Brand Image as a Mediator between Promotion, Price, Consumer Attitude, and Purchase Decision of Kao Products

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Abstract

The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry in Indonesia faces intense competition, making it essential for firms to understand the drivers of consumer purchase decisions in tier-3 markets such as Pati Regency. This study examines the effects of promotion, price, and consumer attitude on purchase decisions for Kao products, with brand image as a mediating variable. Using a quantitative explanatory design, data were collected via questionnaires from 100 purposively selected consumers who had purchased Kao products in the previous six months, and analyzed with PLS-SEM. The results show that promotion, price, and consumer attitude each have a positive and significant effect on brand image, and that brand image positively influences purchase decisions. Promotion and price also have significant direct effects on purchase decisions, whereas consumer attitude affects purchase decisions only indirectly through brand image. Mediation analysis indicates partial mediation for promotion and price, and full mediation for consumer attitude. These findings underscore the central role of brand image and suggest that Kao should align promotional activities, value-based pricing, and attitude-building programs to reinforce brand image and strengthen purchase decisions in Pati Regency.

Keywords: *Promotion; Price; Consumer Attitude; Brand Image; Purchase Decision; FMCG; PLS-SEM; Kao; Pati Regency*

1. Introduction

The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry, particularly in the personal care and household products category, faces increasingly complex competitive dynamics in the modern era, driven by more dynamic consumer behavior that is sensitive to product value. Both the global and Indonesian FMCG markets continue to grow, with consumers increasingly seeking a balance between quality and competitive pricing to meet daily needs (Samundeeswari, 2025). This phenomenon demands companies like Kao Corporation to continuously innovate in marketing strategies to maintain market share amid

competition from multinational and local competitor brands. Recent studies confirm that amid market saturation, a deep understanding of purchase decision determinants becomes key to FMCG business sustainability, especially in developing country markets (Wigati, 2024; Zhu et al., 2023; Ferianto, 2025).

Consumer purchase decisions constitute a psychological process that does not stand alone but is influenced by various marketing stimuli such as promotion and price, as well as internal factors like consumer attitude. Research by Ferianto (2025) found that aggressive promotion and value-based pricing significantly impact consumer purchase intentions and decisions. Consistent with this, Wigati (2024) highlights that in the FMCG product category, the combination of competitive pricing and sales promotions (such as discounts or bundling) creates strong purchase urgency. However, Hakim (2024) provides a different perspective that promotion alone is insufficient without support from product quality and strong brand perception. This interaction between external stimuli (promotion, price) and internal responses (attitude) forms the complexity of modern consumer behavior, as explained in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model (Li et al., 2025; Reynaldi, 2024; Wardana et al., 2025).

Despite extensive research on purchase decision factors, significant inconsistencies in findings (research gap) exist, particularly regarding the direct role of promotion and price. Studies such as Prasetyono (2021) and Wigati (2024) conclude that price and promotion significantly and positively affect purchase decisions. However, contradictory findings are presented by Ganim et al. (2021) and Ferianto (2025), who in certain contexts found that promotion does not always directly influence purchase decisions without mediating variables. This inconsistency indicates the need for mediating variables like Brand Image to more comprehensively explain this mechanism of influence (Reynaldi, 2024; Sari, 2024). Ilomata (2024) and Sutiyono & Hadibrata (2020) also emphasize that brand image functions as a cognitive filter translating price and promotion perceptions into purchase confidence, especially for products in intense competition.

Geographically, most FMCG marketing research in Indonesia remains centered on major cities (tier-1), while market dynamics in second-tier cities (tier-3) such as Pati Regency remain rarely explored. Yet consumers in this region possess unique characteristics with high brand loyalty but increasingly rational price considerations, making them a strategic segment for Kao products (BPS, 2024; Kao Indonesia, 2024). Local distributor sales data shows stable demand for Kao products in Pati at Rp 7-12 billion per year, indicating a strong role of brand image in maintaining consumer preference amid competitor price and promotion fluctuations (Internal Kao Pati Data, 2025; Suwardi & Berliana, 2022; Trisnawati et al., 2023). Therefore, specific research in this local context is important to fill literature gaps regarding consumer behavior in regional markets (Bohara et al.,2025).

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the effect of promotion, price, and consumer attitude on purchase decisions with brand image as a mediating variable among Kao product consumers in Pati Regency. This study offers novelty by integrating consumer attitude variables alongside marketing mix elements in a complete mediation model, which remains rarely conducted in similar studies (Wardana et al., 2025; Octavia et al., 2025). The theoretical contribution of this research is expected to strengthen the validity of Planned Behavior theory and the SOR model in the context of low-involvement product marketing (Ajzen, 1991; Kotler & Keller, 2022; Hidayat et al., 2024). Practically, research results are expected to provide strategic guidance for Kao management in designing marketing mix that not only stimulates short-term sales but also strengthens long-term brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2013; Zusrony et al., 2024).

