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Brand Image and Purchase Decision: The Mediating Role of Product Quality and Social Media Engagement

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the influence of brand image on purchase decision among Generation Z consumers who have purchased products at Corner Nyonya, with product quality and social media engagement as mediating variables. The background of the study is the growing importance of brand meaning, consumption experience, and digital interaction in shaping purchase decisions among young consumers. The objective of this research is to analyze both the direct and indirect effects of brand image on purchase decision. A quantitative explanatory approach was applied using a cross-sectional survey. Data were collected from 120 Generation Z respondents through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that brand image has a positive and significant direct effect on purchase decision. In addition, brand image significantly influences product quality and social media engagement, both of which also have significant effects on purchase decision. The mediation analysis indicates that product quality and social media engagement partially mediate the relationship between brand image and purchase decision, with social media engagement showing a stronger mediating role. The study concludes that brand image is translated into purchase decisions through experiential and digital pathways. Practically, culinary businesses targeting Generation Z should strengthen brand image, maintain consistent product quality, and optimize engagement-oriented social media strategies.
Keywords: *brand image; product quality; social media engagement; purchase decision; Generation Z*

1. Introduction

The culinary market has become increasingly competitive, with brands competing not only through taste and price but also through how they are perceived and discussed in digital spaces. For Generation Z consumers, purchase decisions are rarely driven by a single factor. Their choices are shaped by brand meaning, consumption experience, and social signals obtained from online platforms that support discovery, evaluation, and social validation. As a result, culinary businesses need to manage offline performance and online presence in an integrated way.

From a consumer-based branding perspective, brand image is a critical driver of market performance because it reflects the associations and impressions attached to a brand in consumers' minds. A favorable brand image can increase perceived credibility, attractiveness, and recall, helping consumers reduce uncertainty when selecting among alternatives (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020; Kotler, Keller, & Chernev, 2021). However, brand image does not always translate directly into purchasing behavior, especially in experience-dominant categories such as food and beverages, where consumers evaluate the brand based on actual consumption outcomes. Brand credibility theory supports this logic by explaining that trustworthiness and expertise increase consideration and choice probabilities under uncertainty (Erdem & Swait, 2004), yet the brand promise still needs confirmation through decision-relevant mechanisms.

One important mechanism is product quality, defined as consumers' evaluation of a product's excellence and its consistency in meeting expectations. Quality literature highlights that consumers judge quality through multiple dimensions (Garvin, 1987), while perceived quality functions as a key basis for value assessment and choice (Zeithaml, 1988). In culinary consumption, these judgments are strongly tied to sensory and experiential cues such as taste,

freshness, presentation, hygiene, and consistency, making perceived product quality a plausible pathway through which brand image influences purchase decisions.

In addition to experiential evaluation, Generation Z purchase journeys are heavily influenced by digital interaction. Social media engagement reflects consumers' active involvement with brand-related content through cognitive attention, emotional connection, and behavioral participation (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). Social media environments also enable two-way interaction, rapid diffusion of opinions, and social validation that can shape consumer decisions (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020). Because Generation Z is highly digitally immersed, engagement-based mechanisms are particularly relevant for explaining how online interactions contribute to purchasing (Priporas, Stylos, & Fotiadis, 2017).

Despite extensive research on brand image and purchase outcomes, two limitations remain visible. First, the strength of the direct relationship between brand image and purchase decision can vary across contexts, suggesting that intermediate mechanisms may carry the effect rather than a purely direct influence. Second, prior studies often test product quality or social media engagement separately, providing limited evidence on how both mechanisms operate simultaneously within one integrated model, particularly for Generation Z consumers in a culinary context where experience and digital interaction are both central.

Therefore, this study focuses on Generation Z consumers who have purchased products at Corner Nyonya and examines the effect of brand image on purchase decision with product quality and social media engagement as dual mediators. Specifically, the study aims to: (1) assess the direct effect of brand image on purchase decision, (2) test the influence of brand image on product quality and social media engagement, and (3) evaluate the mediating roles of product quality and social media engagement in translating brand image into purchase decisions.

