

Brand Equity and Purchase Intention towards Passenger Cars

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Abstract

The main aim of the research was to identify the factors influencing purchase intention towards passenger cars in Nepal. The study employed positivist epistemology with predefined hypotheses. Quantitative approach was utilized for the collection, presentation and analyzing the data. Primary data was collected by using a standardized questionnaire with a 6-point Likert scale. The study's population was owners and users of passenger cars in Nepal. 385 passenger car users were sample size. Convenient sampling method was used in the study. The study employed a causal comparative research strategy. The effect of brand equity dimensions on purchase intention was identified by using regression analysis. The result of the study showed that brand association has strong significant role in the development the purchase intention and brand loyalty brand awareness, and perceived quality have also significant role but low in the development of purchase intention in Nepal. The findings of the study offer a guide to the future researchers as well as to policy maker regarding about passenger cars.

Key words: Perceived Quality, Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Brand Loyalty.

GEL Classification: C12, L94, Y10

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Introduction

Aaker (1991) demarcated “brand equity as a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol, which add or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers”. Keller (1993) defined “brand equity as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to brand marketing”. Strong brand equity can be easily recognized, recalled, and it provides a distinction that generates a positive brand response (Keller, 2008). Brand equity comes from customers who recall the brand positively, strongly, and uniquely (Keller, 1993). Brand equity is complex (Aaker, 1991). Brand equity can be defined as assets and liabilities (Aaker, 1996). Value generation requires brand equity, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty, awareness, and exclusive brand assets.

Brand equity has the positive impact on brand recognition and consumer perception to a product (Keller, 1993). Strong brands promote consumer loyalty and successful customer relationships (Keller, 2008). Brand equity drives marketing performance, competitive advantage, and company success (Christodoulides & de Chernatony, 2010). What people have learnt, felt, and responded to about a brand through time determines its brand equity, according to (Keller, 2008). Ahmad et al. (2019) defined “brand equity can be defined as the additional benefit or maximum worth that increased a product due to its brand name.”

High-involvement products, like passenger vehicles, are purchased by consumers for their psychological gratification, symbolic value, or image reinforcement. The passenger automobile brands are a reflection of the consumer's loyalties, dreams, and socioeconomic status. In the majority of the world's countries, the popularity of passenger car brands is growing, which has led to fierce competition among automobile manufacturers. Additionally, a wide range of value-added services for passenger automobiles are becoming the norm, and since they are easily commoditized, differentiators are no longer the core product advances. Technology advancements led to a remarkable rise in consumer demand and the level of competition in the passenger car market.

The fastest-growing global market penetration of passenger automobiles makes it crucial to determine how brand equity factors affect consumers' intentions to acquire high-involvement products. Numerous researches made the assumption that customers' purchasing intentions are positively impacted by brand equity. Furthermore, the majority of researches have been conducted regarding chains of hotels and restaurants (Kim & Kim, 2004). Likewise, Pappu et al. (2005) examined brand equity in two different product categories; however, they did not base their findings on the level of customer participation because the two items they chose were high and low involvement.

Because of this, there aren't many empirical researches that investigate how consumer-based brand equity affects customers' purchase intentions when it comes to passenger automobiles and the level of buyer participation. Prior studies examined Aaker's (1991) model in several industries, including airline, smartphone, lodging, and beverage; however, none examined the influence of "brand equity" on customers' propensity to acquire electric passenger cars. This study aims to investigate the relationship between intention of purchase for passenger automobiles and the brand equity elements of Aaker's model (1991).

The goal of many businesses is to attract customers. Most businesses give non-material factors—such as cost, brand name, and country of origin—priority over tangible traits—such as aesthetic appeal and design. However, these companies aren't limited by brand equity. In order to close these gaps, this study uses a high involvement product category to investigate how brand equity factors affect purchase intention. Therefore, the goal of the research was to provide brand equity determinants that influence consumers' intentions to buy products in high involvement categories.

Literature Review

Literature review refers to the organized examination of prior research done by others on the subject. Based on Aaker's (1991) concept, brand equity is used in this study. Aaker (1991) based his model on all four dimensions and the factors that are discussed in brief below.