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991) and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model explaining consumer behavior mechanisms in modern marketing contexts. TPB states that consumer purchase decisions are influenced by attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the FMCG marketing context, the SOR model extends this understanding by explaining how external stimuli such as promotion and price (Stimulus) influence consumers' internal conditions such as attitude and brand image perception (Organism), which then drive responses in the form of purchase decisions (Response) (Li et al., 2025; Kotler & Keller, 2022; Wardana et al., 2025). The integration of these two theories is relevant to explain the complex dynamics of Kao product purchase decisions in Pati Regency, where consumers face various marketing stimuli from competitors in the personal care and household products category (Bohara et al.,2025).

Brand image is defined as consumer perception of a brand formed through brand associations stored in long-term memory (Keller, 2013). In highly competitive FMCG markets, brand image functions not only as a differentiator but also as a cognitive anchor mediating marketing information into preference and purchase decisions (Zhu et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2023). Recent research shows that strong brand image can reduce consumer perceived risk, accelerate alternative evaluation processes, and increase purchase decision confidence, especially for high-frequency purchase products like Kao (Istanti, 2025; Helmi et al., 2025; Pradono, 2025).

2.2 Hypothesis Development

Promotion and Brand Image

Sales promotion constitutes one of the most effective marketing mix instruments for building brand awareness and forming positive perceptions in consumer minds. Recent empirical studies on the Indonesian FMCG industry demonstrate that integrated promotional strategies—encompassing discounts, bundling, and loyalty programs—can substantially enhance brand awareness and strengthen positive brand associations over the long term (Ferianto, 2025). These findings are supported by research showing that time-limited price promotions not only trigger impulsive purchases but also form stronger brand memory compared to promotions without time constraints (Wigati, 2024). In the context of Kao products, consistent promotion through various touchpoints including television, social media, and point-of-sale displays contributes to forming brand image as a high-quality product with clear added value (Heydiana et al., 2024; Keprinal, 2025; Pradono, 2025). Based on these theoretical arguments and empirical evidence, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Promotion has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image among Kao product consumers in Pati Regency.

Price and Brand Image

Price serves as an extrinsic indicator frequently used by consumers to assess product quality and value, particularly when intrinsic quality information is difficult to evaluate before purchase (Zeithaml, 1988). Research demonstrates that pricing strategies aligned with consumer perceived value contribute significantly to forming premium and trusted brand image (Reynaldi, 2024). These findings align with studies showing that fair and consistent pricing strengthens consumer perceptions of brand commitment to quality, which in turn enhances overall brand equity (Pradono, 2025). Within the Indonesian FMCG context, consumers tend to associate medium-to-high prices with superior quality standards, as

demonstrated by research across various personal care product categories (IRJMETS, 2025). For Kao products positioning themselves as premium-mainstream brands, pricing strategy consistency becomes crucial in maintaining brand image amid competition with cheaper local brands (Sutiyono & Hadibrata, 2020; Wardana, 2025). Based on this literature review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Price has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image among Kao product consumers in Pati Regency.

Consumer Attitude and Brand Image

Consumer attitude represents an overall evaluation—both cognitive and affective—toward an object that tends to be consistent and influences behavioral responses (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Within the TPB framework, attitude toward products or specific product categories forms more specific brand preferences through learning and experience processes. Studies confirm that consumers with positive attitudes toward environmentally friendly product attributes tend to have better perceptions of brands communicating these values (Wardana et al., 2025). Research further demonstrates that attitude toward behavior significantly influences consumer trust in brands, which constitutes an important dimension of brand image (Fitriyani, 2025). In the context of Kao products in Pati Regency, consumers with positive attitudes toward Japanese products—associated with innovation and quality—tend to form stronger Kao brand image compared to consumers with neutral or negative attitudes (Sutiyono & Hadibrata, 2020; Arianty & Andira & Ratnaningrum, 2021; Anshori et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Consumer Attitude has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image among Kao product consumers in Pati Regency.

Brand Image and Purchase Decision

Strong brand image functions as a cognitive heuristic that simplifies consumer decision-making processes by reducing the need to evaluate every product attribute in detail. Research on the local skincare category in Indonesia found that brand image is the strongest predictor of purchase decisions, exceeding direct effects from product quality and promotion (Istanti, 2025). Similar findings demonstrate that positive brand image increases purchase probability through brand trust formation and perceived risk reduction (Putri et al., 2023). In the FMCG context, where consumers make repeated purchases with low involvement, brand image becomes increasingly important because consumers tend to use brands as shortcuts for quick decision-making (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Heydiana et al., 2024; Pradono, 2025). For Kao products relying on consumer trust in Japanese quality standards, consistent brand image becomes a strategic asset for maintaining loyalty and driving repeat purchases (Zusrony et al., 2024; Helmi et al., 2022). Based on this argumentation, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Decision of Kao products in Pati Regency.

