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The Effect of Customer Perception, Brand Image, and Product Quality on Purchase Decisions of AQUA Bottled Water Among Customers in Medan City

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Abstract

Purchase decisions for AQUA bottled water have experienced a decline due to customer perceptions, brand image, and product quality, which have not yet reached optimal levels. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the influence of customer perceptions, Brand Image, and Product Quality on the Purchase Decision of AQUA bottled water among customers in Medan. This research utilizes a descriptive quantitative method. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The population consists of AQUA customers in Medan, with a sample size of 150 respondents determined using the Hair formula. The sampling technique employed was accidental sampling. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis with SPSS version 27. The results indicate that customer perceptions, Brand Image, and Product Quality each have a significant partial effect on purchase decisions. Furthermore, the simultaneous analysis shows that customer perceptions Brand Image, and Product Quality collectively influence the Purc hase Decision of AQUA bottled water among customers in Medan.

Keywords: Customer Perceptions, Brand Image, Product Quality,Purchase Decision

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the Bottled Water (AMDK) industry, driven by high investor interest in water as an absolute necessity for life, has led to the emergence of various new brands in the market. This condition has made people in Medan City who prefer the practicality of bottled water to support their daily activities become more prudent and selective in evaluating and choosing available products. Fundamentally, a purchase decision

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is a customer's action in choosing one among several product alternatives offered by sellers. In determining the choice of a bottled water brand to buy, this customer decision-making process is highly influenced by three main factors: customer perception, brand image, and product quality.

Although PT. Aqua Golden Mississippi (now under Danone Asia Holding Pte) is recognized as the pioneer since 1973 and has successfully maintained its position as the market leader with a strong brand image in Indonesia, initial field research in Medan City indicates a shift in customer perception. Based on interviews with local customers, a phenomenal issue regarding purchase decisions was identified, triggered by intense business competition in the mineral water industry. The majority of customers assess that in order to pursue profits amid fierce competition, manufacturers tend to neglect product quality, particularly in ensuring the safety and quality thresholds of the products offered. Consequently, this negative evaluation of manufacturer behavior potentially impacts customer confidence and their decisions in choosing and purchasing AQUA bottled water products in Medan City.

Table 1: Top Brand Index of Bottled Water Products (AMDK)

Brand	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Aqua	62,50	57,20	55,10	46,90	47,40
Cleo	3,70	4,20	4,20	5,10	5,20
Le Minerale	4,60	12,50	14,50	18,80	23,20

Based on the data in Table 1 intense competition driven by the emergence of alternative brands in the same industry has triggered a downward trend in AQUA's market share over the past five years. Although AQUA peaked at 62.50% in 2021, its market share steadily declined to 57.20% in 2022, 55.10% in 2023, and dropped further to 46.90% in 2024. Despite showing a slight recovery with a 0.5% increase in 2025 and consistently maintaining its position as the top-selling brand, this significant fluctuating decline underscores a critical phenomenon regarding customer purchase decisions that warrants further investigation. Furthermore, the decrease in purchase decisions is also supported by a pre-survey conducted among 30 AQUA customers in Medan.

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Table 2. Pre-survey for AQUA customers

Questionnaires	Answer	
	Yes	No
1. When you want to buy mineral water, is AQUA your primary choice?	14	16
2. Are you confident that AQUA truly originates from genuine mountain springs?	8	22
3. Do the rumors or news regarding counterfeited AQUA packaging affect your intention to purchase it?	17	13
4. Have you switched to another brand due to price or product quality factors?	10	20

Based on the data in Table 2, the pre-survey results reveal that the majority of the 30 respondents answered "no" to all four questions posed. This high accumulation of negative responses serves as a strong indication of low customer purchase decisions toward AQUA bottled water in Medan City. This phenomenon highlights a critical empirical issue, demonstrating that customer loyalty is wavering, trust in product authenticity has declined due to counterfeiting rumors, and there is a strong tendency among customers to switch to competing brands driven by quality and price considerations.

The instability in market share compels the company to better comprehend shifts in customer behavior regarding purchase decisions, particularly amidst the aggressive expansion of competitors like Le Minerale, which has recorded consistent growth. Although AQUA has maintained its market leadership over the past five years, the emergence of various competitor innovations at affordable prices has generated customer hesitation in Medan City. This dynamic is further exacerbated by a gap between AQUA's marketing claims stating that its water originates from rigorously selected and BPOM-verified volcanic springs and negative social media rumors alleging the use of standard deep-well groundwater. This friction has triggered perceptions of greenwashing and eroded customer trust among those who feel the product label does not reflect the actual water source. Coupled with recurrent issues of gallon packaging counterfeiting that threaten product safety and authenticity, the accumulation of these challenges in customer perception, brand image, and product quality empirically contributes to the decline in AQUA bottled water purchase decisions among customers in Medan City.

