

## THE EFFECT OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (COO) AND BRAND IMAGE ON CONSUMER SATISFACTION MEDIATED BY PURCHASE DECISION IN WULING CARS IN PALU CITY

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of Country of Origin (COO) and brand image on consumer satisfaction, with purchase decision as a mediating variable among Wuling car consumers in Palu City. The research employed a quantitative approach with data collected through questionnaires distributed to 106 respondents who are users or consumers of Wuling cars. Data analysis was carried out using SmartPLS 4 software. The findings indicate that Country of Origin has a significant effect on both purchase decisions and consumer satisfaction, directly and indirectly. Brand image also has a significant effect on purchase decisions and consumer satisfaction, as well as an indirect effect through purchase decisions. Furthermore, purchase decision acts as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between Country of Origin and brand image on consumer satisfaction. The results imply that Wuling's corporate strategy should focus on strengthening COO reputation and brand image through innovation, quality, and effective marketing communication strategies.

**Keywords:** *Brand Image, Consumer Satisfaction, Country of Origin, Purchase Decision*

### INTRODUCTION

Advances in transportation have experienced rapid development, especially in the automotive industry. Cars have become one of the most popular types of transportation among the public, especially the upper class, as private vehicles compared to other forms of public transportation. Competition between car brands has become increasingly fierce, both from domestic and foreign manufacturers, so that every company is required to have an effective marketing strategy to attract consumers. According to (Andrian & Fadillah, 2021), customer satisfaction arises from a comparison between perceived performance and expectations. If performance is lower than expectations, consumers tend to feel dissatisfied. Conversely, if it meets their expectations, they will feel satisfied. Even if the performance exceeds expectations, consumers will feel very satisfied and happy. To create customer satisfaction and loyalty, companies need to provide high customer value, namely by delivering product and service quality that is comparable to or greater than what they pay for.

One factor that influences consumer perception and satisfaction is the country of origin (COO) of a product, which can affect purchase intent and play an important role in product purchase decisions (Saputra et al., 2019). Previous studies have shown that the image of the country of origin has a significant influence on purchasing decisions, because consumers often use information about the country of origin as an indicator of quality when other product information is incomplete or difficult to access (Shirin & Kambiz, 2011). Furthermore, according to Javed & Hasnu (2013), COO plays a greater role when consumers purchase high-risk or high-involvement products, such as electronics, cars, and imported cosmetics. Conversely, for low-risk products, COO is not as decisive. These findings motivated researchers to conduct research on the influence of COO on consumer satisfaction through purchasing decisions in the automotive industry, specifically for Wuling cars in Palu City. In addition to COO, brand image can also influence consumer satisfaction. According to Utari et al (2018), brand image is the perception, belief, and impression formed in a person's mind about a brand. This image reflects how consumers view the brand based on their experiences, interactions, and the information they receive. Previous research by (Sapitri et al., 2020) explains that brand image is the result of targeted marketing planning and strategy, so it cannot be done carelessly. It includes the company's implicit commitment to consumers so that the brand remains known and remembered by

the public. To build a strong brand image, consistency in marketing activities supported by superior product quality is required. This superiority will ultimately be assessed through the subjective experiences and evaluations of customers. In Indonesia, Chinese cars are still often viewed negatively. Therefore, Wuling continues to strive to show that its products are different from previous Chinese cars and are more suited to the needs of Indonesian consumers (Hasmoro *et al.*, 2024). In order to enhance customer satisfaction, every company needs to design a marketing strategy that can attract consumers to the products being sold. One way to do this is by maintaining and continuously enhancing the quality of the products offered. Good product quality not only plays a role in attracting consumers' attention, but also influences their decision-making process when purchasing products. The purchase decision is a process that involves a series of carefully considered choices before finally making a purchase. When choosing a car, for example, consumers need to make decisions regarding various aspects, such as the location of purchase, the desired brand, the car model, the time of purchase, the budget, and the payment method. These decisions are certainly influenced by the company's marketing strategy in promoting its car products, which can shape consumer perceptions and assessments (Hanaysha, 2021).

In Indonesia, Wuling cars have attracted considerable interest from consumers. This high level of interest has encouraged the company to compete intensively to dominate the market. One of the strategies employed is to offer a variety of Wuling car products equipped with a range of excellent features. These products are designed to meet the increasingly diverse needs of consumers in terms of technology, comfort, and efficiency, thereby strengthening Wuling's competitiveness in the domestic automotive market. The remainder of this article will be divided into four sections. The second section will discuss the literature review and the basis for developing hypotheses, the third section will discuss the research methods used, the fourth section will discuss the results of hypothesis testing, and finally, the fifth section will discuss the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Country Of Origin**

According to (Tjiptono & Chandra, 2016), country-of-origin image is the impact that the country where a product comes from has on consumer perceptions, both in the form of positive and negative perceptions of certain products and brands. Consumer perceptions of the country-of-origin image of a product are often an important factor considered in purchasing decisions (Agrawal & Kamakura, 1999). Country-of-origin image can influence how consumers assess product quality, whether they believe the product has higher or lower standards, and whether they have confidence in brands originating from that country.

