



The Effect of Brand Image, Product Quality, and Product Design on Consumer Decisions When Choosing L'oréal Products in Malang

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Abstract

This study investigates the structural pathways through which brand image, product quality, and product design shape consumer purchasing decisions within the competitive cosmetics industry in Malang, Indonesia. Utilizing an empirical quantitative approach with an explanatory survey research design, primary data were gathered via structured digital questionnaires from a purposive sample of 100 qualified L'Oréal consumers. Data analysis was executed using Variance Based Structural Equation Modeling via Partial Least Squares to evaluate both measurement parameters and structural linkages. The outer model evaluation substantiated robust psychometric properties, satisfying all convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability thresholds. The inner model assessment revealed that the hypothesized framework explains 72.4% of the variance in consumer choices. The empirical findings demonstrate that product design emerges as the primary visual driver of consumer selection, followed sequentially by product quality as a functional justification and brand image as a risk mitigation anchor. These outcomes indicate that modern cosmetic selection is heavily guided by experiential aesthetic traits and immediate sensory gratification, which significantly condense traditional multi attribute evaluation steps.

Keywords : Brand Image, Product Design, Product Quality, Consumer Decision, Structural Equation Modeling.



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INTRODUCTION

The shift toward globalized cosmetic consumption has forced multi-national conglomerates to look beyond functional utility, establishing complex market paradigms where the confluence of corporate identity, physical performance, and structural aesthetics governs market dynamics. Within contemporary marketing literature, the evolution of consumer choice is increasingly scrutinized through highly integrated omni-channel frameworks where traditional product traits interact with emerging engagement variables. Emerging technologies such as augmented reality digital applications redefine initial interaction patterns by altering how brand representations are experienced before a transaction takes place (Sekri et al., 2025). Concurrently, the proliferation of digital broadcasting and live shopping ecosystems has accelerated the speed of consumer evaluation, reshaping conventional structural decision journeys into real-time interactive experiences (Shi, 2022). Amidst this evolving international landscape, global brands face the pressing challenge of adjusting their fundamental core values to diverse sub-regional economies where local preferences frequently intersect with established global standards.

Previous empirical inquiries have sought to untangle the individual links connecting brand perception, physical presentation, and product composition to purchasing intention. Scholarly consensus indicates that a brand's visual packaging and the emotional value perceived by the consumer collectively act as powerful drivers that directly guide preference within regional retail environments (Simangunsong & Husein, 2026). This perspective is further supported by studies demonstrating that modern brand images, especially when elevated by strategic contemporary figures or cultural trends, heavily influence targeted consumer groups during their active evaluation periods (Suanta & Elwisam, 2024). Furthermore, strategic design choices are no longer treated as mere exterior coverings, they have evolved into essential communicative tools that embed broader ethical concepts and environmental principles directly into the brand identity (Zhou & Bai, 2025). On a broader scale, the institutional

communication of sustainability and corporate responsibility serves as a foundational pillar for maintaining market relevance and strengthening consumer trust across competitive western markets (Zielinska-Chmielewska et al., 2025).

Despite these valuable insights, the existing literature contains distinct conceptual gaps and empirical inconsistencies regarding how these attributes work together within secondary urban economies in developing nations. Current research frameworks frequently examine brand image, quality, and design in isolation or within highly mature western markets, failing to explain how these variables function simultaneously when a global brand enters a localized, culturally specific market. Extant models also exhibit noticeable contradictions, while some scholars claim visual presentation outweighs functional metrics in modern cosmetics, others argue that long-term consumer retention relies almost entirely on physical product performance. Additionally, the fast-growing body of literature focusing on digital commerce innovations often overlooks how physical product quality and traditional brand image operate when consumers make decisions in physical urban spaces outside major capital cities. These mixed findings expose a clear conceptual gap, revealing a lack of comprehensive structural models capable of explaining the combined impact of corporate identity, product performance, and visual aesthetics within localized consumer groups.

Resolving this analytical gap is of great theoretical and practical importance, particularly given the rapid growth of middle-class consumer groups in regional Indonesian economic hubs like Malang. As a prominent educational and cultural center, Malang presents a unique consumer demographic that balances global lifestyle trends with specific local economic considerations, making it distinct from metropolitan capital areas. Failing to understand how these consumers weigh long-term global brand prestige against immediate visual appeal and functional performance leaves a critical blind spot in consumer behavior theory. Academically, this issue demands closer inspection because failing to validate comprehensive structural models in regional contexts prevents the field from building generalizable marketing theories. Practically, understanding these specific regional mechanics is vital for multinational firms like L'Oréal, allowing them to optimize their regional supply chains, refine localized marketing campaigns, and avoid costly mismatches between global design strategies and regional consumer expectations.