Brand awareness

In order to understand brand preference, based brand equity, and intents in home appliance industry in Algeria, Elfekair (2024) carried out research. They discovered that brand selection for home appliances is significantly influenced by brand awareness. A study on the effect of communication through social media on brand equity and purchase intention during a pandemic was carried out by Wei et al. (2023). Researchers observed that purchase intention was not affected by attribution-based dimensions of brand equity like brand awareness.

A study on the influence of brand equity on smartphone purchasing intention was carried out by Ravichandran (2023). The study discovered that the intention to purchase a smartphone is significantly influenced by brand awareness. Cuong (2023) conducted research on the influence of brand equity to the consumers' intentions to use instant coffee. It was discovered that the most important element influencing the propensity to purchase instant coffee is brand awareness.

Azzari and Pelissari (2021) investigated whether "brand awareness" influence purchasing intention. The elements of brand equity's mediating role. The findings demonstrated that while "brand awareness" has no direct effect on purchase intention but the brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand association have significant effect on buy intention.

In a research on impact of "brand equity" on consumer behavior among Veritas University students, Oyenuga et

al. (2021) discovered that “brand awareness” has a significant effect on students' consumer behavior. In Lithuania, Kyguoliene and Zikiene (2021) investigated the impact of brand equity factors on consumers' intentions to buy food items. The study found that brand knowledge has no discernible impact on consumers' inclinations to buy food items in Lithuania.

In Malaysia, Al Koliby and Rahman (2018) conducted research on impact of “brand equity” factors on smartphone purchase intentions. The findings showed that brand awareness has no discernible impact on purchasing intention and is not substantial. A study on the impact of brand equity factors on purchase intention was carried out by Jalilvand et al. (2011). “Brand awareness” significantly influences consumers' intentions to buy things, according to the research.

H1: Brand awareness has significant effect on purchase intention.

Brand loyalty

In order to understand consumer-based “brand equity” and brand preference intention in home appliance in Algeria's industry, Elfekair (2024) carried out research. They discovered that brand preference for home appliances is significantly influenced by brand loyalty. A study on the effect of communication through social media on brand equity and purchase intention during a pandemic was conducted by Wei et al. (2023). Researchers discovered that brand loyalty and other emotional-based “brand equity” dimensions continued to have a substantial impact on purchase intention.

A study on the influence of “brand equity” on smartphone purchasing intention was carried out by Ravichandran (2023). The study discovered that purchase intention of a smartphone is significantly influenced by brand loyalty. According to Azzari and Pelissari (2021), “brand loyalty” has a big impact on consumers' intentions to buy. Cuong (2023) conducted research on influencing brand equity to intentions of consumers to use instant coffee. It was discovered that consumers' intents to purchase instant coffee have been positively impacted by brand loyalty.

“Brand loyalty” has a favorable and significant impact on customer behavior among Veritas University students, according to a study conducted by Oyenuga (2021) on the impact of “brand equity” on consumer behavior.

A study on the effects of virtual interaction and self-congruity on the online celebrity “brand equity” and fans' purchasing intention was done by Liu et al. (2020). Researchers discovered that purchasing intention is significantly impacted by celebrity brand loyalty. One research in the topic of impact of “brand equity” factors on smartphone purchase intention in Malaysia was conducted by Al Koliby and Rahman (2018). The results showed that purchase intention is positively impacted by brand loyalty. Jalilvand et al. (2011) stated that a consumer's decision to buy the product is significantly influenced by their brand loyalty.

H2: Brand loyalty has significant effect on purchase intention.

Perceived Quality

In Algeria's home appliance industry, Elfekair (2024) conducted research on the topic of interpreting consumer-based “brand equity”, brand preference, and intentions. They discovered that brand preference for home appliances is significantly impacted by perceived quality. Rai and Budhathoki (2023) carried out research on the influencing on Nepalese university students' brand preference while purchasing laptops. Researchers discovered that college students' purchasing decisions are significantly impacted by the features and “perceived quality” of the laptop.

