchasing intention at a bread and cake shop in Sinabang, obtained a CR value of -3.677 and a P value of 0.000. These test results prove that the test of hypothesis 5 is rejected or  $H_{a5}$  is rejected and  $H_{05}$  is accepted, which means that price perception has a negative effect on purchasing intention. The standardized estimate value of -0.364 indicates that an increase in price or consumer perception of high prices will reduce their purchasing intention in the products sold.

These test results align with research (Kusuma & Sujana, 2021), which states that the perception of excessively high prices without an increase in perceived value or benefits negatively impacts purchasing decisions. This reinforces the argument that in price-sensitive markets, consumers will tend to delay or even cancel purchase intentions when they perceive the product's price to be disproportionate to the value received. Conversely, these results contradict research (Ferdiansyah et al., 2025), which found that price perception actually has a positive influence on purchase intention, as in their research context, higher prices are associated with better quality (price–quality inference). These differences in results indicate that price perception is highly contextual and dependent on market characteristics and local consumer perceptions.

This value indicates that increasing the price of each product offered at the bread and cake shop in Sinabang will reduce consumer purchasing intention by 36.4%. This indicates that price increases or consumers' perception of high prices will reduce their purchasing intention in the products sold. This finding indicates that consumers have a fairly high sensitivity to price. Therefore, strategies to increase purchasing intention need to focus on how stores can manage price perceptions more effectively. One way to do this is by emphasizing perceived value, namely making consumers feel that the price paid is comparable to or even less than the benefits they receive. This can be achieved through improving product quality, appropriate portion sizes, attractive packaging, and friendly and efficient service.

Furthermore, the aspects of fairness and appropriateness of price to quality must be maintained. Stores need to ensure that their prices are reasonable compared to competitors in the local market, especially for price-sensitive consumer segments. A reference pricing strategy is also important; stores can set prices within a range that aligns with consumer expectations based on previous experience or market prices. Furthermore, price transparency is also key to building trust, so consumers don't feel cheated by hidden fees or price discrepancies on the display and at checkout.



Additionally, to address the negative influence of price perception on purchase intention, stores can adopt promotional strategies such as limited-time discounts, product bundling (value packages), membership systems with shopping points, or purchase bonuses to increase perceived value without having to directly lower prices. (Kusuma & Sujana, 2021) also emphasize that appropriate promotions can be a means of positively and effectively managing price perception.

Thus, although the results of this study indicate a negative influence of price perception on purchase intention, this does not mean that stores should immediately lower prices. Rather, what is more important is how stores can create a perception of fairness, reasonableness, and commensurate with the quality of the product and experience offered. These efforts will significantly contribute to increasing purchase intention and strengthening consumer loyalty in a competitive local market.

### **The Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Intention at Bread and Cake Shops in Sinabang**

The results of testing hypothesis 6, namely the influence of brand image on purchasing intention, obtained a CR value of 9.810 and a P value of 0.000. This value proves that  $H_{a6}$  is accepted and  $H_{06}$  is rejected, or brand image has a positive and significant effect on increasing purchasing intention. The magnitude of the role of brand image in influencing the increase in consumer purchasing intention is 0.645 or 64.5% where the better the brand image of the bread and cake shop in Sinabang, the higher the purchasing intention will be by 64.5%.

The results of this study align with those of (Ridwan, 2024), (Rosadi & Kusdiyanto, 2024), (Madani et al., 2023), and (Dash et al., 2021) which also show that brand image plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior related to purchase intention. Conversely, the results of (Tarmuji & Gemilang, 2023) and (Rahayu et al., 2023) show conflicting findings, emphasizing the importance of consistent efforts in building and maintaining a positive brand image to achieve the desired goal of increasing purchase intention.

To encourage increased purchasing intention through brand image, bread and cake shop managers in Sinabang need to develop a strategy based on five key brand image indicators: professionalism, a modern impression, the ability to serve all segments of society, customer orientation (concern for customers), and popularity. In terms of professionalism, the store must demonstrate well-organized management and consistent, reliable service. This can be achieved by providing regular training to employees, ensuring store cleanliness, and improving the quality of interactions with customers. A professional image will create trust and a sense of comfort for consumers, so they are more likely to return to the store. Furthermore, a modern impression can be built by presenting a contemporary interior design, product innovation (such as new flavors or attractive packaging), and the use of digital media for promotions, online ordering, and cashless payments, reflecting a store that is adaptive to current developments.

To serve all segments of society, stores need to offer products in a variety of price points and sizes to reach consumers from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Strategies such as mini-packs for students or bundled packages for families can increase the store's inclusiveness to a wider market. Furthermore, in terms of customer concern or orientation, it is important for stores to actively address customer needs, preferences, and complaints. This can be done by providing a suggestion box, conducting regular customer satisfaction surveys, and responding quickly to reviews on social media. Customers who feel cared for will have higher loyalty. Finally, popularity, as an indicator of brand image, can be enhanced through creative promotional campaigns, collaborations with local influencers, participation in community events, and strengthening a presence on digital platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business. Word of mouth strategies through positive customer reviews can also drive broader brand recognition.