### **Brand Image**

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2016), brand image includes elements such as name, symbol, and design used to recognize a product and differentiate it from competitors. (Rohmanuddin & Suprayogo, 2022) also state that brand image is a person's perception, view, or interpretation of a brand's identity, which is formed through assumptions and individual experiences during continuous use of the brand. For this reason, the image that is built must have clarity and advantages that distinguish it from competitors, especially when compared to other brands.

### **Consumer Satisfaction**

According to Kotler (2008), consumer satisfaction is the response that arises when consumers compare their expectations with the actual performance of a product. Their satisfaction will affect the company's performance, because satisfied consumers tend to buy again and recommend products, while dissatisfaction can damage the company's reputation. Therefore, companies need to ensure that their products and services meet consumer expectations in order to create loyalty and satisfaction.

### **Purchase Decisions**

According to (Ragatirta & Tiningrum, 2020), purchase decisions are an essential aspect of consumer behavior that reflects individuals' actions in choosing and buying products or services. This decision-making process is influenced by various external and internal factors that drive and shape consumers' motivation to make purchases. Purchase decisions require consumers to choose from many options, so they need to be decisive and have sufficient knowledge about a product. After this process, consumers will decide whether or not to make a purchase.

## **Hypothesis Testing**

### **Country of Origin (COO) Affects Consumer Satisfaction**

Country of Origin (COO) can have a significant influence on consumer perceptions of a product. Research by Habiburrahman et al (2019) shows that the country of origin of a product not only has symbolic value, but also emotional value that can influence consumer perceptions. This means that consumers often associate products with the image or reputation of their country of origin, which can shape their attitudes toward the product (Kamaliono et al., 2020). Companies need to pay attention to Country of Origin because it influences consumer purchasing decisions, satisfaction, loyalty, and repurchase.

H1. Country of Origin Affects Consumer Satisfaction

### **Brand Image Influences Consumer Satisfaction**

Brand image has a direct impact on consumer purchasing decisions. The stronger the brand image, the greater the likelihood that consumers will make purchasing decisions based on existing trust and satisfaction (Nabila & Nurhidayat, n.d.). This shows that brand image not only influences consumer perceptions but also plays a role in shaping their choices when faced with various product alternatives. For companies, building brand trust is a very important goal. The sustainability of companies and the products they offer is highly dependent on the level of trust consumers have in the brand (Nurfadila et al., 2015). This trust will also play a major role in consumer purchasing decisions.

H2. Brand Image Has a Positive Influence on Consumer Satisfaction

### **The Influence of Country of Origin on Purchasing Decisions**

Country of origin (COO) plays a significant role in the purchasing decision-making process. According to Pangestuti & Devita (2018), COO provides mental associations, beliefs, and perceptions about the quality or characteristics of products originating from a particular country. This then becomes one of the main factors that influence consumer attitudes before the actual purchasing decision is made. Thus, COO is not only a source of information in product evaluation, but also contributes to the formation of consumer attitudes in their journey towards purchasing decisions (Suwanto & Nasikah, 2021).

H3. Country of Origin (COO) Has a Positive Impact on Purchasing Decisions

### **The Influence of Brand Image on Purchasing Decisions**

Brand image plays a crucial role in helping consumers evaluate the quality of a product. When a brand has a good image, consumers are more likely to choose and buy products from that brand. This is related to purchase interest, which is formed through a process of learning and thinking that results in certain perceptions of a product or brand (Suwanto & Nasikah, 2021). The purchase decision itself involves various stages, ranging from problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, product selection, to purchase execution (Tamara et al., 2021). Consumers who actively seek information tend to be more interested in products with a positive brand image, which is considered a sign of quality.

H4. Brand Image Has a Positive Impact on Purchase Decisions

### **Purchase Decisions Affect Consumer Satisfaction**

Analyzing consumer behavior in purchasing decisions is a strategic step for companies to win market competition. Consumer behavior is the actions of individuals, groups, or organizations in assessing, acquiring, and using goods through the purchasing decision process, which differs according to their respective needs and desires (Deviana et al., 2018). Consumer purchasing decisions regarding a product do not end with the purchase, but continue with their experience in using the product (Tirtayasa et al., 2021). Purchasing decisions do not stop at the transaction, but continue with the consumer's experience when using the product. If the product meets or exceeds expectations, consumers will feel satisfied, be more likely to buy again, and recommend the product, and vice versa.