As the foundation of business reputation in a competitive market, a positive brand image is crucial for building trust, differentiating products from competitors, and driving customer purchase decisions. However, AQUA currently faces severe challenges regarding a decline in brand image, triggered by issues of water source transparency and environmental

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impacts. Controversies surrounding the alleged use of deep-well groundwater have raised public skepticism regarding the company's honesty, despite management's clarification that their raw material originates from protected volcanic aquifers. Furthermore, as a single use plastic packaged product, AQUA frequently draws sharp criticism regarding ecological waste issues. Although the company aggressively conducts green advertising and environmental campaigns, this gap continues to foster negative public perceptions that gradually erode customer loyalty and directly impact the decline of purchase decisions in Medan City.

As the key to customer satisfaction and loyalty, superior product quality critically determines brand credibility and company profitability in a competitive market. However, AQUA currently faces a phenomenon of perceived decline in product quality directly experienced by customers in the field. These complaints encompass degradation in sensory aspects such as taste, color, odor, and the hygiene of gallon packaging, which are highly influenced by storage and final distribution processes. This issue is further exacerbated by discovered cases of contamination, such as black larvae inside sealed gallons, which triggers public skepticism regarding the company's cleanliness standards and quality control systems. The failure to meet functional expectations and product reliability guarantees empirically impacts the decline in customer purchase decisions in Medan City.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Purchase Decision

Purchase decision is an evaluative process in which customers systematically assess various available product or service alternatives before ultimately selecting the option that best aligns with their preferences (Harinie et al., 2023). Purchase decision is a person's decision where he chooses one of several alternative options. To make the decision, customers first go through several processes (Yudawisastra et al., 2024). Purchasing decision indicators are product selection, brand selection, purchase channel selection, and purchase amount (Harinie et al., 2023).

Customer Perception

Customer perception is a process that begins with customer attention and marketing stimuli and ends with customer interpretation (Putri, 2025). Customer perception is the process by which one comes to create a worldview. This means that everything stands out (Gunawan et al., 2022). According to Anwar et al., (2023) there are 4 indicators that can measure customer perception, namely continuity, credibility, integrity, symbolism.

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Brand Image

Brand image is actually one thing that can not be made, but can be formed from good public relations, which is made continuously and implanted in the minds of customers (Adawiah et al., 2024). Brand image is a picture of a positive belief in a particular brand(Wahyudi et al., 2024). According to Gunawan, et al., (2022), brand image indicator include functional, symbolic, experiential,

Product Quality

According to Amrullah (2021), product quality is an inherent characteristic or distinguishes the degree or level of excellence of a product. According to Susilo (2021), product quality is a collection of characteristic characteristics of goods and services that have the ability to meet needs which is an understanding of the combination of durability, reliability, accuracy, ease of maintenance and other attributes of a product. According to Amrullah, et al., (2023), several indicator of product quality, namely performance durability, reliability, perceived quality.

Customer perception serves as a fundamental factor influencing the purchase decisions of Bottled Water (AMDK) products. Customers exhibit a strong tendency to select products that guarantee their water source originates from pure volcanic mountain springs, is scientifically tested, and is officially verified by authorized bodies such as BPOM (Siswandi, 2020). This aligns with empirical findings by Yusdianti and Hartono (2022), which demonstrate that customer perception exerts a significant contribution to purchase decisions. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Customer Perception has a influences AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK) Purchase Decisions among customers in Medan City.

Brand image constitutes a crucial pillar within a company's marketing strategy. Developing a strong and positive brand image is paramount to guiding public perception, fostering long-term trust, and driving customer purchase decisions alongside other marketing mix elements such as price and quality (Nuryati et al., 2024). Empirically, a study conducted by Pratama and Pudjoprastyono (2023) confirms that brand image has a tangible effect on purchase decisions. Grounded in these theoretical and empirical foundations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Brand Image has a influences AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK) Purchase Decisions among customers in Medan City.