A study on the effect of communication through social media on brand equity and purchase intention during a pandemic was carried out by Wei et al. (2023). Researchers showed that perceived quality, an attribution-based brand equity component, had no bearing on purchase intention.

A research on the influence of “brand equity” on smartphone purchasing intention was carried out by Ravichandran (2023). The study discovered purchasing intention of a smartphone is significantly impacted by perceived quality. Cuong (2023) conducted research on the effect of brand equity on intentions of consumers to use instant coffee. It was discovered that consumers' inclinations to purchase instant coffee have also been positively impacted by

perceived quality. According to Azzari and Pelissari (2021), “perceived quality” has a big effect on consumers' purchasing intentions to make purchases. In Lithuania, Kyguoliene and Zikiene (2021) studied the influence of brand equity factors on consumers' intentions to buy food items. The researchers discovered that purchase intentions for food items are positively influenced by perceived quality in a substantial way.

A research done on effect of “brand equity” factors on smartphone purchase intention in Malaysia was conducted by Al Koliby and Rahman (2018). The outcome showed that purchasing intention is positively impacted by perceived quality. According to the study, consumers' intentions to acquire products are significantly influenced by the perception of their quality (Jalilvand et al., 2011).

H3: Perceived quality has significant effect on purchase intention.

Brand Association

In order to understand consumer-based “brand equity” and purchasing intention in home appliance industry in Algeria, Elfekair (2024) carried out research. They discovered that brand selection for home appliances is significantly influenced by brand connection. A study on the effect of communication by social media on consumer-based “brand equity” and purchase intention during a pandemic was carried out by Wei et al. (2023). Researchers discovered that brand association, an emotional brand equity dimension, continued to have a strong influence on purchasing intention.

A study on the influence of “brand equity” on smartphone purchasing intention was carried out by Ravichandran (2023). The brand association was discovered by the researchers to have a major impact on purchasing intentions of smartphone. According to Azzari and Pelissari (2021), “brand association” has a major impact on purchasing intention. Cuong (2023) conducted research on measuring the effect of brand equity on consumers' purchasing intentions to use instant coffee. It was discovered that customers' intents to purchase instant coffee had also been favorably impacted by the brand linkage.

The study's findings showed that among Veritas University students, brand association has a favorable and significant influence on consumer behavior (Oyenuga et al., 2021). A research conducted on the topic of impact of “brand equity” factors on smartphone purchase intention in Malaysia was conducted by Al Koliby and Rahman (2018). The findings indicated that purchasing intention is positively impacted by brand. According to the study, consumers' intentions to acquire products are significantly influenced by brand association (Jalilvand et al., 2011).

H4: Brand association has significant effect on purchase intention.

Based on the literatures review, various factors may effect on the purchase intention. But in the study only the brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand association have been used to measure the purchase intention of passenger cars in Nepal.

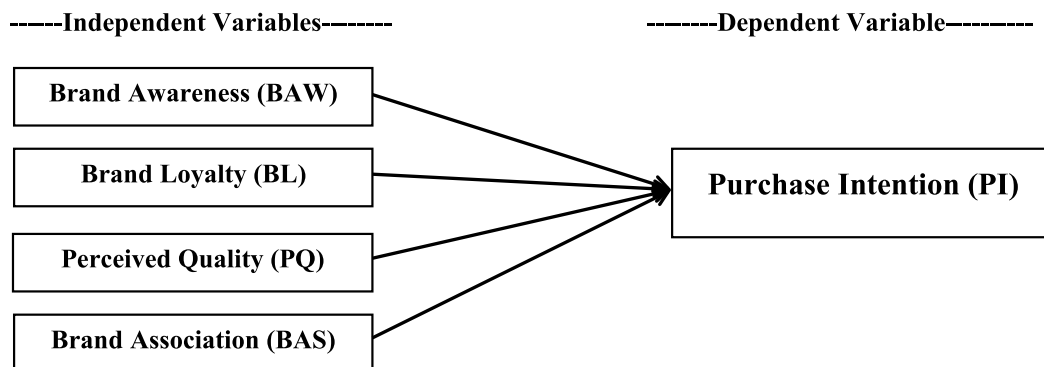


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Materials and Methods

This study was based on the hypothetic-deductive approach. The study has used quantitative research technique to address and fulfill its objectives and hypotheses. The main goal of the research was to examine the influence of “brand equity” dimensions on purchasing intention for buying of high involvement products.