Direct Effect of Promotion on Purchase Decision

Beyond indirect effects through brand image, promotion also exerts direct effects on purchase decisions through formation of economic incentives and creation of psychological urgency. Research proves that value-based sales promotions such as bundling discounts directly increase purchase intention and purchase realization without mediation by other variables (Ferianto, 2025). Comparative studies across various FMCG categories show that flash sale promotions and limited-time offers trigger impulsive purchase responses that bypass deep brand evaluation processes (Prasetyono, 2021). In the context of traditional and modern markets in Pati Regency, point-of-purchase promotions and product demonstrations prove effective in encouraging trial purchases that subsequently develop into regular purchases (Wigati, 2024; IRJMETS, 2025; Heydiana et al., 2024). These findings indicate that promotion

has dual influence paths: direct toward purchase decisions and indirect through brand image formation. Based on this review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Promotion has a positive and significant direct effect on Purchase Decision of Kao products in Pati Regency.

Direct Effect of Price on Purchase Decision

Price constitutes a primary determinant of purchase decisions, especially in price-sensitive markets such as the Indonesian FMCG segment. Research shows that price affordability represents the most dominant factor influencing final purchase decisions (Wigati, 2024). Empirical studies on personal care products found that price perception has the highest direct effect on purchase decisions compared to product quality and brand image (Wardana, 2025). These findings align with consumer economics theory stating that price functions as monetary sacrifice that consumers must consider in trade-offs between benefits and costs (Zeithaml, 1988). In the context of Pati Regency as a tier-3 market with medium purchasing power, consumers tend to conduct intensive price comparisons before making purchase decisions, especially for product categories with low functional differentiation (Pradono, 2025). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Price has a positive and significant direct effect on Purchase Decision of Kao products in Pati Regency.

Direct Effect of Consumer Attitude on Purchase Decision

Based on TPB, attitude represents the closest determinant of behavioral intention and actual behavior. Positive consumer attitude toward a product or product category directly increases purchase probability without requiring mediation by other variables. Research on environmentally friendly product purchase behavior confirms that attitude toward behavior has significant direct effects on purchase intention and actual purchase behavior (Wardana et al., 2025). Studies show that positive attitudes toward green product attributes directly influence visit intentions to environmentally friendly cafes, even more strongly than subjective norm and behavioral control influences (Fitriyani, 2025). In the context of Kao products, consumers with positive attitudes toward quality, innovation, and offered value tend to make purchase decisions without requiring extensive brand evaluation (Hidayat et al., 2024; Octavia et al., 2025; Sutiyono & Hadibrata, 2020). This attitude forms from previous consumption experiences, recommendations from social references, and exposure to positive information about the brand. Based on this theoretical and empirical argumentation, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: Consumer Attitude has a positive and significant direct effect on Purchase Decision of Kao products in Pati Regency.

The Mediating Role of Brand Image

Although promotion, price, and consumer attitude have direct effects on purchase decisions, current literature indicates that these effects are often mediated by brand image as a psychological mechanism translating external stimuli into behavioral responses. Research found that brand image partially mediates the price effect on purchase decisions, indicating that price functions not only as monetary sacrifice but also as a quality signal forming brand perceptions (Pradono, 2025). Studies show that intensive promotion increases purchase decisions through two paths: direct and indirect through positive brand image formation (Hakim, 2024). These findings confirm brand image's role as an intervening variable strengthening marketing stimulus effects (Putri et al., 2023; Istanti, 2025).

In the consumer attitude context, research emphasizes that positive attitudes strengthen brand image, which subsequently increases consumer confidence to transact, with full mediation effects in urban consumer segments (Sari, 2024). Furthermore, research found that price fairness perceptions form

valid value image, which then becomes the basis for purchase decisions (Reynaldi, 2024). This mediation mechanism is highly relevant for Kao products relying on brand equity as a source of competitive advantage in saturated markets (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Zusrony et al., 2024; Helmi et al., 2022). Partial mediation models indicate that brand image functions as a cognitive filter moderating how consumers respond to marketing stimuli, where consumers with strong brand perceptions are more responsive to promotions and more tolerant of premium prices (Zhu et al., 2023; Bohara et al.,2025; Keller, 2013). Based on this comprehensive literature review, this study proposes three mediation hypotheses:

H8a: Brand Image mediates the effect of Promotion on Purchase Decision of Kao products in Pati Regency.

H8b: Brand Image mediates the effect of Price on Purchase Decision of Kao products in Pati Regency.

H8c: Brand Image mediates the effect of Consumer Attitude on Purchase Decision of Kao products in Pati Regency.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design aimed at testing causal relationships between independent variables (Promotion, Price, Consumer Attitude), mediating variable (Brand Image), and dependent variable (Purchase Decision). The quantitative approach was chosen because the research objective is to test hypotheses and systematically measure relationships between variables using numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). A cross-sectional design was applied where data was collected at a single time point to capture the phenomenon of Kao product consumer purchase decisions in Pati Regency (Hair et al., 2022; Sugiyono, 2022). Survey method through structured questionnaires was used as the primary data collection instrument due to its effectiveness in reaching large samples and facilitating robust statistical analysis (Memon et al., 2022; Islam et al., 2024).

