**Optimization of Purchase Decisions for Vario Motorcycles through Product Quality Improvement and Safety Perception**

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| **Article Info** |  | **ABSTRACT** |
| ***Article history:***  Received 11 April 2023  Revised 2 May 2023  Accepted 15 May 2023 |  | In the increasingly competitive automotive industry, motorcycle companies are required not only to deliver high-quality products but also to ensure that their products have distinct advantages over competitors. This study aims to analyze the influence of product quality and safety perception on the purchase decisions of Honda Vario motorcycles among students of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) and the surrounding community. The research method used is a participatory approach, with the study population consisting of UINSU students who are currently using or have used Honda Vario motorcycles. Data were collected through purposive sampling, involving 30 respondents. The results of the study indicate that product quality has a significant impact on purchase decisions, while safety perception does not show a significant influence. These findings underscore the importance of innovation and quality control in enhancing product competitiveness. Furthermore, transparency in addressing safety issues and providing optimal after-sales service were also identified as crucial factors in maintaining consumer trust. A comprehensive and integrated marketing strategy is recommended to enhance consumer loyalty and support the growth of Honda Vario sales. |
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

In the face of increasingly intense competition, companies are required to provide products that are not only of high quality but also have advantages that distinguish them from competing products. Product quality encompasses various aspects, including durability, dependency on other components, exclusivity, comfort, and visual aspects such as color, shape, and packaging (Handoko, 2000:49). A product with the best quality will have the potential for rapid growth and a great chance of capturing market share. Product quality refers to the company’s understanding of creating unique selling points that competitors do not possess, which drives companies to focus attention on product quality and compare it with competitors' products. However, even though a product may have an excellent appearance, it may not necessarily be the best if it does not meet the needs and preferences of customers (Rukaiyah, 2020).

The purchasing decision process generally follows similar steps but is influenced by factors such as personality, age, income, and individual lifestyle. A purchasing decision is a problem-solving approach in the context of buying goods or services to satisfy wants and needs. This process includes the recognition of wants and needs, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchasing decision, and post-purchase behavior (Solihin et al., 2020). For companies marketing motorcycles, understanding this decision-making process is crucial for increasing sales volume. The factors or attributes that consumers consider when buying a motorcycle must be analyzed (Tijjang, 2023). Therefore, an effective marketing strategy should be based on a deep understanding of consumers' needs and desires to develop the right product.

In conducting business, product quality is one of the important factors that influence purchasing decisions. Kotler and Keller, as explained in research by Lathiifa and Hapzi Ali (2013), state that product quality refers to a product's ability to deliver performance that meets or even exceeds customer expectations. Many customers consider product quality as one of the main aspects before making their purchase decisions. Meanwhile, according to research by Shaharudin et al. (2011), product quality is the main factor influencing brand and model selection in the highly competitive motorcycle market. Another study by Chaerudin & Syafarudin (2021) shows that product quality has a significant influence on consumers' purchasing decisions. Good product quality provides satisfaction and comfort for users, which then influences loyalty and repeat purchase decisions. On the other hand, safety perception also plays an important role in purchasing decisions. Consumers' perceptions of product risk and safety influence their purchase intentions and decisions.

The automotive industry consists of various sectors, including the motorcycle and car industries. With the increasing mobility of today's society and the inadequacy of public transportation systems in Indonesia, both the motorcycle and car automotive industries have experienced rapid development. The government’s inability to provide adequate transportation services has led people to prefer using private vehicles, both two-wheeled and four-wheeled (Kurniawan et al., 2013). The need for transportation is crucial in human life because without transportation support, activities or tasks cannot run smoothly; hence, its role is vital. The transportation tools used include vehicles such as motorcycles, cars, and so on (Sutandi, 2015). This condition is one of the main factors for the rapid growth in the automotive industry.

In its early development, the motorcycle industry in Indonesia was dominated by Japanese brands such as Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki, and Kawasaki. These brands successfully won the hearts of Indonesian consumers by offering innovative, reliable products that suit local needs. In recent decades, the motorcycle industry in Indonesia has continued to grow rapidly with the increasing number of assembly plants, wider distribution, and enhanced production capacity (Herlambang et al., 2020). Honda Vario is one of Honda's flagship products in the automatic scooter segment. First launched in 2006, Honda Vario quickly received positive feedback from Indonesian consumers. This automatic scooter is designed to meet urban mobility needs by offering comfort, fuel efficiency, and reliable performance. The Honda Vario uses the eSAF (enhanced Smart Architecture Frame), which is designed to provide better strength and stability. Purchasing decisions for the Honda Vario are often influenced by product quality. The Honda Vario offers advanced features that set it apart from competitors, such as the Smart Key system that allows the motorcycle to be operated without a mechanical key. When consumers choose a motorcycle, product quality is usually a primary concern. According to the American Society for Quality, quoted in Kotler & Keller's book (2012), product quality is a key factor in purchasing decisions. However, recently there have been issues related to the eSAF frame, which is claimed to be prone to breaking and rusting, raising serious concerns among consumers. This issue has occurred in automatic scooter models using the eSAF frame, such as the Honda Genio, Scoopy, Beat, and Vario 160 types. The viral video has triggered various comments from netizens who are beginning to doubt the quality of motorcycles from Astra Honda Motor (Akbar et al., 2024). This negative issue has the potential to undermine consumer confidence in the quality and safety of Honda Vario products, ultimately affecting purchasing decisions.

In this context, students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) and the surrounding community are relevant groups to study. Students have specific needs when choosing the vehicles they will use daily, while the community's perception of motorcycle safety can be influenced by various external factors such as accident news and information from mass media.