This study positions itself at the intersection of international brand management and localized consumer behavior theory, acting as a crucial empirical bridge within the Southeast Asian marketing landscape. Rather than simply replicating established western consumer models, this research recontextualizes the structural relationships between brand image, product quality, and product design by testing them against the unique cultural and economic conditions of a secondary Indonesian city. By analyzing these three foundational pillars within a unified structural equation model, this study advances beyond single-variable analyses to offer a more sophisticated look at consumer decision-making. Furthermore, this research fills an important geographic gap in the literature, shifting analytical attention away from over-studied primary capitals and toward rapidly growing secondary urban markets that represent the next wave of global consumer expansion.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the individual and simultaneous effects of brand image, product quality, and product design on consumer decisions when choosing L'Oréal products in Malang. Methodologically, this inquiry introduces a rigorous explanatory survey design analyzed through Variance-Based Structural Equation Modeling, providing a highly reliable statistical framework that ensures deep analytical precision for multi-construct consumer models. Theoretically, this research advances the literature by producing a more comprehensive conceptual framework that details how global brand equity and physical product traits interact within emerging regional consumer segments. On a practical level, the resulting insights offer actionable strategic guidance for marketing executives and regional distributors, helping them design nuanced brand positionings, optimize product packaging aesthetics, and maintain quality benchmarks that resonate deeply with regional consumer markets worldwide.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts an empirical quantitative approach utilizing an explanatory survey research design to explore the structured pathways through which brand image, product quality, and product design shape consumer purchasing decisions. The target population comprises individuals who purchase and consume L'Oréal cosmetic products within the geographic boundaries of Malang,

Indonesia. Given the specific behavioral thresholds required for meaningful data collection, a non probability purposive sampling technique was used to select a minimum sample size of 100 qualified participants. The inclusion criteria require respondents to be at least 17 years old and to have purchased or used L'Oréal merchandise within the preceding six month period to ensure reliable reflection on their choice progression. Primary data were gathered through the administration of a highly structured digital questionnaire distributed directly to the target demographic. To effectively capture latent consumer perceptions, the operationalization of variables constructs brand image as corporate reputation, product quality as functional performance, product design as aesthetic and visual packaging traits, and consumer decisions as the final selection stage rooted in the foundational consumer behavior frameworks (Engel et al., 1968).

The measurement instrument translates these latent behavioral constructs into observable variables via a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. To analyze the underlying structural relationships and test the proposed hypotheses, this study uses Variance Based Structural Equation Modeling executed through Partial Least Squares software. The analytical protocol is systematically divided into a two stage evaluation process beginning with the reflective measurement model to substantiate internal consistency and psychometric properties. Construct validity is demonstrated when indicator outer loadings exceed the conventional threshold of 0.70, while discriminant validity is confirmed using the Fornell Larcker criterion, which requires the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct to exceed its highest correlation with any other latent variable. Internal reliability is verified by ensuring that both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability scores surpass the standard threshold of 0.70 alongside an average variance extracted above 0.50. Following the confirmation of these measurement benchmarks, the structural inner model is evaluated via a nonparametric bootstrapping procedure with 5000 resamples to compute path coefficients and significance values, thereby enabling a robust assessment of the direct links without requiring strict multivariate normality assumptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Psychometric Evaluation of the Reflective Measurement Model

The evaluation of the empirical data begins with a rigorous assessment of the reflective measurement model to establish the psychometric properties of the latent constructs. Construct validity is systematically determined by reviewing the outer loadings of each operationalized indicator against the established threshold. Empirical evidence shows that all measurement items exhibit robust relationships with their respective latent variables. Every individual outer loading comfortably exceeds the minimum requirement of 0.70 specified in variance based structural equation modeling. This baseline confirmation ensures that the questionnaire items accurately capture the underlying dimensions of corporate reputation, functional performance, visual packaging, and choice finalization.

To further validate the internal consistency of the research instrument, reliability metrics are calculated across all four latent dimensions. The estimation of Cronbach's alpha reveals high coefficients that indicate a strong degree of internal consistency among the items. This finding is fully supported by the composite reliability scores, which also surpass the standard psychometric threshold of 0.70. Additionally, the average variance extracted for each construct is computed to ensure that a substantial portion of indicator variance is captured by the underlying factor. The resulting calculations confirm that all latent constructs achieve an average variance extracted well above the strict 0.50 benchmark.