3.2 Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The research population consisted of all consumers who had purchased and used Kao products (Attack, Biore, or Laurier) in Pati Regency within the last 6 months. Given the very large and unidentifiable population (infinite population), this study used purposive sampling technique with specific criteria to ensure respondent relevance to research objectives (Memona et al., 2025; Cabanelas et al., 2025). Respondent inclusion criteria included: (1) residing in Pati Regency, (2) minimum age of 18 years, (3) purchased Kao products at least twice in the last 6 months, and (4) willing to participate in the research. This criterion sampling approach ensures respondents have sufficient experience with the product and brand to provide valid evaluations of research variables (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017 in Memon et al., 2022; Saunders et al., 2023).

Sample size determination followed guidelines for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis. Based on Hair et al. (2022) recommendations, minimum sample size for PLS-SEM can be calculated using the "10 times rule," which is 10 times the maximum number of paths leading to one endogenous construct in the structural model. In this research model, the construct with the most predictors is Brand Image with 3 predictor paths (Promotion, Price, Consumer Attitude), resulting in a minimum sample size of 30 respondents. However, to increase statistical power and anticipate

incomplete data or data not meeting quality criteria, this study set a target sample of 100-250 respondents, consistent with recommendations for complex models with mediating variables (Hair & Alamer, 2022; Chen et al., 2023; Cheah & Hair, 2025). This sample size is also consistent with similar research on FMCG consumers in Indonesia using PLS-SEM as the analysis method (Sutiyono & Hadibrata, 2020; Istanti, 2025; Putri et al., 2025).

3.3 Data Collection and Measurement

Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed to respondents through two methods: (1) online survey using Google Forms disseminated through social media (WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Instagram) targeting Kao consumers in Pati Regency, and (2) direct offline surveys at strategic locations such as modern markets (Indomaret, Alfamart), traditional markets, and retail areas in Pati Regency. The combination of online and offline methods was chosen to increase response rates and ensure broader representation of various consumer segments, including those with limited internet access (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Islam et al., 2024). Each respondent was provided informed consent explaining research objectives, data confidentiality, and voluntary participation nature according to research ethics principles (Hair et al., 2022). Data collection was conducted over a 4-6 week period to ensure adequate sample target achievement (Sugiyono, 2022; Memon et al., 2022).

All variables in this study were measured using 5-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), standard in consumer behavior research for capturing nuanced respondent attitudes and perceptions (Hair et al., 2022; Kotler & Keller, 2022). The questionnaire was developed by adapting validated instruments from previous studies with contextual modifications for Kao products in the Indonesian market. Specifically, Promotion was measured using three indicators assessing advertisement creativity, sales promotion effectiveness, and promotional content relevance (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Liu & Qureshi, 2023). Price utilized three indicators capturing affordability, value-for-money perception, and competitive positioning (Zeithaml, 1988; Sudirjo et al., 2024). Consumer Attitude was assessed through three indicators representing cognitive trust, affective feelings, and conative purchase intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Rahmawati & Farida, 2024). Brand Image was measured with three indicators focusing on perceived quality, brand trust, and positive associations (Keller, 1993; Zusrony et al., 2024). Purchase Decision employed three indicators measuring purchase intention, brand preference, and repurchase loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016)

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

Data was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software assistance. PLS-SEM was chosen due to several methodological advantages: (1) ability to handle complex structural models with mediating variables, (2) no requirement for multivariate normal distribution assumptions, (3) effectiveness for relatively small to medium sample sizes, and (4) ability to accommodate reflective and formative measurement models simultaneously (Hair et al., 2022; Hair & Alamer, 2022). This method has become standard in consumer behavior and marketing research, as shown by its increasing adoption in high-reputation journal publications (Cheah & Hair, 2025; Chen et al., 2023).

PLS-SEM analysis was conducted in two stages following standard procedures. **The first stage** is outer model (measurement model) evaluation to assess construct validity and reliability. This evaluation includes: (1) convergent validity measured through outer loadings values (≥ 0.70), Average Variance Extracted/AVE (≥ 0.50), and composite reliability (≥ 0.70); (2) discriminant validity evaluated using Fornell-Larcker criteria and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio (<0.85 for conceptually different constructs); and (3) internal reliability through Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.70) (Hair et al., 2022; Sholihin &

Ratmono, 2021). **The second stage** is inner model (structural model) evaluation to test research hypotheses. This evaluation includes: (1) path coefficients and their significance levels through bootstrapping procedures with 5000 subsamples, (2) coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the proportion of endogenous variable variance explained by exogenous variables, (3) effect size (f^2) to assess substantial contribution of each predictor variable, and (4) predictive relevance (Q^2) using blindfolding procedures to assess model predictive capability (Hair et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2023; Cheah & Hair, 2025).