2. Literature Review

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives. First, consumer-based branding theory explains how brand image, as a set of brand associations held in consumers' memory, shapes evaluation and choice (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020; Kotler, Keller, & Chernev, 2021). Second, brand credibility theory posits that credible brands reduce perceived risk and increase consumers' confidence in making purchase decisions (Erdem & Swait, 2004). Third, consumer brand engagement theory explains how cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement with brand-related content on social media can translate brand meaning into purchase-related responses (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). Together, these theoretical foundations support the proposed direct effect of brand image on purchase decision and the indirect pathways through product quality and social media engagement.

A literature review summarizes and integrates scholarly sources relevant to a research problem by presenting key concepts, findings, and theoretical developments that support the proposed model and hypotheses. In this study, the literature review focuses on how brand image influences purchase decision, and how this effect may be transmitted through product quality and social media engagement among Generation Z consumers in a culinary context.

Brand Image

Brand image refers to the set of associations and meanings attached to a brand, formed through consumer experiences, information exposure, and interactions across touchpoints. In consumer-based branding, brand image plays a central role because it helps consumers interpret a brand's identity, differentiate it from competitors, and form evaluative judgments that guide choice (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). In marketing management, brand image also functions as a cognitive shortcut that supports preference formation when consumers face multiple alternatives (Kotler, Keller, & Chernev, 2021).

Brand image is closely related to credibility and risk reduction. When a brand is perceived as trustworthy and competent, consumers are more likely to include it in their consideration set and select it during final choice, particularly under uncertainty (Erdem & Swait, 2004). In culinary categories where outcomes are experiential, brand image can shape expectations before consumption and provide reassurance during decision-making.

Product Quality

Product quality reflects consumers' judgments about a product's overall excellence and its ability to meet expectations consistently. Quality can be viewed through multiple dimensions that build perceived excellence and differentiation (Garvin, 1987). From a consumer perception perspective, perceived quality is strongly linked to value assessment, as consumers evaluate what they receive relative to what they sacrifice (Zeithaml, 1988). In culinary contexts, product quality is commonly interpreted through sensory and experiential cues such as taste, freshness, presentation, hygiene/cleanliness, and consistency, making it a direct driver of whether consumers view a purchase as worthwhile.

Importantly, brand image can also act as a quality signal, particularly before consumption. Positive brand associations may increase expected quality and shape how consumers interpret product cues, strengthening perceived value formation (Zeithaml, 1988; Kotler et al., 2021).

Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement refers to consumers' interactive involvement with brand-related content and activities on social platforms, expressed through cognitive attention, emotional connection, and behavioral participation (e.g., liking, commenting, sharing, saving, and creating brand-related content). Consumer brand engagement in social media is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that captures active involvement beyond passive exposure (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014).

From a broader marketing perspective, social media enables two-way interaction and rapid diffusion of opinions, which can generate social validation and influence consumer choices (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020). For Generation Z, whose consumption journeys are deeply intertwined with digital interactions, engagement-based mechanisms are especially relevant in shaping evaluation and purchase-related responses (Priporas, Stylos, & Fotiadis, 2017).

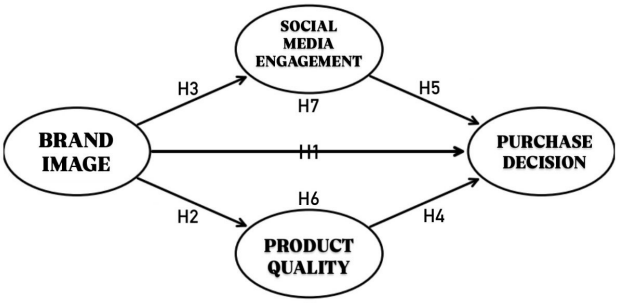
Purchase Decision

Purchase decision represents the consumer's final choice to buy after moving through need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, and selection. Consumer behavior literature emphasizes that purchase decisions are shaped by internal evaluations (beliefs, attitudes, perceived value) and external cues (brand signals and social influence) (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). In culinary contexts, purchase decisions are often influenced by brand-based reassurance, perceived product quality, and social/digital cues that reduce uncertainty and strengthen confidence, particularly for digitally active Generation Z consumers.