Product quality represents more than just functional features; rather, it reflects the overall capability of a product to meet or exceed customer expectations. This component directly intervenes in customer attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors when evaluating

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alternatives to make a purchase (Nursaimatussaddiya and Cen, 2022). Consequently, investing in quality enhancement strengthens a company's market positioning. Prior research by Irawan and Wahyuadi (2024) proves that product quality stands as one of the primary determinants affecting purchase decisions. Based on this framework, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Product Quality has a influences AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK) Purchase Decisions among customers in Medan City.

Integratively, the authenticity of the water source (perception), corporate reputation (brand image), and physical standard fulfillment (product quality) act as stimulating factors that positively and significantly drive customer purchase decisions within the bottled water industry. Modern customers tend to conduct holistic evaluations, favoring products that offer natural source guarantees, a clean corporate image, and high physical quality standards (Putri, 2025). The validity of this simultaneous relationship is further supported by Yusdianti and Hartono (2022) as well as Tatiana et al. (2024), which show that customer perception, brand image, and product quality collectively exert a major impact on purchase decisions. Synthesizing these insights, the final hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Customer Perception, Brand Image, and Product Quality have a influence AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK) Purchase Decisions among customers in Medan City.

METHOD

Research Design

The research design employed in this study is a quantitative method with a descriptive approach. Quantitative research is a scientific methodology that utilizes numerical data and statistical analysis to answer research questions and test formulated hypotheses, aiming to understand patterns and explain phenomena in a measurable manner. Meanwhile, the descriptive method is applied to construct a systematic, factual, and accurate description regarding the current status of human groups, objects, conditions, thoughts, or events (Sahir, 2022).

Population

The population in this study is categorized as an unknown population because the exact number of all customers consuming the product cannot be identified. Therefore, the minimum sample size is determined using Hair's formula. This formula recommends a minimum sample size ranging from 5 to 10 times the total number of research variable indicators. Given that this study utilizes 15 indicators, the maximum multiplier of 10 is

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applied, resulting in a minimum sample size of 150 customer respondents in Medan City who consume AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK).

Sampling Technique Procedure

Furthermore, the sampling technique employed is accidental sampling, which is a technique based on chance occurrence. Through this non-probability approach, anyone who happens to encounter the researcher in the field can be utilized as a sample, provided that the individual is deemed to meet the criteria and is suitable as a research data source..

Instruments

The research instrument utilized in this study is a structured questionnaire distributed directly to respondents in the field. The target respondents for this instrument are customers in Medan City who consume AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK). This questionnaire is designed using a specific measurement scale to transform data regarding respondents' perceptions, brand image, product quality, and purchase decisions into numerical data ready for statistical analysis.

Data Collection

The data collection process in this study was executed through three systematic techniques: questionnaires, interviews, and documentation studies (Sahir, 2022). A structured questionnaire utilizing a Likert Scale measurement was distributed directly to AQUA bottled water (AMDK) customers in Medan City to gather quantitative data regarding their attitudes, opinions, and perceptions. Lastly, the documentation study technique was employed to support secondary data, focusing on gathering theoretical frameworks and empirical references sourced from academic textbooks and prior research journals.

Data Analysis

IBM SPSS version 27 was used to analyze data collected. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were collected. The hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression analysis and accepted at p <0,05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Table 3: Validity test results for variables

Variables	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
X1	.755**	.832**	.824**	.790**	.705**	.804**	.697**	.675**

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X2	.874**	.799**	.714**	.738**	.863**	.807**		
X3	.829**	.820**	.850**	.858**	.778**	.886**	.654**	.703**
Y	.702**	.759**	.749**	.696**	.767**	.746**	.567**	.614**

Based on Table 3 above, r count > rtable is 0.2845 so it can be concluded that all the differences in questionnaires from various customer perceptions, brand image, product quality and purchase decisions are valid

Table 4: Reliability test results for variables

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Customer Perceptions	.894
Brand Image	.885
Product Quality	.919
Purchase Decisions	.851

Table 3. indicates that Cronbach's Alpha value >0.60. This indicates that various customer perceptions, brand image, product quality, and purchase decisions must be reliable.

Classical Assumption Test Results

Normality Test

Normality testing by analyzing the histogram chart:

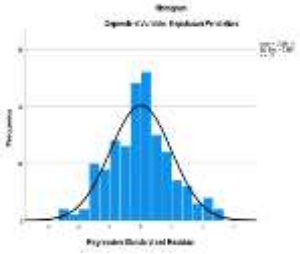


Figure 1: Histogram

Based on Figure 4.1, it can be observed that the histogram chart displays a symmetric, bell-shaped curve. Thus, it can be concluded that the residual values in this study are normally distrib

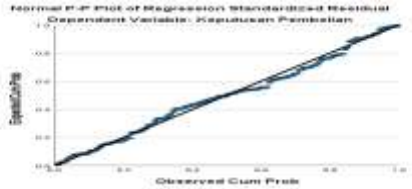


Figure 2: Normal P-P Plot

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Based on Figure 2, it can be observed that the data points cluster around the diagonal straight line and tend to follow its direction. Thus, it can be concluded that the residual values in this regression model are normally distributed."