To test the mediating effect of Brand Image on relationships between Promotion, Price, Consumer Attitude and Purchase Decision, this study used bootstrapping procedures to calculate specific indirect effects and total effects with 95% confidence intervals. Mediation effect significance was assessed based on whether confidence intervals do not include zero value, according to recommendations from Preacher & Hayes (2008) and Hair et al. (2022). Type of mediation (full or partial) was determined based on direct and indirect effect significance: if direct effect is not significant but indirect effect is significant, then full mediation occurs; if both are significant, then partial mediation occurs (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon et al., 2000). All analyses used significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-tailed test) for hypothesis testing, and results were reported including t-statistic, p-value, and confidence interval values for research transparency and replicability (Hair et al., 2022; Memon et al., 2022)

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Respondent Demographic Profile

This study collected data from 100 consumers of Kao products in Pati Regency who met the specified inclusion criteria. The gender distribution is balanced, with an equal proportion of male and female respondents (50% each), which allows for unbiased comparison across gender in the analysis of purchase behavior. The majority of respondents are in the 26–35 age group (43%), followed by those aged 46 years and above (23%), 15–25 years (20%), and 36–45 years (14%), indicating that most participants are in productive age segments with active purchasing capability in the FMCG category. Regarding educational background, most respondents hold a bachelor's degree (71%), while the rest completed senior high school (15%), a diploma (6%), a master's degree (7%), or a doctoral degree (1%), reflecting a relatively high level of education that supports their ability to evaluate marketing information and product quality critically. In terms of occupation, private employees dominate the sample (62%), followed by entrepreneurs (23%), with the remaining respondents working as students, university students, lecturers, state-owned enterprise employees, doctors, housewives, and civil servants, each representing a small proportion of the total sample, which illustrates a diverse but employment-concentrated consumer profile in Pati Regency.

Table 1. Demographic Description of Respondents

Category	Subcategory	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	50	50
	Female	50	50
Age Group	15–25 years	20	20
	26–35 years	43	43
	36–45 years	14	14
	46+ years	23	23
Education	Senior High School	15	15
	Diploma (D3)	6	6
	Bachelor's (S1)	71	71
	Master's (S2)	7	7
	Doctoral (S3)	1	1
Occupation	Private Employee	62	62
	Entrepreneur	23	23
	Student	4	4
	University Student	3	3
	Lecturer	2	2
	State-owned Employee (SOE)	2	2
	Medical Doctor	2	2
	Housewife	1	1
	Civil Servant	1	1
Total		**100**	**100**

4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The measurement model (outer model) was evaluated to examine the validity and reliability of the constructs before testing the structural relationships. All indicators exhibit outer loading values greater

than 0.70, with loadings ranging from 0.781 to 0.925, indicating that each item adequately represents its respective latent construct (Hair et al., 2022; Sholihin & Ratmono, 2021). Convergent validity assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) also shows satisfactory results, with AVE values of 0.757 for Brand Image, 0.666 for Price, 0.728 for Purchase Decision, 0.687 for Promotion, and 0.750 for Consumer Attitude. These AVE values exceed the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50, confirming that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators (Hair & Alamer, 2022; Cheah & Hair, 2025). Internal consistency reliability is therefore supported and the indicators can be retained for further analysis.

Table 2. Convergent Validity (Outer Loadings and AVE)

Construct	Item	Outer Loading	AVE
Brand Image	BI1	0.897	0.757
	BI2	0.925	
	BI3	0.781	
Price	H1	0.796	0.666
	H2	0.854	
	H3	0.797	
Purchase Decision	KP1	0.852	0.728
	KP2	0.861	
	KP3	0.847	
Promotion	P1	0.890	0.687
	P2	0.842	
	P3	0.748	
Consumer Attitude	SK1	0.842	0.750
	SK2	0.880	
	SK3	0.876	

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The square root of the AVE for each construct (reported on the diagonal of the correlation matrix) is higher than its correlations with other constructs, indicating that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model (Hair et al., 2022). This pattern confirms that Brand Image, Price, Purchase Decision, Promotion, and Consumer Attitude are empirically distinct and measure different conceptual domains. Based on these convergent and discriminant validity results, the measurement model

satisfies the required psychometric standards and is deemed appropriate for subsequent structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2022; Chen et al., 202et al., 2024).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity – Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Construct	Brand Image	Price	Purchase Decision	Promotion	Consumer Attitude
Brand Image	**0.870**				
Price	0.536	**0.816**			
Purchase Decision	0.683	0.612	**0.853**		
Promotion	0.485	0.494	0.605	**0.829**	
Consumer Attitude	0.543	0.601	0.560	0.464	**0.866**

4.3 Structural Model Evaluation and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model (inner model) was evaluated to examine causal relationships among constructs and to test the seven direct-effect hypotheses and three mediation hypotheses proposed in this study. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for Brand Image is 0.401 (adjusted R^2 = 0.382), indicating that approximately 40.1% of the variance in Brand Image is explained jointly by Promotion, Price, and Consumer Attitude, which is considered moderate according to Hair et al. (2022) criteria. The R^2 value for Purchase Decision is 0.611 (adjusted R^2 = 0.594), showing that 61.1% of the variance in Purchase Decision is explained by Promotion, Price, Consumer Attitude, and Brand Image, which represents a substantial level of explained variance and demonstrates strong predictive power of the model (Hair & Alamer, 2022; Cheah & Hair, 2025).

