



BRAND IMAGE AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE OF THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED EASE OF USE AND PRICE ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Nur Faiza¹⁾, Nursani²⁾

¹⁾ Universitas Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia

²⁾ Universitas Muhammadiyah Bima, Bima, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

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The survival of businesses, both online and offline, depends on customer satisfaction. The purpose of this research is to examine the role of brand image in mediating the relationship between perceived ease of use and price on customer satisfaction. A total of 160 respondents in East Java who had made online purchases through Online Marketplace in the last three months were given a questionnaire to collect data. Afterward, Partial Least Squares (PLS) was used to evaluate the research assumptions. The research findings reveal that the perception of ease of use, price, and brand image has a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction. Additionally, the perception of ease of use and price has a positive and significant influence on brand image. Moreover, brand image has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, brand image is a mediator in the relationship between the perception of ease of use and price and customer satisfaction. The study also suggests an online marketplace to enhance the perception of ease of use and price, which is implemented to obtain brand image from consumers and improve customer satisfaction.

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Corresponding Author:

Nur Faiza, Indonesia

Email-address: nurrfaiza21@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

E-commerce has emerged as the most significant and successful sector in our era to connect with customers using the internet, digital technology, and social media platforms to grow businesses, increase sales, and attract more customers for both products and services. (Bala, M., & Verma, 2018; Sosanuy, W. & Phayaphrom, 2021). Therefore, the growth of the e-commerce industry has become more inventive in developing and formulating business strategies to remain competitive and focused on providing the best services to customers, such as free shipping, discounts, flash sales, coupons, and other offers. This is important to build and foster customer loyalty.

Customer satisfaction is a measure of how satisfied or dissatisfied customers are with a company's goods or services, which relates to customer expectations, product or service quality, customer experience, and environmental factors (Almeida, F. et al., 2021). According to Kim, S., & Lee (2021), customer satisfaction is an asset that can increase a company's profit in e-commerce. This is because satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and recommend products or services to others, thereby increasing customer value in the long run (Song, J., & Lee 2020). Thus, customer satisfaction is crucial for a company's survival (Wilson, Alvita, and Wibisono 2021).

According to evidence, customer complaints can be handled well in both offline and online business settings. This study examines online purchases within the context of online users on marketplaces in East Java, Indonesia. The selection of

online marketplaces as the research object is based on phenomena related to customer satisfaction among online marketplace users. Firstly, according to the survey conducted by the Association of Internet Service Providers in Indonesia (APJII 2022), the number of internet users in Indonesia continues to increase every year, there were 210.03 million internet users in Indonesia during the period of 2021-2022. DataIndonesia.id (2022) The rapid growth of internet users in Indonesia also has a direct impact on the country's development and economy, more than 74% of consumers in Indonesia prefer to make transactions on online marketplaces. Secondly, despite the increase in online marketplace users in Indonesia in the previous year, based on data published by Kompas.com (2023), visits to online marketplaces experienced a decline in February 2023. This can be observed among Indonesia's top five online marketplaces, namely Shopee, Tokopedia, Lazada, Blibli, and Orami. This indicates that online marketplaces have not fully achieved customer satisfaction. Therefore, in this study, it is important to investigate the factors that can sustain and enhance customer satisfaction among users of online marketplaces.

In the context of online shopping, one thing that can increase customer satisfaction is to make customers have the perception of Ease of Use. (Wilson, Alvita, and Wibisono 2021). According to Mihalache, O. R., & Preda (2019) perceived ease of use is the user's perception of the ease of using a technology system, which is measured through the level of difficulty the user faces in using the system. Perceived ease of use is a