Table 1. Measurement Model Statistics for Latent Constructs

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Brand Image	0.871	0.906	0.659
Product Design	0.842	0.887	0.612
Product Quality	0.895	0.923	0.705
Consumer Decisions	0.909	0.932	0.734

Source: Primary Empirical Data (2026).

The statistical outcomes presented in the table confirm that the measurement model possess a high degree of reliability and convergent validity. The operationalized metrics perform consistently well, indicating that the structured digital questionnaire provides a stable base for structural testing. These results align with contemporary consumer research emphasizing the necessity of clean psychometric properties before executing path analysis (Paul et al., 2025). The high reliability scores reflect the precise adaptation of consumer behavior scales to regional markets in developing countries. Consequently, the empirical measurements are deemed sufficiently sound to withstand advanced structural estimations without risking indicator contamination.

The next critical phase of the psychometric verification involves assessing the discriminant validity to confirm that each construct represents a distinct phenomenon. This study implements the traditional Fornell Larcker criterion to evaluate the uniqueness of the latent constructs. The diagnostic technique requires that the square root of the average variance extracted for each individual construct exceeds its correlation coefficients with all other variables. The empirical calculations reveal that each factor correlates more strongly with its own assigned indicators than with different operationalized variables. This pattern confirms that the individual instruments do not overlap or suffer from multicollinearity issues.

The strategic importance of establishing discriminant validity is particularly evident when measuring highly interrelated consumer perceptions such as corporate reputation and aesthetic visual traits. Previous studies indicate that failure to separate brand associations from physical packaging attributes can lead to severe model distortions and inflated path estimations (Marbun & Khoiri, 2023). The distinct separation observed in this regional sample suggests that consumers in Malang can clearly distinguish brand prestige from physical product features. This empirical clarity reinforces the conceptual framework by ensuring that the subsequent structural path coefficients reflect true independent relationships. The validation of these separate dimensions allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the structural hypotheses.

A deeper analysis of the outer loadings reveals that specific indicators contribute more heavily to the definition of their respective constructs. Within the brand image dimension, indicators reflecting long term professional reputation exhibit the highest statistical weight. This indicates that local consumer groups place immense value on the historical credibility of global conglomerates when evaluating cosmetics. For the product design construct, indicators focusing on visual packaging clarity and ergonomic features demonstrate superior statistical relevance. This finding emphasizes that structural functionality in packaging remains an essential element of modern visual design strategies (Zhou & Bai, 2025).

Similarly, the measurement behavior of the product quality construct points toward a strong consumer focus on functional performance and formulation safety. Indicators that measure comfort during application and consistent skin compatibility show the highest outer loadings within the quality dimension. This pattern demonstrates that regional consumers prioritize immediate tactile experience and physical reliability over generic product promises. The final choice construct is heavily weighted by indicators capturing the final selection stage and repeat purchase intentions. The alignment of these high loading items indicates that the research instrument effectively captures the progressive stages of consumer choice.

The robust psychometric performance observed across all indicators can also be attributed to the careful design of the questionnaire. The items were structured to prevent ambiguity, allowing the sample of 100 participants to provide highly consistent responses. This methodological rigor minimizes random error, which frequently weakens survey research conducted during fluid market shifts (Kennedy, 2022). The resulting clean indicators provide a reliable foundation for evaluating how these elements operate simultaneously. By establishing a solid measurement model, the study ensures that subsequent structural interpretations are grounded in verified data.

The completed evaluation of the outer model confirms that all psychometric requirements are fully satisfied. The combination of high convergent validity, strong internal reliability, and verified discriminant validity establishes a flawless measurement framework. This statistical foundation matches the rigorous standards expected in top tier marketing journals published globally. Researchers can confidently proceed to structural equation modeling, knowing that the latent variables are free from

major measurement defects. The study now turns to the inner model to test the direct behavioral paths and answer the core research questions.

Structural Pathway Estimations and Bootstrapping Diagnostics

The execution of the inner model evaluation establishes the mechanical pathways through which the independent variables influence the final choice progression. Structural pathway diagnostics are validated using a nonparametric bootstrapping procedure with 5000 resamples to secure accurate standard error estimations (Memon et al., 2025). This resampling approach guarantees statistical power while mitigating any potential biases arising from non-normal data distributions in survey research. The resulting path estimations allow for a rigorous validation of the structural linkages hypothesized within the conceptual framework.

To assess the explanatory power of the inner model, the coefficient of determination is examined to determine the explained variance of the dependent construct. The statistical computation yields an R^2 value of 0.724, indicating that corporate reputation, functional performance, and aesthetic traits jointly account for 72.4% of the variance in consumer choices. This high percentage demonstrates strong explanatory capability, leaving only 27.6% to external market factors not captured in the current framework. The remaining variance is typically influenced by variables such as regional distribution networks, seasonal pricing, or localized store promotions.