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Brand Image	0.401	0.382
Purchase Decision	0.611	0.594

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples to assess path significance. Hypothesis H1, proposing that Promotion positively influences Brand Image, is accepted (β = 0.229; t = 2.915; p = 0.004), confirming that effective promotional activities significantly enhance Kao brand image among consumers in Pati Regency (Hair et al., 2022). Hypothesis H2, stating that Price positively affects Brand Image, is accepted (β = 0.251; t = 2.405; p = 0.017), indicating that perceptions of fair pricing and value for money contribute to stronger brand image formation (Reynaldi, 2024). Hypothesis H3, proposing that Consumer Attitude positively influences Brand Image, is accepted (β = 0.286; t = 2.677; p = 0.008), with the strongest coefficient among the three predictors of Brand Image, underscoring the critical role of consumer evaluations in shaping brand perceptions (Wardana et al., 2025; Istanti, 2025).

Hypothesis H4, stating that Brand Image positively affects Purchase Decision, is accepted (β = 0.385; t = 4.012; p < 0.001), confirming that a strong brand image is the most influential direct predictor of purchase behavior in this model (Putri et al., 2023). Hypothesis H5, regarding the direct effect of Promotion on Purchase Decision, is accepted (β = 0.267; t = 3.604; p < 0.001), suggesting that promotional efforts also exert a direct influence on purchase decisions beyond their indirect effect through brand image (Ferianto, 2025). Hypothesis H6, proposing a direct effect of Price on Purchase Decision, is accepted (β = 0.214; t = 2.422; p = 0.016), confirming that price considerations remain a significant factor in consumers' final purchase choices (Wigati, 2024). However, Hypothesis H7, which posits a direct effect of Consumer Attitude on Purchase Decision, is not supported (β = 0.098; t = 1.107; p = 0.269), indicating that consumer attitude influences purchase decisions primarily through the mediating role of brand image rather than directly (Hair et al., 2022; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results – Direct Effects

Hypothesis Path	β (Original Sample)	Sample Mean	SD	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision
Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.385	0.374	0.096	4.012	0.000	Accepted
Price → Brand Image	0.251	0.255	0.104	2.405	0.017	Accepted
Price → Purchase Decision	0.214	0.219	0.088	2.422	0.016	Accepted
Promotion → Brand Image	0.229	0.230	0.078	2.915	0.004	Accepted
Promotion → Purchase Decision	0.267	0.271	0.074	3.604	0.000	Accepted
Consumer Attitude → Brand Image	0.286	0.284	0.107	2.677	0.008	Accepted
Consumer Attitude → Purchase Decision	0.098	0.104	0.089	1.107	0.269	Rejected

Mediation analysis reveals significant indirect effects for all three hypothesized mediating paths. Hypothesis H8, proposing that Brand Image mediates the relationship between Price and Purchase Decision, is accepted (indirect effect = 0.097; t = 2.348; p = 0.019), demonstrating partial mediation because both the direct and indirect effects are significant (Hakim, 2024). Hypothesis H9, stating that Brand Image mediates the Promotion–Purchase Decision relationship, is accepted (indirect effect = 0.088; t = 2.147; p = 0.032), also indicating partial mediation (Pradono, 2025). Hypothesis H10, proposing that Brand Image mediates the Consumer Attitude–Purchase Decision relationship, is accepted (indirect effect = 0.110; t = 2.172; p = 0.030), showing full mediation given that the direct effect of Consumer Attitude on Purchase Decision is not significant while the indirect effect through Brand Image is significant (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon et al., 2000). These mediation patterns underscore the pivotal role of brand image as a psychological mechanism translating marketing stimuli and consumer evaluations into actual purchase behavior (Cheah & Hair, 2025).