Questionnaire contained 22 purchase intention questions, incorporating 4 questions for brand awareness (BAW), 6 questions for perceived quality (PQ), 4 questions for brand loyalty (BL), 4 questions for brand association (BAS), and 4 questions for purchase intention (PI). 6-point “Likert-type scales” were used to measure the scale items in the questions, and response choices ranged from 1 (very insignificant) to 6 (highly important). The questions were also asked on the participants' gender and age of study, among other demographic details. The survey instrument therefore included a total of 24 questions.

The targeted population of research was the car users in the Nepalese market. Total of 700 car users were approached to for collection of primary data at Kathmandu, from January to July 2024. Sampling technique was convenience sampling, whereby respondents were chosen based on the availability and accessibility of passenger car users. Out of the selected participants, 384 respondents provided accurate and complete responses, accounting for a response rate of 54.9%. Table 1 shows the pertinent details of the 384 participants who accurately completed the questionnaires and that is provided their perspectives on the research. The “internal consistency” was identified to examine reliability of data. The correlation matrix was utilized to examine the relationship of variables with purchase intention. Regression analysis has been carried out to examine the effect of independent variables on purchase intention for buying of passenger cars.

Table 1

The Respondents Profile

	Nos	%
Age Group:		
20 Yrs. and below	26	6.8
21 – 25 Yrs.	209	54.4
26 -30 Yrs.	113	29.4
31 Yrs. and above	36	9.4
Gender:		
Female	177	46.1
Male	207	53.9
Total	384	100%

Results and Discussion

The major goal of research was to examine factors affecting consumer purchase intention towards buying of passenger cars in Nepal. The deductive approach and quantitative technique has been utilized in the research. Before analyzing the data, “internal consistency” of the variables must be identified. The “internal consistency” of the variables was identified through the Chronbach's Alpha which is as bellows;

Table 2

Reliability Test

S.N.	Variables	Chronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
1	Brand Awareness	.932	4
2	Brand Loyalty	.969	6
3	Perceived Quality	.943	4
4	Brand Association	.812	4
5	Purchase Intention	.820	4

Reliability tests were conducted on both the dependent and independent variables. Cronbach's Alpha has been used to gauge the study constructs' internal consistency. Taber (2018) stated that reliable estimates of internal

consistency are provided by coefficient values larger than the minimum criterion of 0.7. The attribute measures of “brand equity” and “purchase intention” showed strong “internal consistency”, as showed by “Cronbach's Alpha” values for each variable over 0.7. This suggests that the instruments were sufficiently reliable.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Insights

Variables	Mean	SD	BAW	BL	PQ	BAS	PI
BAW	4.88	.69	1				
BL	5.09	.74	.282**	1			
PQ	4.81	.72	.221**	.149**	1		
BAS	4.34	.71	.311**	.253**	.394**	1	
PI	4.39	.77	.312**	.247**	.339**	.503**	1

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

All the dependent and independent variables are rated for purchase intention scale with score 1 as “strongly disagree”, 2 as “disagree”, 3 as “somewhat disagree”, 4 as “somewhat agree”, 5 as “agree” and 6 as “strongly agree”. Table no 3 shows that mean value of brand awareness was 4.88, mean value of brand loyalty was 5.09, mean value of perceived quality was 4.81, mean value of brand association was 4.34 and the mid-point of “purchase intention” was the 4.39. All the mean values are higher than mid-point 3. It shows that majority responses are inclined towards the agreeing on “purchase intention” of passenger cars. Therefore, we can arrive in the conclusion that the brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand association have significant effect on the “purchase intention” of passenger cars in Nepal. All the values of standard deviation are less than zero. Therefore, data are not more scattered and it is good for further analysis.