Research Model Framework

The proposed conceptual framework and the hypothesized relationships among constructs are illustrated in Fig. 1

Fig. 1. Research conceptual framework



The figure presents the proposed research model examining the effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision , both directly and indirectly through two mediators: Product Quality and Social Media Engagement . The model specifies five direct paths (BI→PD, BI→PQ, BI→SME, PQ→PD, SME→PD) and two mediation paths (BI→PQ→PD and BI→SME→PD). Abbreviations: BI = Brand Image; PQ = Product Quality; SME = Social Media Engagement; PD = Purchase Decision.

Brand image can directly influence purchase decision by strengthening preference, confidence, and perceived credibility under uncertainty (Erdem & Swait, 2004).
H1: Brand image positively influences purchase decision .

Brand image can shape perceived product quality because favorable brand associations function as informational cues that influence how consumers interpret performance and value (Zeithaml, 1988; Kotler et al., 2021).
H2: Brand image positively influences product quality .

Brands with favorable images are more likely to stimulate consumer interaction and participation in digital spaces, consistent with engagement theory (Hollebeek et al., 2014).
H3: Brand image positively influences social media engagement .

Product quality influences purchase decision because it strengthens value judgments and reduces post-purchase regret, especially in experience-heavy categories (Garvin, 1987; Zeithaml, 1988).
H4: Product quality positively influences purchase decision .

Social media engagement can influence purchase decision by increasing brand salience, trust, and social validation in digital-first journeys (Appel et al., 2020; Santini et al., 2020).
H5: Social media engagement positively influences purchase decision .

Because brand image can shape both experiential evaluation (product quality) and digital interaction (engagement), both constructs are expected to mediate the relationship between brand image and purchase decision.
H6: Product quality mediates the relationship between brand image and purchase decision .
H7: Social media engagement mediates the relationship between brand image and purchase decision .

3. Research Methods

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the relationships among brand image , product quality , social media engagement , and purchase

decision . A cross-sectional survey approach was used to capture respondents' perceptions at a single point in time and to test both direct and indirect (mediating) effects within one integrated model using PLS-SEM.

Research Context and Unit of Analysis

The research was conducted in the context of Corner Nyonya, a culinary business targeting young consumers. The unit of analysis was individual consumers who had purchased Corner Nyonya products, ensuring that responses reflected both brand perceptions and post-consumption evaluations.

Population, Sampling Technique, and Sample Size

The population comprised Generation Z consumers, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, who had purchased products at Corner Nyonya. Because the population size was not precisely known and specific respondent criteria were required, purposive sampling (non-probability sampling) was applied. Respondents were included if they: (1) belonged to Generation Z, (2) had purchased Corner Nyonya products at least once, and (3) actively used social media. After data screening, 120 valid responses were retained for analysis, which is adequate for PLS-SEM.

Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to eligible respondents. Data collection was conducted in December 2025. To ensure data quality, incomplete or inconsistent responses were excluded prior to analysis.

Measurement of Variables

All constructs were measured using a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). All variables were specified as reflective constructs. Brand image, product quality, social media engagement, and purchase decision were each measured using five indicators adapted from established literature and contextualized to the culinary setting.

Table 1. Operational Definition and Measurement of Variables

VARIABLE	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	INDICATORS (5Items Reflective)	SCALE	KEY REFERENCES
Brand Image	Consumers' overall impressions and associations regarding the Corner Nyonya brand.	BI1 Reputation; BI2 Credibility; BI3 Attractiveness; BI4 Uniqueness; BI5 Consistency	1–10 Likert	Keller & Swamination (2020); Kotler Keller & Chernev (2021)
Product Quality	Consumers' evaluation of the excellence and consistency of Corner Nyonya products during consumption.	PQ1 Taste; PQ2 Freshness; PQ3 Presentation; PQ4 Hygiene/Cleanliness; PQ5 Consistency	1–10 Likert	Garvin (1987); Zeithaml (1988)
Social Media Engagement	Consumers' involvement with	SME1 Attention/interest;	1–10 Likert	Hollebeek et al. (2014);

	Corner Nyonya's social media content and interactions.	SME2 Interaction; SME3 Participation; SME4 Sharing intention; SME5 Following/supporting		
Purchase Decision	The consumer's decision and confidence to purchase Corner Nyonya products after evaluating available alternatives.	PD1 Purchase confidence; PD2 Preference; PD3 Willingness to buy; PD4 Purchase certainty; PD5 Recommendation intention	1–10 Likert	Schiffman & Wisenblit (2019)