Table 6. Mediation Testing Results – Indirect Effects

Mediation Path	Indirect Effect (β)	Sample Mean	SD	t-Statistic	p-Value	Decision (Mediation Type)
Price → Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.097	0.093	0.041	2.348	0.019	Accepted (Partial)
Promotion → Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.088	0.088	0.041	2.147	0.032	Accepted (Partial)
Consumer Attitude → Brand Image → Purchase Decision	0.110	0.107	0.051	2.172	0.030	Accepted (Full)

4.4 Discussion

The Effect of Promotion on Brand Image and Purchase Decision

This study's findings confirm that promotion exerts positive and significant influences on both brand image formation and purchase decisions among Kao product consumers in Pati Regency. These results align with recent research demonstrating that value-based promotional strategies on FMCG products can substantially increase purchase intentions while simultaneously strengthening positive brand associations in consumer memory (Ferianto, 2025). Tactical sales promotions such as bundling discounts and limited-time offers not only create purchase urgency but also build stronger brand value perceptions (Wigati, 2024). In the context of Kao products in Pati Regency, consistent promotion through various touchpoints including television, social media, and in-store displays has successfully built brand awareness and strengthened brand associations with quality, innovation, and trust attributes (Heydiana et al., 2024; Pradono, 2025; Kotler & Keller, 2022).

The partial mediation pattern found in this research indicates that promotion operates through two simultaneous mechanisms: a cognitive pathway through brand image formation and a behavioral pathway through direct purchase stimulus. This finding is consistent with the SOR model explaining that promotional stimuli can produce direct responses as well as responses mediated by changes in consumer internal conditions such as brand perception (Li et al., 2025; Hakim, 2024). For low-involvement FMCG products like Kao, promotional incentives tend to trigger relatively rapid purchase responses without requiring extensive brand evaluation, although brand image formation still occurs as a longer-term effect (Putri et al., 2023; Istanti, 2025; Bohara et al.,2025). The managerial implication is that Kao needs to design balanced promotional strategies integrating short-term tactics such as sales promotions with long-term investments in brand-building communication to maximize marketing effectiveness.

The Effect of Price on Brand Image and Purchase Decision

This research found that price has significant positive effects on both brand image and purchase decisions among Kao consumers in Pati Regency. This finding confirms signaling theory which posits that consumers use price as an extrinsic quality indicator, especially when intrinsic quality information is difficult to evaluate before purchase (Zeithaml, 1988). Research results align with studies finding that price fairness perception substantially contributes to forming premium and trusted brand image (Reynaldi, 2024). Pricing strategies consistent with consumer perceived value not only increase purchase decisions but also strengthen brand reputation in competitive markets (Pradono, 2025). In the Pati Regency context, consumers tend to associate Kao's medium-to-high prices with superior Japanese quality standards, so price functions as a brand credibility signal (IRJMETS, 2025; Wardana, 2025; Kotler & Keller, 2022).

The partial mediation effect of brand image on the price-purchase decision relationship indicates that price influences purchase decisions through dual pathways: a direct path as monetary sacrifice that consumers must consider in cost-benefit trade-offs, and an indirect path through brand value image formation. This finding is consistent with research showing that in the personal care product category, consumers evaluate price not only based on affordability but also based on consistency with brand positioning (Istanti, 2025). In the Indonesian FMCG context, even price-sensitive consumers remain willing to pay premiums for brands with strong quality and trust images (Putri et al., 2023). Strategic implications are that Kao needs to maintain pricing consistency reflecting its premium-mainstream positioning while clearly communicating product value propositions through various marketing communications to justify pricing (Hair et al., 2022). Value-based promotional strategies such as discounted bundling can serve as alternatives to attract price-sensitive consumers without compromising premium brand image.

The Effect of Consumer Attitude on Brand Image and Purchase Decision

Consumer attitude emerges as the strongest predictor of brand image among the three antecedent variables examined in this study. However, consumer attitude does not exhibit a significant direct effect on purchase decisions, indicating that its influence operates exclusively through brand image as a full mediating mechanism. This finding provides important nuance to Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which typically positions attitude as a direct determinant of behavioral intentions and actions (Ajzen, 1991). Research confirms that positive attitudes toward product attributes significantly strengthen brand perceptions and increase purchase probability (Wardana et al., 2025). In the Indonesian consumer context, attitudes formed from positive consumption experiences and external information exposure play crucial roles in shaping purchase behavior (Fitriyani, 2025). For Kao products specifically, consumers' positive attitudes toward Japanese brands—characterized by technological innovation, consistent quality, and meticulous attention to detail—provide robust foundations for positive brand image formation and sustained brand loyalty (Sutiyono & Hadibrata, 2020; Anshori et al., 2021; Arianty & Andira & Ratnaningrum, 2021).

The full mediation pattern observed reveals that consumer attitude influences purchase decisions exclusively through the formation of brand mental representations rather than through direct affective evaluation alone. This finding aligns with research demonstrating that positive attitudes strengthen brand image, which subsequently enhances consumer transaction confidence (Sari, 2024). Consumer learning models further explain that satisfaction-derived attitudes create enduring brand associations within long-term memory, which then facilitate streamlined decision-making during subsequent purchase occasions (Bohara et al.,2025). Managerial implications emphasize that Kao should prioritize positive attitude cultivation strategies including: experiential marketing through product sampling and demonstrations, word-of-mouth amplification by leveraging satisfied consumers as brand advocates, educational content marketing highlighting technological advantages and innovations, and loyalty programs that strengthen affective brand commitment (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Zusrony et al., 2024). Critically, these attitude-

building efforts must be designed to enhance brand image, as this is the primary pathway through which attitudes translate into actual purchases.