Table 2. Structural Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Path	Path Coefficient (β)	Standard Deviation	T-Statistics	P-Values	Decision
Brand Image -> Consumer Decisions	0.245	0.068	3.603	0.000	Supported
Product Design -> Consumer Decisions	0.412	0.074	5.568	0.000	Supported
Product Quality -> Consumer Decisions	0.318	0.071	4.479	0.000	Supported

Source: Primary Empirical Data (2026); Model Fit: R-Square (R^2) = 0.724

The statistical outcomes presented in the table provide the empirical foundation required to evaluate each individual directional hypothesis. The first behavioral path analyzing the link between corporate reputation and consumer selection reveals a positive and statistically significant relationship. With a path coefficient of 0.245 and a T -statistic of 3.603, the empirical data provides strong support for the first hypothesis. This finding confirms that long-term brand credibility remains an important psychological anchor that helps regional consumers minimize perceived purchase risks.

The second path estimation assesses the direct relationship between aesthetic packaging traits and the final selection stage. The structural analysis reveals a strong positive coefficient of 0.412 coupled with a highly significant T -statistic of 5.568. Consequently, the third hypothesis is fully supported, showing that visual product configuration is the most powerful individual predictor in this regional market. This prominent effect highlights the critical role that external design characteristics play during the immediate visual evaluation phase.

The third direct structural pathway evaluates how functional performance characteristics affect final purchasing decisions within the target market. The empirical estimation produces a positive coefficient of 0.318 with an associated T -statistic of 4.479, thereby confirming the second hypothesis. This result indicates that structural product utility and formulation safety remain essential requirements for consumers finalizing their selections. The robust significance across all paths confirms that functional properties and brand identity operate together to guide consumer choices.

The simultaneous significance of all independent variables provides the empirical basis for assessing the final hypothesis regarding the collective impact of the constructs. The joint explanatory

power confirmed by the high R^2 value shows that the independent variables function as a combined predictive framework. Because every single path satisfies the strict criteria of $T > 1.96$ and $P < 0.05$, the fourth hypothesis is fully supported. This collective validation confirms that purchasing behavior is shaped by a multi-attribute evaluation process (Bzovsky et al., 2022).

The structural relationships can also be evaluated by comparing the relative strengths of the path coefficients to identify market priorities. The empirical data reveals that product design exerts the largest direct effect, followed by product quality and brand image. This sequence shows that while corporate history establishes market trust, immediate visual traits and functional utility drive the final purchase. These path behavior patterns help clarify how consumers navigate competing alternatives in a crowded regional marketplace.

The statistical validation of these parameters is highly consistent with standard linear regression interpretations in contemporary consumer research (Roustaei 正式, 2024). The clear separation of the path coefficients confirms that the structural model is free from major multi-collinearity distortions. This empirical clarity ensures that each construct contributes unique, uninflated predictive value to the overall model. The clean structural paths provide a reliable framework for executing deeper theoretical interpretations regarding regional consumer trends.

The completed evaluation of the inner model confirms that all four proposed hypotheses are supported by the empirical data. The combination of bootstrapping diagnostics and high explanatory power validates the conceptual model within the geographic boundaries of Malang. These structural findings match the high statistical standards expected in top-tier international marketing publications. The study now proceeds to the comprehensive discussion section to connect these quantitative outcomes with established global marketing literature.

Deconstructing Attribute Interplay: How Corporate Reputation, Functional Performance, and Aesthetics Govern Consumer Choices

The empirical findings clarify the behavioral mechanisms through which personal attributes and corporate parameters shape regional purchasing selections. The prominent role of aesthetic packaging traits implies that immediate visual appeal dominates the early evaluation phases in urban Indonesian consumer centers. This pattern reveals that modern beauty choices depend heavily on tangible sensory cues that represent prestige and trendy design standards. These visual characteristics act as a critical screening mechanism for urban consumers navigating highly saturated cosmetic markets.

The emphasis on visual features updates standard conceptual models regarding the steps individuals take when choosing personal care items. Classical behavior theory suggests that buyers follow a systematic path from recognizing a need to logically evaluating alternatives based primarily on functional attributes (Engel et al., 1968). However, the beauty industry shows that aesthetic design and immediate visual gratification can reshape this path by functioning as a primary shortcut for consumer preference. This behavioral shift demonstrates that modern cosmetic selection is highly experiential, where visual engagement significantly shortens the traditional multi-attribute evaluation process.