H5. Purchase Decisions Have a Positive Effect on Consumer Satisfaction

### **Country of Origin Influences Consumer Satisfaction Mediated by Purchase Decisions**

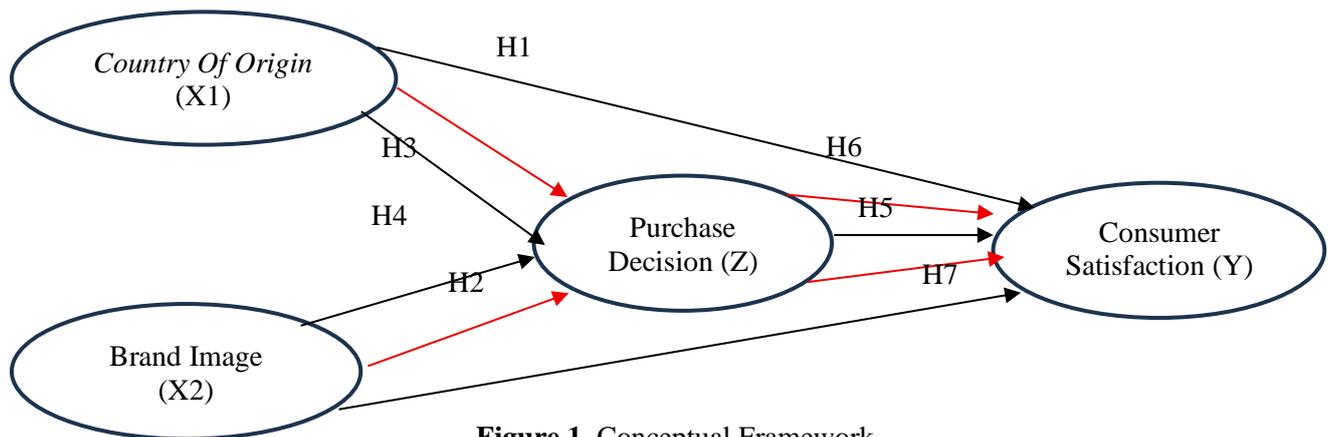
Country of origin (COO) shapes consumers' initial perceptions of product quality and reliability, thereby influencing purchase decisions. Products from countries with good reputations tend to enjoy higher levels of trust, as COO is considered an indicator of quality even before consumers use the product. Meanwhile, according to (Mulyaningsih et al., 2025), COO has a significant influence on purchasing decisions, particularly through the mediating role of

quality perception. Consumers who view a product's country of origin positively tend to perceive the product as having good quality, thereby being more inclined to purchase it. These findings indicate that COO can indirectly enhance consumer satisfaction through the evaluation and purchasing decision stages.

### **Brand Image Influences Consumer Satisfaction Mediated by Purchase Decisions**

Brand image is a consumer perception formed through experience, marketing communication strategies, and information from various sources. As an indicator of quality, brand image can influence consumer expectations and beliefs, which in turn drive purchase decisions and impact satisfaction when the product meets expectations. According to research (Damayanti et al., 2023), brand image significantly influences purchasing decisions and ultimately contributes to consumer satisfaction. The more positive the brand image, the greater the likelihood that consumers will purchase and feel satisfied if the product meets their expectations.

### **Conceptual Framework**



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

- H1: Country of origin influences consumer satisfaction with Wuling cars in Palu City.
- H2: Brand image influences consumer satisfaction with Wuling cars in Palu City.
- H3: Country of origin influences purchasing decisions for Wuling cars in Palu City.
- H4: Brand Image Affects Purchase Decisions for Wuling Cars in Palu City.
- H5: Purchase Decisions Affect Consumer Satisfaction with Wuling Cars in Palu City.
- H6: Country of Origin Affects Consumer Satisfaction Mediated by Purchase Decisions for Wuling Cars in Palu City.
- H7: Brand Image Influences Consumer Satisfaction Mediated by Purchase Decisions for Wuling Cars in Palu City.

### **METHOD**

#### **Type of Research**

The type of research used in this study is causal associative. Causal associative research is research that questions the relationship between two or more variables (Sugiyono, 2020). Causal associative in this study is used to determine the extent of the influence of variable X, country of origin and brand image, on variable Y, consumer satisfaction, variable X on variable Z, purchase decision, partially and simultaneously mediated.