The Mediating Role of Brand Image

The most significant finding of this research is confirmation of brand image's pivotal role as a mediating variable connecting marketing stimuli and consumer internal factors with behavioral responses. Brand image demonstrates the strongest direct effect on purchase decisions among all examined variables, confirming its function as a cognitive anchor that simplifies consumer decision-making processes (Zhu et al., 2023). These results align with research identifying brand image as the strongest purchase decision predictor in various FMCG and personal care categories in Indonesia (Istanti, 2025). Positive brand image increases purchase probability through brand trust formation and perceived risk reduction mechanisms (Putri et al., 2023). In the FMCG context characterized by low consumer involvement and high purchase frequency, consumers tend to utilize brand image as mental shortcuts to accelerate purchase decisions without requiring detailed product attribute evaluation at every purchase occasion (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Keller, 2013; Hakim, 2024).

The mediation analysis reveals distinct patterns across the three antecedent variables: partial mediation for promotion and price, but full mediation for consumer attitude. This differential mediation pattern indicates that brand image functions as a psychological mechanism translating various information inputs into coherent mental brand representations, which then drive purchase decisions. This is consistent with the associative network memory model positing that brands in consumer memory consist of association networks formed from diverse information sources, with the strength and uniqueness of these associations determining overall brand equity (Keller, 2013; Aaker, 1991). In markets saturated with numerous brand alternatives, strong brand image becomes a source of sustainable competitive advantage because it is difficult for competitors to replicate (Pradono, 2025). The finding that consumer attitude operates exclusively through brand image underscores that experiential and attitudinal factors exert their influence primarily through shaping stable brand representations that guide long-term purchase behavior (Reynaldi, 2024; Bohara et al.,2025; Wardana et al., 2025).

Theoretical implications include validation of the SOR model in the FMCG marketing context, where brand image functions as the organism mediating external stimulus effects on behavioral responses, as well as extending TPB by demonstrating that brand image serves as a critical psychological bridge through which attitudes shape behavioral intentions and actual purchase behavior (Hair et al., 2022; Li et al., 2025).

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that promotion, price, and consumer attitude exert positive and significant influences on brand image of Kao products in Pati Regency, with consumer attitude demonstrating the strongest effect, reflecting the critical role of affective and cognitive evaluations in forming brand perceptions (Ajzen, 1991; Wardana et al., 2025). Brand image proves to have a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions and emerges as the strongest predictor among all examined variables, confirming that strong brand image serves as a cognitive anchor simplifying consumer decision-making processes (Zhu et al., 2023; Istanti, 2025; Kotler & Keller, 2022). Consumer purchase decisions for Kao in Pati Regency are directly and significantly influenced by both promotion and price, demonstrating that consumers respond to short-term promotional incentives and rational price-value assessments.

Importantly, consumer attitude does not exhibit a significant direct effect on purchase decisions, indicating that its influence operates exclusively through brand image as a full mediating mechanism rather than through direct behavioral pathways (Fitriyani, 2025; Sari, 2024).

The mediating role of brand image reveals distinct patterns across the three antecedent variables: partial mediation for both promotion and price, and full mediation for consumer attitude. This differential pattern indicates that promotion and price operate through dual pathways simultaneously—generating direct purchase responses while also building brand image that subsequently influences decisions—whereas consumer attitude functions exclusively through brand image formation without direct behavioral effects (Hakim, 2024; Pradono, 2025; Putri et al., 2023). In tier-3 markets like Pati Regency, promotional and pricing strategies deliver immediate behavioral impacts while simultaneously contributing to long-term brand equity, but attitude-enhancement initiatives must prioritize brand image strengthening as the essential pathway to purchase behavior (Bohara et al.,2025; Reynaldi, 2024).

Theoretically, these findings validate and extend both Theory of Planned Behavior and the Stimulus-Organism-Response model in the FMCG context, demonstrating that brand image operates as a key psychological organism mediating marketing stimuli effects on behavioral responses, and revealing that consumer attitude—contrary to TPB's typical direct-effect predictions—exerts its influence primarily through brand perception formation rather than as a direct behavioral determinant (Li et al., 2025; Hair et al., 2022). Practically, results recommend that Kao management integrate tactical promotions and value-based pricing policies that deliver both immediate sales activation and sustained brand image enhancement, while designing consumer attitude cultivation programs focused explicitly on strengthening brand perceptions, recognizing that favorable attitudes translate into purchases exclusively through the mediating mechanism of brand image (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Zusrony et al., 2024). This integrated approach will sustainably enhance purchase decisions in Pati Regency by leveraging the complementary direct effects of promotion and price alongside the indirect influence pathways operating through brand image strengthening.

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