key factor in the success of technology use in the e-commerce field. This is because the easier and more comfortable the use of an online shopping platform, the higher the level of customer satisfaction with their shopping experience (Kuo, Y. F., Wu, C. M., & Deng 2019). In the context of e-commerce, perceived costs and user-friendliness can affect customer satisfaction. Price is an amount of money or other exchange value paid by consumers to obtain a desired product or service (Nikolaidis, Y., & Kassimati 2020). Comparing prices in e-commerce is simpler than in traditional retail settings. (Tanrıverdi, H., & Güngör 2020). This is because customers can easily compare prices across multiple e-commerce sites, making competitive pricing a critical factor in attracting and retaining customers (Haddad, M., Alsharairi, M., & Alalwan 2020). The reason why this study is important is first, although many empirical studies have stated that perceived ease of use has a positive impact on user satisfaction, According to another study, this effect is short-lived, and perceived usefulness does not have a statistically significant impact on customer pleasure or satisfaction (Chong et al. 2023). The previous studies have yielded different results, and this research attempts to address this issue by adding brand image as a mediating variable, which bridges the relationship between Perceived Ease of Use and customer satisfaction. The selection of brand image as the mediating variable between Perceived Ease of Use and customer satisfaction is based on previous research indicating a positive relationship between Perceived Ease of Use and Brand Image (Damayanti 2019).

Furthermore, a high brand image influences the level of satisfaction that consumers feel (Diputra and Yasa 2021). Secondly, the relationship between Perceived Ease of Use has been studied separately with price, brand image, and customer trust. For instance, between Perceived Ease of Use on brand image (Jingwen Huang, Huifang Mao 2021). The relationship between brand image and customer satisfaction (Dam and Dam 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived Ease of Used

Perceived Ease of Use refers to the level of ease perceived by users when using technology, which is influenced by the quality of the interface and the complexity of the technology (Chen, H., & Zhang 2020). Zolfaghari, S. et al. (2021). define Perceived Ease of Use as an individual's perception of how easy a technology or system is to use, depending on their skills, experience, and individual characteristics.

Price

Zeithaml, V.A., et al (2018), define price as the cost that customers have to pay to obtain the benefits of the products or services offered by the company. Berkman, H., Grewal, D., & Motyka (2020) Define price as the monetary value set by the seller and accepted by the buyer as compensation for the products or services offered.

Brand Image

Brand image is how consumers perceive a brand. This includes elements such as brand attributes, benefits, quality, brand image, and emotional connection to the brand (Aaker 2022). According to Salamzadeh, A., & Kapferer (2020), The sophisticated portrayal of a brand based on its brand

connections is called brand image, brand values, brand personality, and brand culture generated by the brand.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the positive perception perceived by customers regarding the products or services provided by a company, based on their experience, expectations, and received value (Ali, A., Yaseen, U., & Ghani 2020). According to Rana et al., (2021), customer satisfaction is the result of the comparison between customer expectations and perceptions of the quality of products or services provided by a company.

The relationship between Perceived Ease of Use and Customer Satisfaction

Perceived Ease of Use refers to the simplicity and openness of technology that enables users to use it easily and without difficulty (Kim, H. W., & Lee 2020). In the context of online shopping, perceived ease of use is significant as it can affect consumer happiness. (Ohk, Park, and Hong 2015). Users who find it easy to use a technology or product tend to be more satisfied with the product or technology, while those who have difficulty using it tend to be dissatisfied.

Previous research conducted by (Olivia & Marchyta, 2022; Ohk et al., 2015; Tandon et al., 2016; Wardana & Oktarini, 2018; Wilson et al., 2021).

Revealed that Perceived Ease of Use and customer satisfaction have a positive and significant influence. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H1. Perceived Ease of Use has a positive and significant influence on Customer Satisfaction.

The relationship between Perceived Ease of Use and Brand Image

According to Chen, C.-C., Hu, P. J.-H., & Yang (2020), Perceived ease of use explains how users feel about using technology directly and without complications. In the context of online shopping, perceived ease of use is related to how easily consumers can navigate the platform, find the products they are looking for, compare prices and product features, select suitable payment options, and complete purchases. For online purchasing platforms, perceived ease of use is very important because it can impact the brand image (Kim, M., Kim, S., & Park 2018). This is because a poor user experience can give consumers a negative impression of the brand. If consumers have difficulty using the brand's products or services, they may consider switching to a brand that is easier to use.

Several previous studies conducted by (Damayanti, 2019; Wajdi & Djamin, 2021). It has been claimed that both perceived ease of use and brand image have beneficial and significant impacts. Consequently, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H2: Perceived ease of use has a positive and significant effect on brand image.

The relationship between Price and Brand Image.

