



## Investigating the Role of Sport Goods Quality and Stores Services in Creating Brand Preference and Customer Purchase Intention Emphasizing the Mediated Role of Perceived Value and Brand Equity

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### ABSTRACT

The distinctive characteristics of sportswear underscore the critical importance of product quality in this sector, where purchasing decisions are often influenced by brand reputation and perceived quality. Sports products are not only essential for athletic activities but are also increasingly integrated into daily wear and leisure attire. This study examines the impact of sports product quality and retail service quality on brand preference and purchase intention, with a focus on the mediating roles of perceived value and brand equity. Using a descriptive-survey approach and structural equation modeling, the research targeted customers of prominent domestic and international sports brands in Iran. Given the unlimited population size, a sample of 384 was determined based on the Krejcie and Morgan table; ultimately, 370 completed questionnaires were analyzed. Data were collected using validated scales: perceived value (Ebrahimi et al., 2014), brand equity (Boyle et al., 2013), purchase intention and brand preference (Chang & Liu, 2009), and product and service quality adapted from Ebrahimi et al. (2009) and Ismailpour and Goldouzi (2013). The structural equation analysis revealed that both product and service quality directly affect purchase intention and also exert influence through the mediating role of brand equity. Furthermore, brand equity mediated the relationship between quality dimensions and brand preference. These findings suggest that enhancing perceived quality—through factors such as durability, functionality, product design, and after-sales service, supported by strategic communication—can strengthen brand preference and maximize purchase intention among consumers.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary marketing discourse, concepts such as service quality, approached through the lens of co-creating shared value, are recognized not only for generating societal value but also for enhancing organizational value and establishing competitive advantage (Maleki Amraei, 2017). Investment in product and service quality is regarded as a strategic imperative, with emphasis placed on its role in elevating brand value, fostering brand preference, and strengthening purchase intention—particularly within service-oriented industries (Ebrahimi et al., 2017).

As competition among firms and brands intensifies in attracting customers, and consumer empowerment grows within competitive markets, companies must not only focus on acquiring new customers but also prioritize the retention of existing ones through the cultivation of robust relational bonds (Maleki Amraei, 2017). The brand, as the most valuable intangible asset of any organization, plays a pivotal role in organizational success and effective consumer engagement due to the exceptional advantages it confers (Gholipour et al., 2018). Central to building a powerful brand is investment in and continuous improvement of product and service quality (Abdavi & Abdolalinejad, 2018).

Furthermore, understanding the drivers of brand equity is essential for fostering a strong brand and encouraging repurchase behavior. Superior quality enhances brand equity, leading to differentiation and preference, which in turn positively influences consumer behavior and purchase intentions (Chang et al., 2009). Service quality is typically evaluated during service delivery, with each customer interaction representing a critical moment for building trust and ensuring satisfaction (Ebrahimi et al., 2017).

Product quality encompasses attributes such as material, durability, price, color variety, comfort, social appeal, and brand-generated benefits—all of which significantly shape purchase decisions and

consumer perceptions (Gaurav et al., 2020). Existing research on quality and brand equity underscores that perceived value is an indispensable construct linking both product/service quality and brand equity. Perceived value, influenced strongly by quality, serves as a key determinant of brand equity (He & Mukherjee, 2007). In this vein, He and Li (2010) identified service quality as a primary antecedent of brand equity. Similarly, Gaurav et al. (2020) demonstrated the impact of brand equity on loyalty and repurchase behavior in the sportswear market.

Consumers increasingly base their purchasing decisions on value perceptions, making value one of the most powerful drivers of consumer behavior in the marketplace (Afkar et al., 2018). Understanding consumer needs and the factors influencing brand choice is essential, as consumer behavior encompasses various psychological and social processes before, during, and after purchase and consumption activities (Aboei et al., 2016). In the context of sports, consumer behavior involves the selection, purchase, use, and disposal of sports-related products and services to fulfill needs and obtain benefits (Sadeghi Broujerdi & Mansouri, 2018).