Table 5: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

			Unstandardized Residual
N			150
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean		.0000000
	Std. Deviation		5.79295913
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute		.063
	Positive		.063
	Negative		-.052
Test Statistic			.063
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)[c]			.200[d]
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)[e]	Sig.		.157
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.148
		Upper Bound	.166

Based on Table 5, the *Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)* (0.200 > 0.05), it can be concluded that the residual values in this regression model are normally distributed

Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity test calculation results are as follows

Table 6: Multicollinearity Test

Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	Customer Perceptions	.500	1.999
	Brand Image	.730	1.369
	Product Quality	.612	1.633

Table 6 indicates that the Tolerance value for each independent variable is greater than 0.1 while the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value for each independent variable is below 10. Consequently, it can be concluded that free multicollinearity.

Heteroscedasticity Test

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The results of heteroscedasticity test with scatterplot graph can be seen in Figure 3.

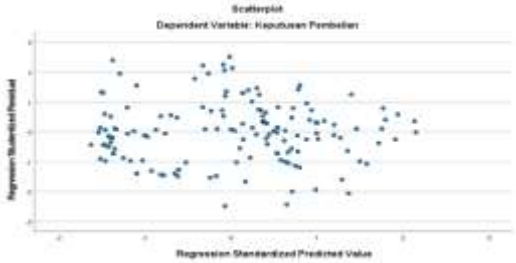


Figure 3. Scatterplot

Figure 3 shows that the data points are randomly scattered without any distinct pattern, appearing both above and below the zero (0) line on the Y-axis, and do not cluster in a specific area. Consequently, it can be concluded that the regression model in this study meets the classical assumption requirements and is free from heteroscedasticity.

Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The following test results are multiple linear regression analysis :

Tabel 7. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.036	1.453		3.465	.001
	Customer Perceptions	.329	.074	.339	4.467	.000
	Brand Image	.226	.084	.169	2.693	.008
	Product Quality	.351	.060	.401	5.847	.000

Purchase Decision = 5.036+ 0.329 Customer Perception + 0.226 Brand Image + 0.351 Product Quality + e

The explanation of multiple linear regression analysis above is

1. If the customer perception, brand image and product quality is worth 0, then the value of the purchase decision of 5.036 units.
2. If the customer perception variable increased by 1 unit, then the purchase decision increased by 0.329 units, while other variables experienced constant.

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3. If the brand image variable increased by 1 unit,then the purchase decision increased by 0.226 units, while other variables experienced a constant.
4. If the product quality variable increased by 1 unit, then the purchase decision increased by 0.351 units, while other variables experienced constant.

Testing the hypothesis

Table 8: Partial Test

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.036	1.453		3.465	.001
	Customer Perceptions	.329	.074	.339	4.467	.000
	Brand Image	.226	.084	.169	2.693	.008
	Product Quality	.351	.060	.401	5.847	.000

The results of partial hypothesis testing for customer perception perception variables obtained that the tcount t (4.467) > table (1.976) with a significant level of 0.000 < 0.05 so that it can be concluded that customer perception has positive effect on purchase decision. The results of partial hypothesis testing for brand image variables obtained that the tcount (2.693) > ttable (1.976) with a significant level of 0.008 < 0.05 so it can be concluded that brand image has positive effect on purchase decision. The results of partial hypothesis testing for product quality variables obtained that the tcount (5.847) > ttable (1.976) with a significant level of 0.000 < 0.05 so that it can be concluded that product qualihas positive effect on purchase decision.

Table 9: SimultaneousTest

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6865.295	3	2288.432	66.820	.000[b]
	Residual	5000.198	146	34.248		
	Total	11865.493	149			

The results of simultaneous hypothesis testing obtained that the value Fcount (66.820) > Ftable (2.67) with a significant level of 0.000 < 0.05 so that it can be concluded that customer perception, brand image and product quality have a positive effect on purchase decision.