Price is the amount of money or goods that customers must pay to receive the desired commodity or service. (Kotler et al., 2020). According to Zeithaml et al., (2020), Price is the amount of money people spend to obtain the goods or services they want, and it represents the value and standard of the goods or services. According to Zhiqiang, L., &

Hongbo (2020), Price is a key factor that can influence brand image. This is because the price has an impact on consumers' perceptions of the quality, value, status, and reliability of a brand. Therefore, brands must pay attention to the right pricing strategy to improve brand image and achieve desired marketing goals.

The author of several previous studies (Anandia et al., 2015; Hernikasari et al., 2022) have stated that price and brand image have a significant positive influence. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H3: Price has a positive and significant influence on brand image.

Relationship between Price and Customer Satisfaction

Kotler, P., & Armstrong (2019), Defined price as the amount of money, product, or service that must be paid by consumers to obtain the product or service. In the context of online shopping, price becomes increasingly important because customers can easily compare prices between different products and brands, and they can search for prices more quickly and easily. Therefore, the right and balanced price is very important to maintain customer satisfaction (Bata Ilyas and Mustafa 2022).

Previous research conducted by (Bata Ilyas & Mustafa, 2022; Liliana Dewi et al., 2022; Wantara & Tambrin, 2019; Zhong & Moon, 2020). Has shown that price and customer satisfaction have a significant and positive influence. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H4: Price has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction.

The relationship between Brand Image and Customer Satisfaction

Brand image is when people think of a brand, they construct a perspective or image that is influenced by various factors, including product characteristics, functional and emotional benefits, and brand values (Kotler, P., & Keller 2018). A positive brand image can have a positive influence on customer satisfaction, so it is important for companies to build and maintain a good brand image (Semuel and Wibisono 2019). Previous research conducted by (Dam & Dam, 2021; Diputra & Yasa, 2021; Semuel & Wibisono, 2019). There is a strong and positive correlation between brand image and customer satisfaction. Therefore, the suggested theory is:

H5: Brand image has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction.

Brand Image Mediates the Effect of Perceived Ease of Use on Customer Satisfaction

In online shopping, the perception of ease of use and customer satisfaction are key factors that influence the success of a brand or product (Olivia & Marchyta, 2022; Tandon et al., 2016). In this case, if a brand or product is perceived as easy to use by consumers, it can enhance a positive perception of the brand image, which in the long run can increase customer satisfaction because consumers feel satisfied using the product or brand (Sara Haghbin, Mehdi Abzari 2019). The previous research conducted by Damayanti (2019), Stated that the perception of ease of use has a positive effect on brand image.

Similarly, one element that can enhance client happiness and customer satisfaction is brand image

(Damayanti, 2019; Diputra & Yasa, 2021; Kavengi, 2013; Samuel & Wibisono, 2019). Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H6: Brand image mediates the effect of the perception of ease of use on customer satisfaction.

Brand image mediates the effect of price on customer satisfaction

In the context of online marketing, price and customer satisfaction are one of the key factors that influence the success of a brand or product (Bata Ilyas & Mustafa, 2022; Diputra & Yasa, 2021; Albari, (2019); Khair et al., 2023; Wantara & Tambrin, 2019). In this case, if a brand or product has an affordable price that meets

consumer expectations, it can enhance a positive perception of the brand image. When consumers feel satisfied using a product or brand, it can increase customer satisfaction in the long term.

The research conducted by Hernikasari et al., (2022) States that price can enhance brand image. Furthermore, a strong and positive brand image can enhance customer satisfaction (Dam & Dam, 2021; Diputra & Yasa, 2021; Samuel & Wibisono, 2019; Wilis & Nurwulandari, 2020). The suggested hypothesis is as follows:

H7: Brand image mediates the effect of price on customer satisfaction.