Table 3 also shows the “correlation matrix” between dependent and independent variables under study. It reveals that, there is significant positive “correlation” between brand awareness and purchase intention ($r = 0.312, p < 0.000$), brand loyalty and purchase intention ($r = 0.247, p < 0.000$), and perceived quality and “purchase intention” ($r = 0.339, p < 0.000$), brand association and “purchase intention” ($r = .503, p < 0.05$) for buying passenger cars. All the values of p are significant because ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand association have significant relationship with purchase intention. The result indicates there is highly positive and significantly correlated brand association with purchase intention, others three variables have low correlation with “purchase intention” for buying of passenger cars in Nepalese market.

Table 4

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.553 ^a	.305	.299	.64657

a. Predictors: (Constant), BAS, BL, BAW, PQ

Explanatory power (R²) indicates the degree to which the variance of the “purchase intention” is explained by independent variables. Table 4 shows the the value of R-square was 0.305. It reveals that the four independent variables like brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality have explained 30.5% of proportion of variance of purchase intention. However, remaining 69.5% was unexplained by these variables, the remaining 69.5%. will be clarified by remaining independent variables.

Table 5

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	74.640	4	18.660	44.635	.000 ^b
Residual	169.730	406	.418		

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Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total	244.370	410			

a. *Dependent Variable: PI*

b. *Predictors: (Constant), BAS, BL, BAW, PQ*

Multiple regression model was carried out to identify whether the regression model significant or not. From the above table no 5 of ANOVA model shows that the significant level is 0.000 that is smaller than 0.05. Therefore, statistically the regression model is significant (F=44.635, p=.000, degree of freedom=406. Four independent variables like brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality are the good predictors on purchase intention.

Table 6

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.615	.324		1.900	.058		
BAW	.151	.050	.135	3.013	.003	.850	1.176
BL	.095	.046	.092	2.087	.038	.890	1.124
PQ	.156	.049	.145	3.207	.001	.833	1.200
BAS	.415	.051	.381	8.088	.000	.772	1.295

a. *Dependent Variable: PI*

The VIF data is displayed in the coefficient table no 6. As to Hair et al. (1995), less than 10 VIF level is acceptable. The VIF values of “brand awareness”, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand association are 1.176, 1.124, 1.200 and 1.295, respectively, which are less than 10, indicating there is not issue with multicollinearity between the “independent variables”. A value of VIF over 10 indicates multicollinearity. Additionally, the tolerance level for each variable is 0.850, 0.890, 0.833 and 0.772 respectively, satisfying the requirement and showing that multicollinearity is not a problem for the model.

Regression analysis results show that purchase intention is significantly influenced by brand loyalty, perceived quality brand awareness, brand association, because all the values of p were smaller than 0.05. So, hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, and H4) were accepted. It was found brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and have significant effect on purchase intention in the buying of passenger cars.

Discussion

Many factors might influence purchase intention. But in this study, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality were used independent variables for measuring purchase intention. First independent factor used to measure the purchase intention was the brand awareness towards the passenger car. The result presented that the brand awareness has a positive significant impact on purchase intention ($\beta=0.135$, $p<0.05$). This finding was dissimilar with the findings of others (Wei et al., 2023; Azzari & Pelissari, 2021; Kyguoliene & Zikuene, 2021) but it is similar with Ravichandran, 2023; Cuong, 2023; Oyenuga, 2021) that the brand awareness has significant influence on purchase intention. The “brand awareness” is important factor to create the purchase intention of high involvement products. When the consumers are fully aware with the any brand of cars then they prefer the passenger cars, otherwise it is not possible to select the brand without awareness. Therefore, the brand awareness is a crucial factor for shaping purchase intention.

Another independent variable for measuring the purchase intention was brand loyalty and it was found that “purchase intention” is impacted by the brand loyalty towards passenger cars. The study’s finding displayed the brand loyalty has a significant impact on purchase intention ($\beta=0.092$, $p<0.05$). This finding was similar with previous findings of (Elfekair et al., 2024; Wei et al., 2023; Coung, 2023; Oyenuga, 2021) that “purchase intention” is affected by “brand loyalty” of passenger cars. Most respondents are ready to buy passenger cars

based on their loyalty towards cars' brand. When consumers feel proud with any reputed brand then they prefer the brand and they select the reputed brand. When consumers are more loyal towards any brand, definitely the loyalty enhances satisfaction and it is the universal truth that the purchase intention is outstretched via brand loyalty.