By improving these five aspects in an integrated manner, the bread and cake shop in Sinabang is not only able to build a strong and trustworthy brand image but also enhance the perception of value in the eyes of consumers. This will ultimately drive a significant and sustainable increase in purchasing intention, while strengthening the store's competitive position amidst increasingly fierce market competition.

### **The Influence of Service Quality on Purchase Interest at Bread and Cake Shops in Sinabang Through Brand Image**

The results of the hypothesis 7 test prove that brand image partially mediates the effect of service quality on purchase intention. This can be seen from the results of the Sobel test which produced a Sobel statistic value of  $3.317 > 1.96$  and a P value of  $0.0009 < 0.05$ . Both values indicate that the mediation that occurs is statistically significant, so it can be concluded that brand image significantly mediates the



influence of service quality on consumer purchasing decisions. Partial mediation means that although service quality has a direct influence on purchase intention, some of that influence is channeled through brand image.

Furthermore, based on the C' path relationship shown in Figure 4, it is known that the contribution of brand image in mediating the influence of service quality on purchase intention is 0.406 or 40.6%. This means that 40.6% of the influence of service quality on purchase intention is channeled through consumer perceptions of brand image. This indicates that perceptions of brand image are an important channel that strengthens the impact of the service received by consumers on their decision to purchase a product.

These findings have important implications: improving service quality alone is insufficient without simultaneously strengthening brand image. When consumers receive excellent service in terms of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, this will shape a positive perception of the brand. If this brand perception is strong and consistent, it will increase the likelihood of consumers making repeat purchases or recommending the product to others. Therefore, the management of the bread and cake shop in Sinabang must not only focus on excellent service, but also on how each aspect of the service reflects a professional, modern, and trustworthy brand identity in the eyes of consumers.

Thus, a brand image strengthening strategy needs to be directed at enhancing the effectiveness of the services provided, through elements such as consistent visual branding, compelling brand communications, and service that reflects brand values. This will make brand image a key force in strengthening customer loyalty and purchasing intention in the long term.

### **The Influence of Price Perception on Purchase Interest at Bread and Cake Shops in Sinabang Through Brand Image**

The results of the hypothesis 8 test were rejected, with  $H_{a8}$  rejected and  $H_{08}$  accepted, meaning brand image does not mediate the influence of price perception on purchase intention. This is evident from the Sobel test results, which produced a Sobel statistic value of  $0.463 < 1.96$  and a P value of  $0.643 > 0.05$ . These findings indicate that the influence of price perception on purchase intention is direct and not mediated by perceptions of brand image. This means that even if consumers perceive a price as affordable or appropriate, this does not necessarily shape or strengthen brand image, nor does it increase its impact on purchasing decisions through brand perception. Consumers tend to assess price directly when making purchasing decisions without considering how the price reflects the brand image of the bakery and cake shop in question.

The failure of brand image to act as a mediating variable in this context may be due to several factors. First, consumers in local markets like Sinabang are more sensitive to direct price than to brand image, especially for daily necessities like bread and cakes. Second, if the store's brand positioning is not strong enough or does not yet have a specific price association in the minds of consumers, then the resulting price perception will not significantly influence brand image formation.

Therefore, the recommended improvement strategy is to clarify the price position within the brand image framework, for example by communicating the value offered explicitly through price campaigns, discount programs, or product bundling that illustrates that the set price reflects the quality and character of the brand. In addition, it is important for the bread and cake shop in Sinabang to build a brand narrative that is consistent and aligned with the pricing strategy, so that the price perception formed can indirectly strengthen the brand image and ultimately increase consumer purchasing intention more comprehensively.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the study on bread and cake shops in Sinabang can be concluded as follows:

- a) Service quality, price perception, brand image, and purchase intention are good ( $H_1$  is accepted).
- b) Price quality has a positive and significant effect on brand image ( $H_2$  is accepted).
- c) Price perception has no effect on brand image ( $H_3$  is rejected).
- d) Service quality has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention at bread and cake shops in Sinabang ( $H_4$  is accepted).
- e) Price perception has a negative and significant effect on purchase intention at bread and cake shops in Sinabang ( $H_5$  is rejected).
- f) Brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention at bread and cake shops in Sinabang ( $H_6$  is accepted).

- g) Brand image partially mediates the effect of service quality on purchase intention at bread and cake shops in Sinabang (H7 is accepted).
- h) Brand image does not mediate the effect of price perception on purchase intention at bread and cake shops in Sinabang (H8 is rejected).

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