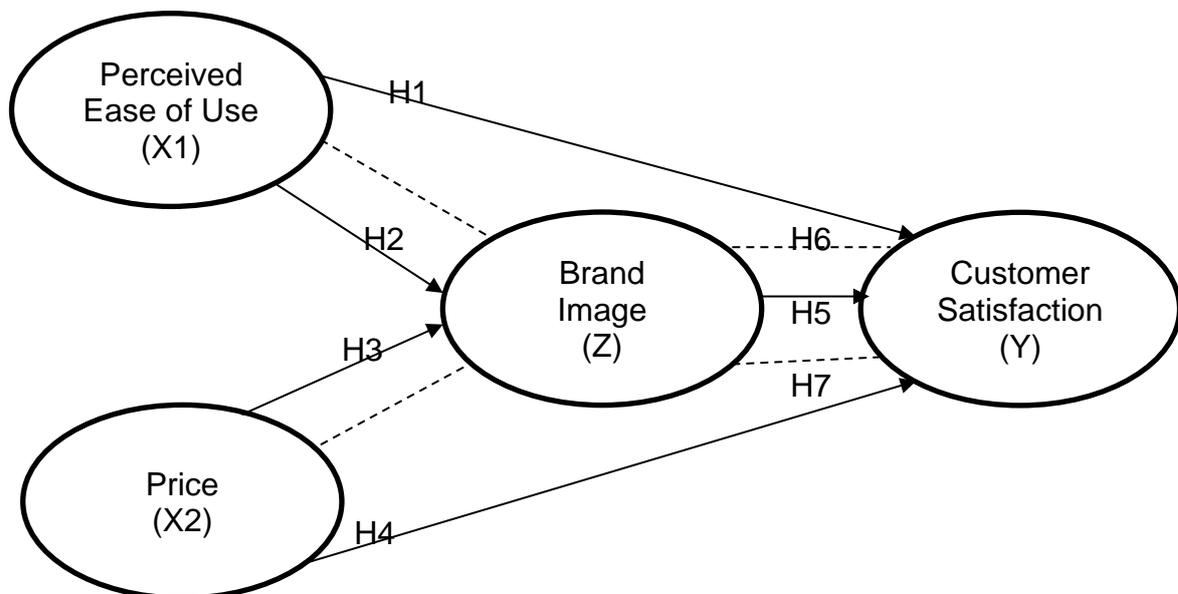


Figure 1. Hypothesized Framework
Source: Data Processed by Author (2022)

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Approach

In this investigation, a quantitative technique is applied. Quantitative method is a form of research strategy that uses relevant samples, population, and research instruments to evaluate hypotheses. (Sugiyono, 2015). The purpose of

using quantitative methods is to understand the differences between various types of research questions. The current study is conducted to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon related to the variables used in the research and will take

place from January 2023 to March 2023.

Data and Sample

The sampling method used in this research is non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling (Hair et al., 2017) Purposive sampling is the act of selecting samples based on specific criteria that result in data acceptable for the type of standard assessment used by the researcher (Sekaran, U., & Bougie, 2016). The population of East Java residents who have utilized Online Marketplace for online purchases not more than three months prior to the study became the sample criteria used in this research. The sampling was based on the criteria to determine the consistency of customers in shopping at Online Marketplace Shop in order to obtain more specific and desired data by the researcher. Based on the concept of Hair Jr, J. F., Page, M., & Brunsveld (2020) The criteria for calculating the sample size in PLS-SEM technique indicate that the sample size is 10 times the number of indicators in the formative latent variable or 10 times the number of antecedents (exogenous variables) that lead to the endogenous variable. Therefore, the following formula is obtained.

$n = 10 \times \text{operational variables (Indicators)}$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of a questionnaire with 160 respondents, it is known that out of the 160 respondents in this study, females dominate with a total of 110 people, accounting for 68.8%, while male respondents are 50 (31.3%).

The number of indicators in this study is 16, so according to the concept mentioned, the sample used in this study is $16 \times 10 = 160$ respondents.

Data Collection Techniques

The data used in this study is primary data, collected through a survey method using a questionnaire distributed through Google Forms shared on several social media platforms. The operational variables used in this investigation were adapted from another study. Likert scales were used to measure the variables in this research. The scale used to describe the degree of agreement or disagreement of subjects is created by asking questions to respondents (Ghozali and Latan 2015). Generally, a Likert scale consists of 5 points (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

Data Analysis Techniques

In this study, the researcher used Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis by utilizing Smart PLS software to process and evaluate data. PLS is a powerful analytical technique as it works with all different data types. Little assumption is required in PLS analysis, and a small sample size is sufficient.