Table 1 summarizes the operational definitions and measurement indicators used for each construct in this study. All constructs are specified as reflective measurement models, meaning the indicators reflect the underlying latent variable. Each construct is measured with five indicators adapted from established literature and contextualized to the Corner Nyonya culinary context. All items use a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). Abbreviations: BI = Brand Image; PQ = Product Quality; SME = Social Media Engagement; PD = Purchase Decision.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was chosen because it is suitable for predictive research models with multiple constructs and mediation paths. The analysis followed two main stages:

1. Measurement model (outer model) evaluation, including indicator reliability (outer loadings), internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity (HTMT).
2. Structural model (inner model) evaluation, including collinearity assessment (VIF), hypothesis testing (path coefficients), explanatory power (R^2), effect size (f^2), and mediation analysis (specific indirect effects).

Hypothesis Testing and Mediation Analysis

Hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to obtain robust estimates of standard errors and significance levels. Effects were considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. Mediation was assessed through specific indirect effects for the paths BI → PQ → PD and BI → SME → PD, and the mediation type was interpreted by comparing the significance of direct and indirect effects.

Research Procedure

The overall research procedure involved: (1) identifying the research problem and developing the conceptual model, (2) determining the population and sampling criteria, (3) designing and distributing the questionnaire, (4) collecting and screening data, (5) analyzing data using PLS-SEM, and (6) interpreting the results to draw conclusions and implications. This procedure is illustrated in the research flowchart.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Respondent confidentiality was maintained, and all data were used solely for academic purposes related to research and publication.

4. Results and Discussions

Construct scores were computed as the average of five indicators using a 10-point Likert scale (1–10). Overall, respondents reported high evaluations across all constructs with relatively moderate dispersion, indicating consistent perceptions among Generation Z consumers who purchased at Corner Nyonya. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Construct-level descriptive statistics (n = 120; scale 1–10)

Construct	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Brand Image	8.743	0.669	7.0	10.0
ProductQuality	8.642	0.766	6.0	10.0
SocialMedia Engagement	8.628	0.659	7.0	10.0
Purchase Decision	8.732	0.660	7.2	10.0

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics of the construct scores for the sample (n = 120). Construct scores were computed as the average of five indicators for each variable using the 10-point Likert scale (1–10). The table reports the mean (average perception), standard deviation (response dispersion), and the observed minimum and maximum values. Overall means above 8 indicate respondents generally reported favorable perceptions of brand image, perceived product quality, social media engagement, and purchase decision in the Corner Nyonya context.

Measurement Model Assessment (Outer Model)

Indicator Reliability (Outer Loadings)

All indicators demonstrate strong loadings on their respective constructs (Table 3), indicating adequate indicator reliability.

Table 3. Outer loadings

Construct	Number of items	OuterLoading range	Lowest loading (item)	Highest loading (item)
Brand Image	5	0.705–0.809	BI5 (0.705)	BI1 (0.809)
Product Quality	5	0.763–0.806	PQ5 (0.763)	PQ2 (0.806)
Social Media Engagement	5	0.724–0.821	SME4 (0.724)	SME2 (0.821)
Purchase Decision	5	0.787–0.866	PD5 (0.787)	PD3 (0.866)

Table 3 reports indicator loadings from the PLS-SEM measurement model. Outer loadings represent the strength of the relationship between each indicator and its latent construct. The table summarizes the loading range, as well as the lowest and highest loading indicator for each construct. In this study, all constructs show loading ranges above commonly used minimum criteria for reflective measures (with the lowest reported loading being 0.705), indicating adequate indicator reliability and that the indicators represent their constructs well.

Internal Consistency Reliability and Convergent Validity

Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability values exceed 0.70 for all constructs, while AVE values exceed 0.50 (Table 4), supporting internal consistency reliability and convergent validity.

Table 4. Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
BI	0.813	0.822	0.869	0.570

PQ	0.846	0.850	0.890	0.619
SME	0.832	0.839	0.881	0.598
PD	0.883	0.884	0.915	0.682

Table 4 presents the results of internal consistency reliability and convergent validity assessment for all constructs. Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values for Brand Image , Product Quality , Social Media Engagement , and Purchase Decision all exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs are above 0.50, demonstrating adequate convergent validity, as each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators. These results confirm that the measurement model is reliable and that the indicators adequately represent their respective constructs.

Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Discriminant validity was assessed using HTMT. All values are below the commonly used threshold of 0.85 (Table 5), indicating that each construct is empirically distinct.

Table 5. HTMT results

Construct pair	HTMT
PD ↔ BI	0.685
PQ ↔ BI	0.625
PQ ↔ PD	0.684
SME ↔ BI	0.626
SME ↔ PD	0.744
SME ↔ PQ	0.741

Table 5 reports the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) used to assess discriminant validity. All HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of 0.85, indicating that each construct is empirically distinct from the others. This result confirms that Brand Image, Product Quality, Social Media Engagement, and Purchase Decision measure conceptually different phenomena and that discriminant validity is established.

Structural Model Assessment (Inner Model)

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The explanatory power of the model is reported in Table 6.

Table 6. R^2 values

Endogenous construct	R^2	R^2 Adjusted
Purchase Decision	0.531	0.519
Product Quality	0.281	0.275
Social Media Engagement	0.285	0.279

Table 6 shows the coefficient of determination (R^2) for the endogenous constructs. The model explains 53.1% of the variance in Purchase Decision, indicating substantial explanatory power in the context of Generation Z culinary consumption. Brand Image explains 28.1% of the variance in Product Quality and 28.5% of the variance in Social Media Engagement, suggesting that brand-related perceptions play an important role in shaping both experiential evaluation and digital interaction.**Effect Size (f^2)**

Effect sizes are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. f^2 effect sizes

Path	f^2
BI → PD	0.113
BI → PQ	0.391
BI→SME	0.399
PQ → PD	0.059
SME→PD	0.147

Table 7 presents the effect size (f^2) values, which indicate the relative contribution of each exogenous construct to the R^2 of the endogenous variables. Brand Image shows large effect sizes on Product Quality and Social Media Engagement, highlighting its role as a key upstream driver. In contrast, Social Media Engagement exhibits a larger effect size on Purchase Decision than Product Quality, suggesting that digital engagement contributes more strongly to purchase decisions among Generation Z consumers than experiential quality alone.

Model Fit (Supporting Information)

Model fit indicators are reported as supporting information in Table 8.

Table 8. Model fit indices

Fit index	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.073	0.105
NFI	0.786	0.773

Table 8 reports model fit indices as supporting information for the PLS-SEM analysis. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) values are presented for both saturated and estimated models. Although PLS-SEM primarily focuses on predictive accuracy rather than global fit, these indices indicate that the model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit and is suitable for further interpretation.

Hypothesis Testing (Direct Effects)

Bootstrapping results for direct effects are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Path coefficients (bootstrapping)

Path	β (O)	Mean	SD	t	P
BI → PD	0.286	0.290	0.079	3.612	<0.001
BI → PQ	0.530	0.539	0.060	8.894	<0.001
BI→SME	0.534	0.544	0.083	6.465	<0.001
PQ → PD	0.223	0.225	0.084	2.660	0.008
SME→PD	0.354	0.348	0.090	3.932	<0.001

Table 9 summarizes the results of hypothesis testing based on bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. All direct paths show positive and statistically significant coefficients ($p < 0.05$), providing empirical support for hypotheses H1 to H5. These results indicate that Brand Image significantly influences Purchase Decision both directly and indirectly, while Product Quality and Social Media Engagement each have significant effects on Purchase Decision.

Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effects)

Specific indirect effects are reported in Table 10, followed by total indirect effects in Table 11.

Table 10. Specific indirect effects

Indirect path	β (indirect)	Mean	D	t	P
BI→ PQ → PD	0.118	0.121	0.049	2.432	0.015
BI→SME→PD	0.189	0.187	0.050	3.775	<0.001

Table 10 presents the specific indirect effects used to assess mediation. The indirect effects of Brand Image on Purchase Decision through Product Quality and through Social Media Engagement are both statistically significant. This finding confirms that Product Quality and Social Media Engagement function as mediating mechanisms in the relationship between Brand Image and Purchase Decision.

Table 11. Total indirect effect

Total indirect path	β (total indirect)	Mean	D	t	P
BI → PD	0.307	0.308	0.052	5.963	<0.001

Table 11 shows the total indirect effect of Brand Image on Purchase Decision. The significant total indirect effect, combined with the significant direct effect reported in Table 9, indicates a partial mediation pattern. This suggests that Brand Image influences Purchase Decision both directly and indirectly through Product Quality and Social Media Engagement, with the digital engagement pathway playing a relatively stronger role.