This study aims to analyze the influence of product quality and safety perception on the purchase decisions of Honda Vario motorcycles among UINSU students and the surrounding community. By understanding the factors that influence purchasing decisions, it is hoped that valuable input can be provided to manufacturers in improving their product quality and marketing strategies. Additionally, this research is also expected to provide insights for consumers in making the right choices based on product quality and safety.

1. **METHOD**

This article employs the Participatory Method because this method actively involves students in the process of improving product quality and safety perceptions. Through direct participation, students can better understand and contribute to the desired enhancement efforts, making the outcomes of the service activity more relevant and effective in achieving the goal of optimizing purchasing decisions. The population in this article consists of all students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) who are currently using or have previously used a Honda Vario motorcycle. The data used in this article are primary data. The sampling technique applied is purposive sampling, where samples are selected based on specific criteria, namely UINSU students who are active users or former users of the Honda Vario motorcycle. A total of 30 respondents were sampled to obtain representative data to support the implementation of this service activity.

1. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

Based on the results obtained, it was found that the product quality variable has a significant impact on purchasing decisions, with a regression coefficient of 0.494 and a standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.691, and a very high statistical significance (p < 0.001). This indicates that each one-unit increase in product quality is positively correlated with a 0.691 unit increase in purchasing decisions. On the other hand, the safety perception variable did not show a significant impact on purchasing decisions, with a low regression coefficient (0.063), a low standardized coefficient (0.084), and an insignificant t-value (p = 0.562). These results imply that product quality is the primary factor influencing consumer purchasing decisions, while safety perception does not contribute significantly. This interpretation can be used to guide more effective marketing strategies with a focus on enhancing product quality to support increased sales.

The results strongly support Hypothesis 1, which states that the quality of the Honda Vario has a significant impact on purchasing decisions among students at UIN Sumatera Utara and the surrounding community. Regression analysis shows that product quality has a positive and significant regression coefficient (B = 0.494, Beta = 0.691, p < 0.001), indicating that improvements in Honda Vario's product quality are directly related to increased purchasing decisions. Conversely, Hypothesis 2, which claims that safety perception, including negative issues regarding the Honda Vario's eSAF frame being prone to breaking and rusting, affects purchasing decisions, is not supported by these findings. The analysis results show that the safety perception variable does not have a significant impact on purchasing decisions (B = 0.063, Beta = 0.084, p = 0.562), meaning that these safety issues are not a major factor influencing consumer decisions.

**Discussion**

This study reveals important insights into the factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Regression analysis results indicate that product quality and consumer safety perception are significant predictors that positively affect purchasing decisions. These findings are consistent with previous research confirming the central role of product attributes and trust dimensions in consumer behavior.

The positive and significant regression coefficient for the "Product Quality" variable indicates that the higher the quality perceived by consumers, the greater their tendency to make a purchase. This aligns with marketing theories that emphasize the importance of meeting or even exceeding consumer expectations regarding product performance, features, and value (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Modern, educated consumers tend to prioritize quality as a key criterion in their purchasing decisions, especially in a competitive environment.

On the other hand, the coefficient for the "Safety Perception" variable also shows a positive direction, though with lower strength compared to product quality. This finding highlights that the sense of safety and protection consumers feel during transactions is an important factor that marketers should not overlook. With the advancement of technology and digital shopping trends, issues related to data security, privacy, and consumer trust have become major concerns among businesses (Pavlou, 2003). The results of this study suggest that efforts to build a positive safety perception in the minds of consumers can significantly contribute to their purchasing decisions.

1. **CONCLUSION**

Based on this article, it is found that to improve the quality and safety of the Honda Vario motorcycle and encourage consumers to make purchases, the company needs to implement various integrated strategic measures. First, the company should focus on innovation aimed at creating products that not only meet but exceed consumer expectations. This can be achieved by enhancing aspects such as durability, fuel efficiency, riding comfort, and adding advanced features that can enhance the user experience. The manufacturing process should include stringent quality control and ensure that each motorcycle unit produced meets the highest standards. Additionally, investing in research and development (R&D) is crucial. With in-depth research into new materials, more ergonomic designs, and the latest technologies, the company can create more innovative and high-quality products. The company should also be responsive to consumer feedback by listening to input through surveys, reviews, and online forums, which can help the company continuously improve its product quality.

In addition to focusing on quality, the company must also pay attention to improving product safety. One important step is using high-quality materials, especially for critical components like the motorcycle frame. Utilizing more corrosion-resistant and robust materials can reduce the risk of damage that could endanger riders. Furthermore, integrating advanced safety technologies such as Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and traction control systems will provide additional protection for users. Products that have been thoroughly tested and certified by recognized safety organizations will also enhance consumer confidence in the safety of the motorcycle. Transparency in handling safety issues is crucial. If problems arise, such as those related to the eSAF frame, the company should proactively communicate the corrective actions taken, including recalls if necessary. This transparency will help maintain consumer trust.

Moreover, improving after-sales service is an aspect that cannot be overlooked. The company can offer extended warranties or additional protection, particularly for components of concern, such as the frame and safety systems. Providing a broad service network with trained technicians will ensure that consumers receive the support they need to keep their motorcycles in optimal condition. Educating consumers about proper maintenance and usage of the motorcycle is also important to ensure that product quality and safety are maintained in the long term. Finally, an effective marketing campaign should be designed to reinforce the image of product quality and safety. Using testimonials from satisfied customers, positive reviews, and regularly holding product demo events and test rides will allow potential customers to experience the advantages of the Honda Vario firsthand. Additionally, the company can engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities focused on road safety and environmentally friendly product usage to enhance the company's image among consumers who care about these issues. By implementing these strategies comprehensively and integratively, the company can improve the quality and safety of the Honda Vario motorcycle and drive increased sales through higher consumer trust and loyalty.

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