59 (36.9%) respondents are aged between 26 and 30 years old, followed by those aged 19-25 years with 42 (26.3%), those aged 31-35 years with 20 (12.5%), those under 19 years with 11 (6.9%), and those over 35 years with 6 (3.7%). In terms of occupation, the questionnaire is dominated by students with 65

(40.6%), followed by private employees with 59 (36.9%), government employees with 25 (15.6%), and other professions with 11 (6.9%). Furthermore, in the category of allowance or income, the respondents were dominated by those with an income of IDR 1,000,000 - IDR 3,000,000 with 62 (38.8%), followed by those with an income of IDR 3,000,000 - IDR 4,000,000 with 47 (29.4%), those with an income > IDR 4,000,000 with 38 (23.8%), and those with an income of IDR 1,000,000 with 11 (6.9%). As for the last respondents who shopped at Online Marketplace, those who shopped less than 1 month ago were 126 (78.8%), while those who shopped between 1-2 months ago were 34 (21.3%). This study used convergent and discriminant validity to assess the validity and reliability of a concept in SEM-PLS. If the loading factor of a specific instrument is higher than 0.6.

it is considered to have passed the convergent validity test. Additionally, convergent validity can be assessed by using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. If the AVE value of each individual variable exceeds 0.5, then the instrument is said to have convergent validity. Furthermore, the cross-loading and construct loadings provide information about the discriminant validity of the measurement model. If a model's loading values for each indication from the latent variable are larger than those for other latent variables, the model is said to have excellent discriminant validity. The reliability test, which is the next step in the outer model technique, Using Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.6 and composite reliability value greater than 0.7 is better to assess the consistency of the instrument in measuring the construct (Hair et al. 2017).

Table 1: Convergent Validity (Loading Factor)

Variables	Indicators	Loading Factor	AVE	Conclusion
Perceived Ease of Used (X1)	PEU1	0,854	0,759	Valid
	PEU2	0,912		Valid
	PEU3	0,900		Valid
	PEU4	0,814		Valid
Price (X2)	P1	0,833	0,767	Valid
	P2	0,903		Valid
	P3	0,904		Valid
	P4	0,860		Valid
Brand Image (Z)	BI1	0,810	0,762	Valid
	BI2	0,907		Valid
	BI3	0,913		Valid
	BI4	0,857		Valid
Customer Satisfaction (Y)	CS1	0,848	0,784	Valid
	CS2	0,925		Valid
	CS3	0,909		Valid
	CS4	0,857		Valid

Source: Data processed by the author (2023)

Based on the results of the Validity Convergence test in Table 1, it can be concluded that each item and variable below, namely perceived usability, cost, brand perception, and

customer satisfaction, It has loading factors higher than 0.6 and AVE higher than 0.5. This clarifies that each item in the current survey instrument can be considered valid.

Table 2: Discriminant validity

Item	Variables			
	Perceived Ease of Used	Price	Brand Image	Customer Satisfaction
X1.1	0,854	0,618	0,743	0,677
X1.2	0,912	0,634	0,765	0,697
X1.3	0,900	0,715	0,718	0,723
X1.4	0,814	0,761	0,641	0,703
X2.1	0,711	0,833	0,600	0,691
X2.2	0,642	0,903	0,620	0,722
X2.3	0,689	0,904	0,725	0,706
X2.4	0,695	0,860	0,748	0,667
Z1	0,703	0,751	0,810	0,608
Z2	0,763	0,664	0,907	0,678
Z3	0,712	0,646	0,913	0,715
Z4	0,696	0,637	0,857	0,744
Y1	0,705	0,712	0,777	0,848
Y2	0,734	0,754	0,704	0,925
Y3	0,718	0,677	0,649	0,909
Y4	0,685	0,667	0,653	0,857

Source: Data processed by the author (2023)

Based on the discriminant validity test results in Table 2, overall the indicators of the variable produced loading factors that were larger than the cross-correlations with the other

variables. This indicates that each indicator can be considered capable of measuring the latent variable that corresponds to its indicator.

Table 3: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Customer Satisfaction_(Y)	0,935	0,908	Reliable
Brand Image_(Z)	0,927	0,895	Reliable
Perceived Ease of Used_(X1)	0,926	0,893	Reliable
Price_(X2)	0,929	0,898	Reliable

Source: Data processed by the author (2023)

The reliability test in Table 3 shows that all variables are reliable, namely perceived ease of use, price, brand image, and customer satisfaction, have Composite Reliability values greater than 0.7 and Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.6.