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The results of testing the coefficient of determination can be seen below :

Table 10 : Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.761[a]	.579	.570	5.852

The magnitude of the coefficient of determination can be seen from the value of Adjusted R Square of 0.570 means customer perception, brand image and product quality can explain the influence on purchase decision Aqua bottled water (AMDK) on customers in Medan by 57% and the remaining 43% (100-57) influenced by other variables outside of this study such as: price, product distribution and so on..

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis testing results indicate that customer perception has a positive effect on the purchase decision of AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK) among customers in Medan City. This finding aligns with research by Yusdianti and Hartono (2022), which identifies customers perception as a fundamental factor driving purchase choices. customers tend to prefer products that guarantee quality stability, specifically those with water sources proven to be pure, scientifically tested, and officially verified by regulatory bodies such as BPOM (Adehadiono, 2025). Despite negative social media rumors regarding the use of standard deep wells, public trust in Medan City remains intact due to AQUA's consistent quality assurance. AQUA scientifically demonstrates that its water is extracted from deep aquifers integrated with natural volcanic mountain spring systems, selected through a rigorous one-year exploration process involving 9 criteria and 5 screening stages, and protected by nature conservation zoning to prevent contamination.

The partial hypothesis testing results indicate that the brand image has a positive effect on the purchase decision of AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK) among customers in Medan City. This finding aligns with research by Pratama and Pudjoprastyono (2023) and is supported by Nurhayati et al. (2024), who emphasize that a strong brand image is crucial for building trust and driving purchase choices. Although AQUA's reputation as a market leader was tested by social media controversies regarding water source transparency and ecological concerns over single-use plastic packaging, customer trust in Medan City remains intact. This resilience is driven by AQUA's effective scientific clarifications regarding its use of protected deep mountain aquifers, combined with proactive green advertising strategies and sustainable environmental campaigns that successfully re-established the brand's positive image.

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The partial hypothesis testing results indicate that the product quality variable has a positive effect on the purchase decision of AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK) among customers in Medan City. This finding aligns with a study by Irawan and Wahyuati (2024) and is supported by the theory of Nursaimatussaddiya and Cen (2022), which states that a product's capability to meet quality expectations directly determines purchasing choices. Nonetheless, AQUA's quality advantage in Medan City is currently challenged by customer complaints regarding a perceived decline in taste, odor, and gallon hygiene, such as the reported presence of black larvae inside officially sealed packages. This decline in perceived quality within quality control and distribution channels serves as a critical signal for AQUA's management, as a failure to maintain consistent product quality is proven to erode customer trust and ultimately lead to a decrease in purchasing decisions in the market

The simultaneous hypothesis testing results indicate that customers perception, brand image, and product quality simultaneously exert a positive and significant effect on the purchase decision of AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK) among customers in Medan City. This finding aligns with studies by Yusdianti and Hartono (2022) and Tatiana et al. (2024), which confirm that these three variables collectively contribute to driving customer purchase choices. According to Putri (2025), the authenticity of the water source, a reputable brand image, and high product quality are interconnected, crucial elements; when these factors are consistently maintained, their synergy successfully reinforces public trust and strengthens customer purchasing decisions in the market.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that on a partial basis, the variables of customer Perception, Brand Image, and Product Quality each exert a positive effect on the Purchase Decision of AQUA Bottled Water (AMDK) among customers in Medan City. Similarly, on a simultaneous basis, these three independent variables collectively have a positive and significant influence on the Purchase Decision of AQUA AMDK among customers in Medan City. This implies that a more positive perception formed in the minds of customers, a stronger brand image established by the company, and more consistent product quality delivered to the market will synergistically enhance the intensity of customer purchasing decisions toward AQUA products in Medan City.

Recommendations

Efforts to enhance repeat purchase decisions for AQUA products in Medan City require a comprehensive strategy that integrates the enhancement of customer perception, brand image, and product quality. Regarding perception, the company should improve water

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source transparency from deep aquifers through visual education (infographics), "fact vs. myth" digital campaigns, and strengthened verification of production code authenticity. For brand image, AQUA must reinforce its eco-friendly positioning under the "One Planet One Health" vision by expanding recycled packaging, leveraging emotional digital marketing with influencers, and ensuring product availability across all retail channels. Meanwhile, product quality optimization must focus on strengthening the hygiene of reusable gallons through regular laboratory testing to prevent packaging chemical migration, mitigate counterfeiting, and introduce more ergonomic gallon designs. Synergizing consistent quality, product authenticity, and operational transparency will simultaneously solidify the brand trust that drives customer purchasing decisions.

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