#### **Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique**

The population in this study consists of all consumers of Wuling brand products. Due to the lack of supporting data, the exact population size is unknown in this study. According to Sugiyono (2020), a sample is a part of the population that has the same characteristics as the population. The sample in this study consists of consumers in Palu City who have purchased and used Wuling brand cars. Sample size determination uses Roscoe's theory, which is the minimum number of sample members multiplied by 10 from the number of research variables. In this study, there are four variables, so the researcher determined the sample size to be  $25 \times 4$  variables = 100 respondents. The sampling technique in this study is non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling approach. According to Sugiyono (2020), purposive sampling is a technique for determining samples based on specific considerations. The sample

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selection used in this study was to select consumers in Palu City who had previously purchased and used Wuling brand cars.

## Types and Sources of Data

The type of data used in this study is primary data. Primary data was obtained from an online questionnaire completed by 106 Wuling consumers in Palu City. Secondary data supports the research from books, journal articles, and other documents that support this study.

## Data Collection Techniques

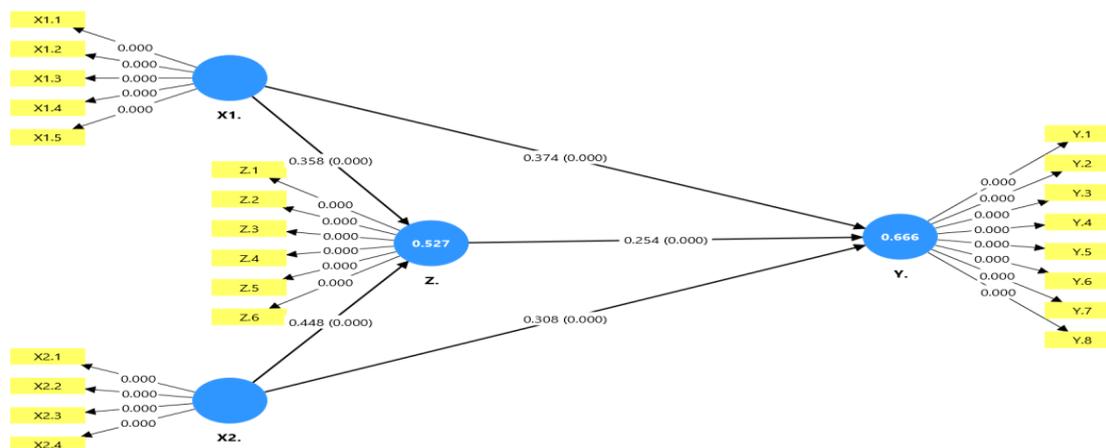
Data collection techniques in this study were through observation and questionnaires. The Likert scale was used in this research questionnaire, which is a scale used to measure the opinions, attitudes, and assessments of individuals or groups regarding social phenomena Sugiyono (2020).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

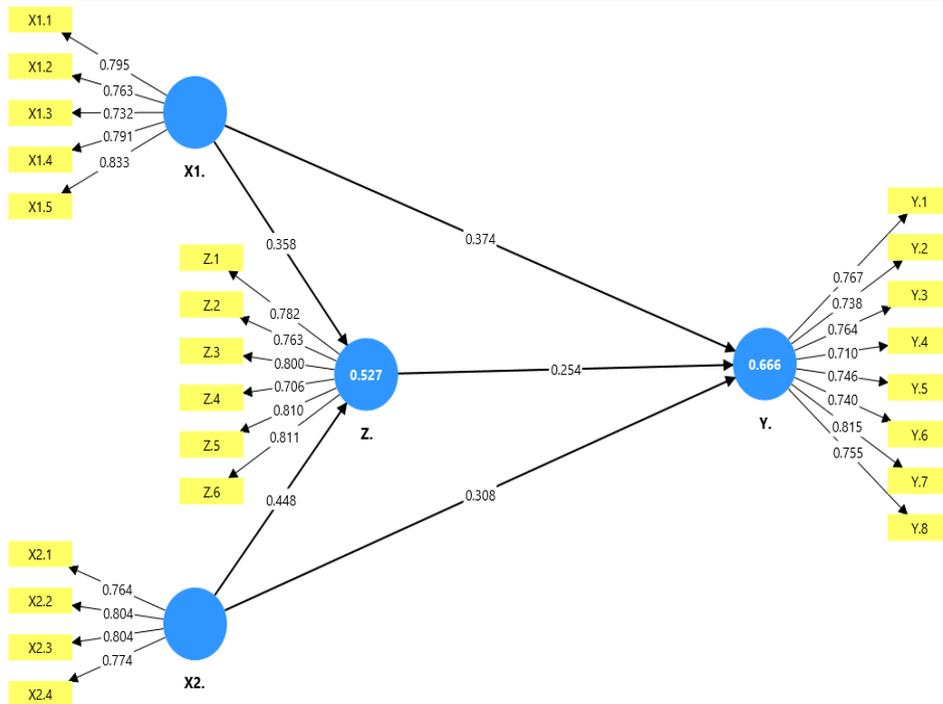
This study used inferential analysis techniques with structural equation modeling analysis techniques analyzed using Smart PLS software. Structural analysis is variance-based, which is predictive in nature. The testing was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved testing using a measurement model (outer model), which examined the validity and reliability of the constructs of each indicator, including testing outer loading, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (Crombach's alpha).