Therefore, it can be concluded that all indicators in this study can be considered reliable in measuring the latent variable.

Table 4: Goodness of fit Model

Variable	R Square
Brand Image_(Z)	0,721
Customer Satisfaction_(Y)	0,735
$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - R^2_{12}) \times (1 - R^2_{22})$	
$Q^2 = (0,279) \times (0,265)$	
$Q^2 = 1 - 0,927$	
$Q^2 = 0,073$	

Source: Data processed by the author (2023)

According to the Goodness of Fit testing results in Table 5, 72.1% and 73.5% of the R² for brand image and customer satisfaction variables, respectively, can be attributed to perceived ease of use and price, while the remaining 27.9% and 26.5% come from other variables not examined in this study. The predictive relevance Q-Square value is 0.073 or 73% for the study.

This score also indicates that the model as a whole can account for 73% of the variation in the Customer Satisfaction variable or in other words, The accuracy of the Perceived Ease of Use, Price, and Brand Image variables in predicting customer satisfaction is 73%; The influence of other factors that are not included in this study is represented by the remaining 27%.

Hypothesis Testing Direct Effect and Indirect Effect

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing of PLS

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	SE	t-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H1	X1 – Y	0,323	0,076	4,243	0,00	Supported
H2	X1 – Z	0,567	0,067	8,446	0,00	Supported

H3	X2 – Z	0,329	0,070	4,668	0,000	Supported
H4	X2 – Y	0,347	0,070	4,949	0,000	Supported
H5	Z – Y	0,254	0,090	2,813	0,005	Supported
H6	X1 – Z – Y	0,144	0,052	2,756	0,006	Supported
H7	X2 – Z - Y	0,083	0,036	2,317	0,021	Supported

Source: Data processed by the author (2023)

In Table 5, the results of the structural equation model are presented. The coefficient value of the first hypothesis is 0.323, and the t-statistic value is 4.243, which is greater than the t-table value of 1.65. This indicates that customer satisfaction is positively and significantly influenced by perceived ease of use.

In this light, it can be said that hypothesis 1 is true. Additionally, this finding supports previous research by Olivia & Marchyta (2022), It can be said that the Perceived Ease of Use can directly increase customer satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the study by Tandon et al., (2016), The study also indicates that Perceived Ease of Use is a key element in building and improving customer satisfaction. This is because perceived ease of use, as a characteristic of technology, can directly influence customer satisfaction when purchasing online (Ghasemaghahi, M., & Hassanein, 2019; Ohk et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2021). This study contradicts previous research that claims that perceived ease of use does not directly increase customer satisfaction. (Chong et al. 2023).

The coefficient value for Hypothesis 2 - that Perceived Ease of Use has a

favorable and substantial influence on brand image is 0.329, and the t-statistic value is higher than the t-table (1.65). Therefore, it can be concluded that hypothesis 2 in this study is accepted. The research findings support those from previous studies by Damayanti (2019), who found a positive and significant effect between Perceived Ease of Use and brand image. This result is supported by the study by (Wadjidi and Djamin 2021). Which emphasizes that Perceived Ease of Use serves as a stimulus that can be used to enhance brand image.

Hypothesis three, which states that price has a significant influence on brand image, has a coefficient value of 0.329 and a t-statistic value of 4.668, which is higher than the t-table (1.65). The third hypothesis in this study can therefore be considered accepted. The findings of this research support the investigation conducted by Anandia et al., (2015); Hernikasari et al., (2022); Zhiqiang, L., & Hongbo, (2020), which stated in their findings that price has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image.

With a coefficient value of 0.347 and a t-statistic value of 4.949, which is greater than the t-table (1.65), the fourth hypothesis of this study is that Price has a positive and substantial influence on

customer satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that the fourth hypothesis of this study is accepted. The findings of this study support previous research conducted by several researchers such as Bata Ilyas & Mustafa (2022), who stated in their research that Price has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction. This study also aligns with several previous studies Albari, (2019); Hasibuan et al., (2020); Khair et al., (2023); Liliana Dewi & Shafamila Handininta Putri, (2022); Wantara & Tambrin, (2019); Zhong & Moon (2020); which revealed that the price offered on online shopping platforms has a significant effect on increasing customer satisfaction in conducting online transactions.