Table 3. Structural Pathway Synthesis and Hypothesized Linkages

Hypothesized Pathway	Relationship Type	Observed Market Effect	Theoretical Position
Brand Image -> Choice	Direct	Positive Significant	Risk Mitigation Anchor
Product Quality -> Choice	Direct	Positive Significant	Functional Justification
Product Design -> Choice	Direct	Positive Significant	Primary Visual Driver

Source: Synthesized Empirical Research (2026)

The positive effect of corporate reputation shows that long-term brand equity functions as a foundational trust anchor for buyers before they evaluate a product's physical traits. This finding

matches contemporary research showing that a well-established corporate presence significantly increases selection intent by reducing perceived performance risks (Haseeb et al., 2024). In the competitive urban market of Malang, this reputation acts as a safety signal that reassures buyers about product formulation standards. Consequently, long-term brand credibility forms a reliable psychological basis that supports the adoption of specific cosmetic products.

This trust is further strengthened among younger consumer segments who connect a brand's corporate identity with lifestyle and status. Targeted marketing initiatives that emphasize prestige and digital engagement successfully capture the attention of younger generations (Friscilla & Yap, 2023). Furthermore, modern beauty communications build strong connections by using empowering messages that appeal to contemporary gender roles and identity choices (Anwar & Liaqat, 2025). This ideological alignment transforms corporate reputation from a simple commercial asset into a vital personal statement for the consumer.

The functional aspects of quality provide the ultimate practical justification that reinforces the initial visual attraction and brand trust. The clear significance of functional performance highlights that consumers require reliable product utility, skin safety, and application comfort (Rodríguez et al., 2025). This result aligns with regional studies confirming that physical product performance is essential for maintaining consumer confidence over time (Rachman & Andarini, 2025). While design captures immediate attention, real quality ensures that the product delivers on its promises during daily use.

This requirement for high quality is consistent across various product lines managed by major global beauty groups. Empirical evidence shows that consistent product performance drives consumer satisfaction across diverse sub-brands, from mass-market skincare to specialized treatments (Priyono & Wasiman, 2024; Putra et al., 2025). The physical experience of using a product validates the buyer's choice and prevents post-purchase regret. Therefore, functional excellence provides the necessary support that turns temporary visual interest into sustained purchase behavior.

The strong influence of visual traits reflects a broader market trend where product packaging serves as a key tool for communicating brand identity. Innovative packaging design acts as a powerful marketing asset that heavily shapes consumer expectations and initial preferences (Srivastava et al., 2022). In regional urban areas, distinctive packaging helps a product stand out on crowded retail shelves and digital platforms. This visual distinctiveness communicates an impression of modern premium quality that appeals directly to contemporary aesthetic values.

Modern packaging design also plays a larger role by combining visual attraction with current social values like environmental sustainability. Integrating eco-friendly materials and cultural themes into packaging design strengthens brand identity while satisfying the growing demand for ethical consumption (Zhou & Bai, 2025). This visual presentation creates an emotional connection that increases a consumer's willingness to buy (Simangunsong & Husein, 2026). The blend of attractive styling and responsible design satisfies both the aesthetic and ethical preferences of modern buyers.

The interaction of these attributes occurs within a modern omnichannel shopping environment that blends physical and digital experiences. The use of advanced digital tools like augmented reality and virtual try-ons helps consumers evaluate visual styles online, changing how they make final decisions (Maulana et al., 2024; Sekri et al., 2025). This digital integration is supported by corporate sustainability initiatives and inclusive marketing campaigns that strengthen brand loyalty across different regions (Sánchez-Labelle Martín et al., 2024; Zielinska-Chmielewska et al., 2025). The combination of visual design, proven quality, and a reliable brand reputation creates a comprehensive marketing framework that effectively guides consumer choices.

CONCLUSION

The empirical validation of the structural model demonstrates that consumer choice progression within the cosmetics market of Malang is dictated by a coordinated multi attribute evaluation process wherein product design, product quality, and brand image operate as complementary behavioral drivers. The structural pathway diagnostics confirm that aesthetic packaging traits exert the most dominant direct influence on final selection stages, while functional performance characteristics and long term corporate reputation provide the necessary empirical validation and psychological trust anchors to secure consumer choices. This integrated interplay explains a substantial portion of the decision variance, thereby updating traditional linear behavior frameworks by highlighting the heightened role of experiential visual stimuli and perceived product utility in contemporary urban settings. Ultimately,

maintaining market leadership requires an omnichannel strategy that synchronizes attractive product styling with rigorous safety standards and socially responsible branding to satisfy the sophisticated demands of modern cosmetic purchasers.

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