The second stage was to conduct a structural test (inner model) to determine whether there was an influence between variables. The inner model test was conducted by looking at the R square value (goodness fit model), path coefficient, and two-tailed t-significance test. To determine the magnitude of the influence between variables, the results of the SEM model analysis analyzed using Smart PLS software can be seen below.

Figure 2. Path Coefficients and Outer Loading SEM Model



To determine whether the path coefficients in the research hypothesis are significant or not, refer to the Path Coefficients and t-value table below:



**Figure 3.** Path Coefficients and p-Values of the SEM Model

The results of the SEM model analysis can be used to answer the research hypothesis after going through two stages of model evaluation, namely the measurement model evaluation (outer model) and the structural model evaluation (inner model), as discussed below:

**Measurement Model Test Results (Outer model)**

In the Measurement Model Test, there are several tests that must be fulfilled, namely, first, construct validity testing, which includes testing the factor loading value (Outer loading), second, construct reliability testing, including testing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), third, Composite Reliability (Crombach Alpha), and fourth, discriminant validity testing (heterotrait-monorait ratio (HTMT)). The discussion of these tests is as follows:

**Construct Validity Testing (Convergent Validity)**

The measurement model validity test in this study was conducted to determine whether a variable accurately measures what it is supposed to measure. According to Wijanto (2015), a variable is said to have good validity for its construct or latent variable if the factor loading value is greater than the critical value ( $fl \geq 1.96$ ) and the standard factor loading is greater than ( $sfl \geq 0.70$ ). To test construct validity (convergent validity), outer loading or factor loading values are used. An indicator is considered to meet convergent validity in the good category if the outer loading value is  $> 0.7$ . Based on the research results above, the outer loading values for each indicator in the research variables are as follows:

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**Table 1.** Outer Loading

Laten	Manifest	Outer loadings	Critical value	Description
Country of Origin (X1)	X1.1	0.795	0.700	Valid
	X1.2	0.763	0.700	Valid
	X1.3	0.732	0.700	Valid
	X1.4	0.791	0.700	Valid
	X1.5	0.833	0.700	Valid
Citra Merek (X2)	X2.1	0.764	0.700	Valid
	X2.2	0.804	0.700	Valid
	X2.3	0.804	0.700	Valid
	X2.4	0.774	0.700	Valid
Keputusan Pembelian (Z)	Z.1	0.782	0.700	Valid
	Z.2	0.763	0.700	Valid
	Z.3	0.800	0.700	Valid
	Z.4	0.706	0.700	Valid
	Z.5	0.810	0.700	Valid
	Z.6	0.811	0.700	Valid
Kepuasan Konsumen (Y)	Y.1	0.767	0.700	Valid
	Y.2	0.738	0.700	Valid
	Y.3	0.764	0.700	Valid
	Y.4	0.710	0.700	Valid
	Y.5	0.746	0.700	Valid
	Y.6	0.740	0.700	Valid
	Y.7	0.815	0.700	Valid
	Y.8	0.755	0.700	Valid

Based on the table above, it is known that each construct/indicator of the latent variables in the study has an outer loading value  $> 0.7$ , which is sufficient to meet the requirements of convergent validity. The data above shows that there are no variable indicators with an outer loading value below 0.5, so all indicators are feasible or valid for use in the study and can be used for further analysis.

**Construct Reliability Testing**

The reliability testing of the measurement model in this study aims to determine the consistency of the measurements taken. High reliability indicates that the construct variables/indicators have high consistency in measuring their latent constructs. The reliability of the constructs is measured using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted. A variable can be considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's alpha value  $> 0.7$ , composite reliability (CR)  $\geq 0.70$ , and variance extracted (VE) value  $\geq 0.50$ .