With a coefficient value of 0.254 and a t-statistic value of 2.813, which is higher than the t-table value of 1.65, The relationship between brand image and customer satisfaction is considered beneficial and important, according to the fifth hypothesis of this study. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis of this study can be considered true. The results of this study strengthen previous research conducted by several researchers such as Wilis & Nurwulandari, (2020); Kavengi, (2013); Dam & Dam, (2021); Diputra & Yasa, (2021); and Samuel & Wibisono, (2019) They found that the impact of brand image on customer satisfaction is beneficial and quite significant.

In this study, the sixth hypothesis is that brand image mediates the relationship between perceived ease of use and customer satisfaction. The t-statistic for this hypothesis is 2.756, which is higher than the t-table (1.65), with a coefficient value of 0.144. As a result, it can be said that the sixth hypothesis of this study is true. The findings of this research support previous studies conducted by several scientists, including Damayanti, (2019) and Wadjdi & Djamin, (2021), Who revealed that perceived ease of use has an effect on brand image. Furthermore, Dam & Dam, (2021);

Diputra & Yasa, (2021); Samuel & Wibisono, (2019) They found that customer happiness increases proportionally with brand image.

The seventh and final hypothesis of this study is that brand image mediates the relationship between price and customer satisfaction. The t-statistic for this hypothesis is 2.756, which is higher than the t-table (1.65), with a coefficient value of 0.144. As a result, it can be said that the seventh hypothesis is accepted. The findings of this study are consistent with previous work done by several researchers such as Hernikasari et al., (2022), Who revealed that price is one of the factors that can affect brand image. Furthermore, the study conducted by Herawaty et al., (2022); Khair et al., (2023); Liliana Dewi & Shafamila Handininta Putri, (2022); Wantara & Tambrin, (2019); and Zhong & Moon, (2020), According to the study, the strength of brand image has a direct correlation with customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this research is to analyze brand image as a mediating variable in the relationship between the perception of ease of use and price and customer satisfaction. Based on theoretical and empirical reviews, hypothesis testing, and the results of data analysis conducted, managerial implications and limitations are discussed in this section.

Managerial Implications

The results of this research also contribute to determining policies and strategies implemented to optimize customer loyalty, specifically for online marketplaces in Indonesia. The study reveals that the perception of ease of use, price, and brand image can directly enhance customer satisfaction. This is because users who perceive a technology or product as easy to use tend to be more satisfied with that product or technology (Olivia and Marchyta 2022; Wardana and Oktarini

2018; Wilson et al., 2021). Furthermore, price can also directly increase customer satisfaction. This is because, in the context of online shopping, price becomes increasingly important as customers can easily compare prices between various products and brands, and they can search for prices more quickly and easily (Bata Ilyas and Mustafa 2022). Moreover, brand image can also be a key factor in enhancing customer satisfaction. Positive brand image can have a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction, making it essential for companies to build and maintain a good brand image (Semuel and Wibisono 2019). Additionally, this study reveals that brand image, apart from being one of the crucial elements influencing customer satisfaction, also has a positive relational association with the perception of ease of use. Damayanti (2019) Stated that the perception of ease of use has a positive impact on brand image. Similarly, one of the elements that can enhance customer happiness and satisfaction is brand image (Damayanti 2019; Diputra and Yasa 2021). Therefore, it is essential for online marketplaces in Indonesia to pay attention to and enhance consumers' perception of ease of use, price, and brand image to create and improve customer satisfaction while shopping on the online marketplace.

Research Limitation

Like most previous studies, this research also has some limitations that need to be addressed for future research purposes. Firstly, the sample in this study is limited to online marketplaces in Indonesia, which restricts the generalization of research findings to different contexts. Future research is recommended to expand the sample to include both online and offline marketplaces to broaden the scope of the study. Secondly, this study is confined to the variables of perception of ease of use, price, and brand image in predicting customer satisfaction. Future

research is suggested to incorporate other variables that influence customer satisfaction, such as service quality and trust. These additional variables can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting customer satisfaction in the context of online marketplaces.

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