Next independent variable of the study was perceived quality for measuring the purchase intention. The study's result presented the perceived quality significantly influences purchase intention ($\beta=0.145$, $p<0.05$). This study's finding is similar with other's findings (Elfekair et al., 2024; Rai & Budhathoki, 2023; Wei et al., 2023; Ravichandran, 2023) that the perceived quality of passenger cars influences purchase intention. Perceived quality can be defined as the features of the cars, performance of the cars. There is a significant connection of purchase intention of consumers with perceived quality of passenger cars; thus, it is most important factor to determine the purchase intention of consumers.

Last independent variable for measuring the purchase intention was the brand association to measure the purchase intention towards passenger cars. The result of the research displayed that the brand association with any brand significantly influences on the purchase intention ($\beta=0.381$, $p<0.05$). This result was similar with the previous findings of (Elfekair et al., 2024; Wei et al., 2023; Coung, 2023) that the brand association has significantly influence to the purchase intention. When consumers are associated with any brand then consumers might have positive attitude with associated brand and the purchase intention of consumers will be enhanced if they are associated with brand.

Conclusions and Managerial Implications

The main goal of research was to examine factors affecting "purchase intention" for buying passenger cars in Nepal. The study was carried out to examine the effect of brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, and perceived quality to the purchase intention. Based on the findings the brand association is strongly considered by the consumers in the selection of brand of cars. It indicates that the brand awareness might guide for boosting the preference and purchase intention of passenger cars. Well-known brand and recognized brand of passenger cars influence on "purchase intention". Therefore, it is concluded that brand awareness has important role for the improvement of purchase intention towards passenger cars. The perceived quality is also considered by the Nepalese consumers in the buying of passenger cars. It reveals that the perceived quality might lead to increase for purchase intention of passenger cars; researchers concluded that the perceived quality is an important factor for development of purchase intention of passenger cars. Likewise, the brand loyalty towards passenger cars might lead to increase the purchase intention. Brand loyalty creates the feeling proud to the consumers and it might have significant role in the shaping the purchase intention. Researchers came in conclusion that Nepalese consumers prefer perceived quality of passenger cars while purchasing. The different qualities of passenger cars like safety, design, features, ground clearance, interior decoration, comfortability are considered on purchase passenger cars. Therefore, the perceived quality of passenger cars is important factor for development of purchase intention. "Brand association" has also strong effect to the purchase intention. If any consumers are closely associated with any brand, then purchase intention can be increased in the buying of passenger cars. Researchers concluded the brand association with passenger cars enhances the purchase intention of consumers. Thus, researchers concluded the brand awareness of passenger cars, perceived quality, brand loyalty of passenger cars and brand association of passenger cars are the important. So, they considered these factors in the time of buying passenger cars.

The conclusive findings of the study will add the value to brand consumer behavior. Theoretically, it assumes that Nepalese consumers are very aware with the brand association, perceived quality, brand awareness, brand loyalty towards passenger cars. Therefore, policy maker of the manufacturers and distributors should consider about the brand association, brand perceived quality, awareness, and brand loyalty of the passenger cars.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study included only brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality to measure the purchase intention and not captured other independent factors that determine the purchase intention. This research has been used only for passenger cars. Hence, the finding may not be applied in the other sector and other

products. This study is conducted in the underdeveloped country like Nepal and the finding of the research may not be applicable in other developed country.

Based on the study's limitations, the “future research directions” can be identified. This research can be conducted in other underdeveloped and developed countries where consumers have different angles socioeconomic backgrounds, customs, values, traits, cultures, purchasing capacity, attitudes, etc. This research can be carried out to other products such as Smartphone, computers, other service sectors also. Demographic factors can that moderate between purchase intention and these independent variables can be used in this model. Other independent variables that are not taken in the research may be included to understand the real perception of customers and “purchase intention” of consumers.

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