Discussion

This study examines the effect of brand image on purchase decision among Generation Z consumers who have purchased at Corner Nyonya, while testing the mediating roles of product quality and social media engagement . Overall, the model demonstrates meaningful explanatory power: BI, PQ, and SME jointly explain 53.1% of the variance in PD ($R^2 = 0.531$), while BI explains 28.1% of PQ ($R^2 = 0.281$) and 28.5% of SME ($R^2 = 0.285$). Effect-size evidence further highlights BI as a key upstream driver, showing the largest contributions to PQ ($f^2 = 0.391$) and SME ($f^2 = 0.399$). For PD, SME shows a larger effect size ($f^2 = 0.147$) than PQ ($f^2 = 0.059$), suggesting that digital interaction mechanisms play a relatively stronger role than quality perceptions in shaping purchasing decisions in this sample.

Hypothesis testing using bootstrapping (5,000 resamples; $p < 0.05$) confirms that all proposed direct relationships are statistically supported. Brand image positively influences purchase decision (BI → PD: $\beta = 0.286$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that stronger brand perceptions increase consumers' confidence and willingness to purchase. In addition, brand image strongly shapes both product quality perceptions (BI → PQ: $\beta = 0.530$; $p < 0.001$) and social media engagement (BI → SME: $\beta = 0.534$; $p < 0.001$), implying that brand meaning not only frames consumers' evaluations of the product experience but also motivates interaction with the brand in digital spaces. Both mediators significantly predict purchase decision (PQ → PD: $\beta = 0.223$; $p = 0.008$; SME → PD: $\beta = 0.354$; $p < 0.001$), with SME showing the larger coefficient, reinforcing that engagement is an important behavioral pathway linking the brand to purchasing outcomes.

Mediation testing indicates that both indirect paths are significant: BI influences PD through product quality (BI → PQ → PD: $\beta = 0.118$; $p = 0.015$) and through social media engagement (BI → SME → PD: $\beta = 0.189$; $p < 0.001$). The total indirect effect is also significant ($\beta = 0.307$; $p < 0.001$), and because the direct effect of BI → PD remains significant, the findings indicate partial mediation. Substantively, this means that brand image improves purchase decisions via two complementary mechanisms: an experiential route (improving perceived product quality) and a digital route (strengthening social media engagement). Notably, the engagement-mediated effect is larger than the quality-mediated effect, suggesting that strengthening digital engagement strategies may yield relatively greater leverage in converting brand perceptions into purchase decisions while maintaining product quality remains essential to sustain credibility and reinforce the brand promise.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the effect of brand image on purchase decision among Generation Z consumers who have purchased products at Corner Nyonya, with product quality and social media engagement as mediating variables. The results confirm that brand image has a positive and significant direct effect on purchase decision and also exerts significant indirect effects through both mediators. Product quality and social media engagement each significantly increase purchase decision, and the mediation analysis indicates partial mediation, meaning brand image influences purchase decision both directly and through experiential (product quality) and digital (social media engagement) pathways. Overall, the findings show that strengthening brand image is beneficial for improving purchase decisions, particularly when supported by consistent product quality and high consumer engagement on social media.

In terms of advantages, the study provides an integrated explanation of how brand perceptions translate into purchase decisions through two complementary mechanisms, which

is especially relevant for Generation Z consumers in a culinary business context. The results also offer practical value by highlighting that social media engagement plays a relatively stronger role in driving purchase decisions than product quality in this sample, without diminishing the importance of maintaining product standards. The main limitation is that the study uses cross-sectional survey data from a specific business context, which may limit generalizability and does not allow causal conclusions to be drawn over time.

Suggestions for future research include expanding the study to different culinary brands or regions and applying probability sampling to improve representativeness. Future studies may also use longitudinal designs to capture changes in engagement and purchasing behavior over time. In addition, researchers can incorporate additional variables—such as perceived value, trust, price perception, or electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM)—to refine and strengthen the explanatory power of the model and to further clarify how digital interactions shape purchase decisions among Generation Z consumers.

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