**Table 2.** Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability dan Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
X1.	0.842	0.844	0.888	0.614
X2.	0.795	0.795	0.867	0.619
Y.	0.892	0.896	0.914	0.570
Z.	0.870	0.873	0.903	0.608

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the composite reliability value of all latent variables in the study is  $> 0.7$ , the Cronbach alpha value of all latent variables is  $> 0.7$ , and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is  $> 0.5$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that all constructs/indicators that measure/form latent variables have fairly good reliability. Thus, all indicators of each latent variable in the Measurement Model (Outer Model) are consistent

in measuring their latent variables, so that the Measurement Model (Outer Model) can be used to answer the research hypothesis.

### **Discriminant Validity Testing**

In the Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) approach, discriminant validity testing is an important step in evaluating the outer model. The goal is to ensure that each construct in the model is truly distinct and does not overlap with others. Discriminant validity measures the extent to which a construct can be distinguished from other constructs through the indicators used. To detect this, one of the methods used is the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), with a recommended value limit of less than 0.90. If this criterion is met, it can be concluded that each construct has conceptual clarity and does not measure the same thing as other constructs.

The results of the Discriminant Validity Test can be seen in the following pls output:

**Table 3.** Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix		X1.	X2.	Y.	Z.
X1.					
X2.	0.757				
Y.	0.828	0.836			
Z.	0.735	0.801	0.787		

Based on the HTMT test results shown in the table above, all correlation values between constructs are below the threshold value of 0.90. The HTMT values between construct X1 and X2 are 0.757; X1 and Y are 0.828; X1 and Z are 0.735; X2 and Y are 0.836; X2 and Z are 0.801; and Y and Z are 0.787. All of these values indicate that there is no overly high correlation between one construct and another. Thus, it can be concluded that each construct in this model has met the discriminant validity criteria, which means that these constructs are able to clearly represent different variables.

### **Structural SEM Model Test Results (Inner model)**

The Structural SEM Model Test (Inner model) has several tests that must be met, including the multicollinearity test, the model goodness-of-fit (GOF) test, and the R-square value test, followed by testing the significance of direct and indirect effects (direct effect and indirect effect). The explanation of these tests is as follows:

#### **Multicollinearity Test**

The multicollinearity test was conducted by examining the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value in the structural model. Based on the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019), a VIF value < 3 indicates no multicollinearity problem, a value of 3–5 is still acceptable, while > 5 indicates strong multicollinearity. The results of this study show that all indicators have VIF values below the critical limit, so it can be concluded that the model is free from multicollinearity issues and is suitable for further analysis. The results of the Multicollinearity test can be seen in the following PLS output:

**Table 4.** Collinearity Statistic (VIF)

Collinearity statistics (VIF)

Outer model - List

	VIF
X1.1	2.103
X1.2	1.656
X1.3	1.571
X1.4	1.830
X1.5	2.340
X2.1	1.462
X2.2	1.648
X2.3	1.716
X2.4	1.609
Y.1	2.140
Y.2	1.931
Y.3	2.066
Y.4	1.727
Y.5	1.915
Y.6	2.072
Y.7	2.413
Y.8	2.129
Z.1	1.848
Z.2	1.833
Z.3	2.132
Z.4	1.525
Z.5	2.068
Z.6	2.180

Based on the test results in the table above, all indicators have VIF values ranging from 1.46 to 2.41, which means that all VIF values are still well below the threshold of 5. The highest value was recorded in indicator Y.7 with a VIF of 2.413, while the lowest value was found in indicator Z.4 with a VIF of 1.525. This shows that there are no significant signs of multicollinearity in this measurement model. Thus, it can be concluded that all indicators in the model are free from multicollinearity issues and can be used for further analysis.

#### **Goodness of Fit of the Structural SEM Model**

The model fit test is expected to accept the hypothesis. In SEM, the test is conducted using several fit measures (Goodness of Fit Test-GOF). The model fit test or Goodness of Fit aims to measure the suitability of the research data with the research model, in other words, to measure the suitability of the observed or actual input (covariance/correlation matrix) with the proposed model prediction. The full SEM model fit test can be seen in the following table:

**Table 5.** Goodnest of fit model structural SEM

Model fit	Goodness of fit Model Structural SEM	
	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.070	0.070
d_ULS	1.334	1.334
d_G	0.646	0.646
Chi-square	365.591	365.591
NFI	0.756	0.756

Fit summary  
Nilai SRMR < 0,10

The goodness-of-fit model testing was conducted by looking at the SRMR value with the following testing criteria: A value of less than 0.10 or 0.08 (in a more conservative version; see Hu and Bentler, 1999) is considered a good fit. Henseler et al. (2014). Based on the SEM Model Goodness-of-Fit Test output above, the SRMR value is 0.070. Since the SRMR value of 0.070 is less than 0.10, it can be interpreted that the SEM Model Goodness-of-Fit Test is acceptable. In other words, there is no significant difference between the covariance matrix of the observed variable data (Indicators) and the covariance matrix of the specified model. This indicates that the structural equation produced by the research model can be used to explain the influence between exogenous variables and endogenous variables.

**R Square**

R Square shows the extent to which exogenous variables influence endogenous variables. The R Square calculation results can be seen in the table below; Table R-Square Values

**Table 6.** R-Square

	Overview	
	R-square	R-square adjusted
Y.	0.666	0.657
Z.	0.527	0.518

Based on the results of the structural model analysis, an R-square value of 0.527 was obtained for the Purchase Decision (Z) variable. This means that the Country of Origin (X1) and Brand Image (X2) variables are able to explain 52.7% of the variation in Purchase Decision, while the remaining 47.3% is influenced by other factors outside the model. Thus, the model's ability to explain Purchase Decision can be categorized as moderate. Meanwhile, for the Consumer Satisfaction (Y) variable, the R-square value obtained is 0.666. This indicates that the variables Country of Origin (X1), Brand Image (X2), and Purchase Decision (Z) can explain 66.6% of the variation in Consumer Satisfaction, while the remaining 33.4% is influenced by other variables outside the model. This value indicates that the model has a fairly strong predictive ability for Consumer Satisfaction.

**Path Coefficient**

**Direct Effect**

Direct Effect in a structural model is used to determine the extent of the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable without going through an intermediary variable (mediator). To test the significance of the direct effect, the p-value is used, which indicates the probability of the relationship occurring by chance. Generally, the significance level ( $\alpha$ ) used is 0.05. If the p-value is < 0.05, then the relationship between variables is considered statistically significant (Hair et al., 2017).

Table of Direct Effect Path Coefficients and p-values

**Table 7. Direct Effect**

Path coefficients

Mean, STDEV, T values, p values

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ((O/STDEV))	P values
X1. -> Y.	0.374	0.376	0.091	4.096	0.000
X1. -> Z.	0.358	0.363	0.088	4.071	0.000
X2. -> Y.	0.308	0.307	0.071	4.367	0.000
X2. -> Z.	0.448	0.448	0.094	4.763	0.000
Z. -> Y.	0.254	0.253	0.070	3.597	0.000

Based on the table of direct effect coefficients above, it can be seen that all direct effect coefficients are positive, and the p-value is < 0.05, which means that all direct effects are positive and significant. In other words, the higher the exogenous variable, the greater the increase in the endogenous variable.

**Indirect effect**

An indirect effect occurs when the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable occurs through one or more mediating variables. To test the significance of the indirect effect, the p-value test is used through the bootstrapping procedure in the PLS-SEM structural model. If the p-value is < 0.05, the indirect effect is considered statistically significant (Hair et al., 2017). Conversely, if the p-value is ≥ 0.05, the indirect effect is not significant.

**Table 8. Indirect Effect**

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ((O/STDEV))	P values
X1. -> Z. -> Y.	0.091	0.092	0.035	2.590	0.010
X2. -> Z. -> Y.	0.114	0.114	0.041	2.757	0.006

Based on the table of indirect effect coefficients, it can be seen that all indirect effect coefficients are positive and significant, as they have a p-value < 0.05.

**The effect of Country of Origin (X1) on Consumer Satisfaction (Y)**

H1: Country of Origin (X1) has a significant effect on Consumer Satisfaction (Y).

The analysis results show that Country of Origin has a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction with a T-statistic value of 4.096 and a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This is in line with previous research conducted by (Hasmoro et al., 2024), which explains that the country of origin of a product can influence how consumers evaluate that product. If a product comes from a country with a good image, such as being known for its quality or technology, consumers will consider the product to be better. This can enhance their expectations. If, after purchasing the product, those expectations are met, consumers will feel satisfied. Thus, the image of the country of origin not only influences the decision to buy, but can also influence satisfaction after purchase.

**The Effect of Brand Image (X2) on Consumer Satisfaction (Y)**

H2: Brand Image (X2) has a significant effect on Consumer Satisfaction (Y).

Brand image has been proven to have a significant effect on consumer satisfaction with a T-statistic of 4.367 and a p-value of 0.000. This statement is in line with the findings of (Sapitri et al., 2020), which show that brand image has an effect on customer satisfaction, especially through product functional attributes, perceived benefits,

and value provided. A positive brand image can enhance customer satisfaction because they believe that the brand—in this case, Wuling—has a good reputation and quality.

### **The Effect of Country of Origin (X1) on Purchase Decision (Z)**

H3: Country of Origin (X1) has a significant effect on Purchase Decision (Z).

The test results show that Country of Origin has a significant effect on purchase decisions with a T-statistic of 4.071 and a p-value of 0.000. This is in line with previous studies which explain that the image of the country of origin has a significant effect on purchasing decisions. This is due to consumers' tendency to use information about the country of origin as a benchmark for quality, especially when other information about the product is not available or difficult to obtain (Shirin & Kambiz, 2011). The better consumers' perception of the country of origin of a product, the more likely they are to buy it. COO can be used as an indicator of the quality of a product.

### **The Effect of Brand Image (X2) on Purchase Decision (Z)**

H4: Brand Image (X2) has a significant effect on Purchase Decision (Z).

Brand image has been proven to have a significant effect on purchasing decisions, with a T-statistic of 4.763 and a p-value of 0.000. This supports the research (Hien et al., 2020) which shows that brand image is very important in the purchasing decision process. Brands with a good reputation can help consumers assess product quality, especially if they have never tried the product before. Positive information about a brand can enhance consumers' perceptions of product quality and value, and make them more prepared and confident to buy. The better a brand's image, the more likely consumers are to choose the product. Therefore, brand image needs to be strengthened in order to enhance consumer confidence in making purchasing decisions.

### **The Effect of Purchase Decisions (Z) on Consumer Satisfaction (Y)**

H5: Purchase decisions (Z) have a significant effect on consumer satisfaction (Y).

Purchase decisions were found to have a significant effect on consumer satisfaction with a T-statistic of 3.597 and a p-value of 0.000. This is in line with research (Hartono & Wahyono, 2015) which states that purchasing decisions have a direct effect on consumer satisfaction. This means that consumers' choices when buying a product can determine whether they will be satisfied or not. If the purchasing decision is in line with expectations and needs, consumers tend to be satisfied. But if it is not, they may feel disappointed. Therefore, it is important for companies to understand what influences purchasing decisions in order to enhance consumer satisfaction.

### **Indirect Effect of Country of Origin (X1) on Consumer Satisfaction (Y) through Purchasing Decisions (Z)**

H6: Country of Origin (X1) has a significant indirect effect on Consumer Satisfaction (Y) through Purchasing Decisions (Z). The test results show a significant indirect effect with a T-statistic of 2.590 and a p-value of 0.010. This means that a positive perception of the country of origin of a product encourages consumers to buy, which ultimately enhances their satisfaction. Thus, COO not only has a direct effect but also plays a role through purchasing decisions.

### **The Indirect Effect of Brand Image (X2) on Consumer Satisfaction (Y) through Purchase Decision (Z)**

H7: Brand Image (X2) has a significant indirect effect on Consumer Satisfaction (Y) through Purchase Decision (Z). The analysis results show that brand image has a significant indirect effect on satisfaction through purchasing decisions, with a T-statistic of 2.757 and a p-value of 0.006. A strong brand image encourages consumers to buy, and if the decision meets their expectations, it will enhance satisfaction. This confirms that brand image plays a direct role as well as through the purchasing decision process.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the study entitled “The Influence of Country of Origin and Brand Image on Consumer Satisfaction Mediated by Purchase Decisions for Wuling Cars in Palu City,” the following conclusions can be drawn: (1) Country of Origin (COO) has a significant influence on consumer satisfaction when purchasing Wuling cars in Palu City. (2) Brand image has a significant effect on consumer satisfaction. (3) Country of Origin (COO) has a significant effect on the purchase decision of Wuling cars. (4) Brand image has a significant effect on the purchase decision of Wuling cars in Palu City. (5) Purchase decisions have a significant influence on the level of consumer satisfaction with Wuling cars. (6) Country of Origin (COO) has been proven to have a significant indirect influence on consumer satisfaction through purchase decisions. (7) Brand image has been proven to have a significant indirect

influence on consumer satisfaction through purchase decisions. Based on the results of the study, several suggestions can be made as follows: (1) Wuling is advised to provide more detailed information, offer flexible alternatives, and create a more comfortable purchasing experience. (2) To satisfy consumers, Wuling needs to strengthen its after-sales service, warranty, and product quality. (3) For consumers, this research can be used as a reference in making purchasing decisions by not only considering price, but also looking at brand image and the reputation of the product's country of origin as a guarantee of quality. (4) For future researchers, it is hoped that they can develop research by adding other variables such as price, service quality, and promotions. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence consumer satisfaction in the automotive industry.

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**THE EFFECT OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (COO) AND BRAND IMAGE ON CONSUMER SATISFACTION MEDIATED BY PURCHASE DECISION IN WULING CARS IN PALU CITY**

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