Repurchase intention reflects consumers' motivational state to repeat purchasing behavior and is recognized as an outcome of perceived brand value. Thus, brand-related activities that enhance perceived value ultimately lead to repurchase behavior (Tsai, 2005). Researchers have identified brand preference as a key predictor of purchase intention (Boroumand et al., 2024; Barakhas et al., 2020; Ahmadifard et al., 2018). Brand preference reflects a consumer's bias toward a specific brand, while purchase intention is a critical attitudinal component that predicts actual behavior—the stronger the intention, the greater the likelihood of purchase (Ebrahimi et al., 2009; Ebrahimi et al., 2017).

Previous studies (e.g., Kim & Ko, 2012; Martin et al., 2018; Cuong, 2020) confirm that purchase

intention is strongly influenced by attitudes toward product quality and brand preference. Badrinarayanan and Kumar (2017) found that quality was the most important factor influencing repurchase behavior in sportswear, followed by color, design, comfort, and price. Effective quality management and the identification of quality signals and brand differentiators are among the most critical success factors for firms operating in competitive markets. Marketing managers strive to enhance brand value through branding strategies and asset leveraging (Afzal, 2013). Thus, improving quality can serve as a viable strategy for brand development, subsequently strengthening brand preference and repurchase rates.

Sport consumers often prefer stores that offer a full range of products (e.g., apparel and equipment). Faced with a plethora of similar products, consumers increasingly rely on brand reputation rather than product attributes in making purchase decisions. Given the expanding global sports industry and its profitability, branding and brand development have become conventional strategies for many major sportswear manufacturers seeking entry into new segments and markets (Maleki Amraei, 2017).

In fact, brands have become so influential in consumer decision-making that they are often considered firms' most critical assets. Research indicates that factors such as product quality, price, design, store environment, and service quality significantly enhance customer loyalty and repurchase behavior (Broadbent et al., 2010; Noone & Mount, 2008). Azadi et al. (2015) emphasized the role of quality in enhancing brand equity in the sportswear industry, while Chinomona et al. (2013) identified product quality as the most important factor affecting perceived loyalty and brand preference. Budi et al. (2021) asserted that consumer experience with high-quality products shapes future attitudes and satisfaction. Shadivand et al. (2016) highlighted that the widespread availability of sports brands through numerous retail outlets allows consumers to directly experience and

evaluate product quality, implying that product accessibility influences perceived quality.

Sportswear and equipment are highly brand-sensitive product categories (Azadi et al., 2015). Research indicates that three brands—Nike, Adidas, and Puma—collectively control approximately 30% of the global sportswear market (Newbery, 2009; Statista, 2024). Intense competition and product proliferation compel manufacturers to differentiate their offerings and create value for buyers. Cultivating customer loyalty through superior quality encourages repeat purchases, retains current customers, and reduces advertising costs (Gaurav et al., 2020).

Given the distinctive characteristics of sportswear, quality is of paramount importance, and product selection in this industry is often brand- and quality-driven. Sports products are used not only for athletic activities but also in daily life and leisure. Moreover, due to the global nature of sports, these products are marketed both nationally and internationally, with global firms deriving more than half of their sales from consumers in developing countries.

Retailers, in turn, strive to enhance service quality to improve brand image and stimulate purchase intention. Implementing strategies to improve service quality fosters competitive differentiation among stores (Faria et al., 2022).

While previous studies have largely examined factors affecting brand equity, the influence of marketing mix elements on brand value, and the relationship between satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase intention, limited research in Iran has focused on marketing in the sportswear and athletic products industry. Thus, the central research question is: Can the quality of sports products and the service quality of retail stores influence perceived value and, consequently, brand equity, brand preference, and purchase intention among consumers of sports products?

Since no prior study has comprehensively addressed this research gap, the present study aims to investigate the role of product quality and service delivery in shaping brand preference and purchase intention among sportswear consumers, with

particular attention to the mediating effects of perceived value and brand equity.

## 2. Methodology

This study adopts an applied research approach and employs a descriptive-correlational methodology utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM). Data collection was conducted through a survey. The statistical population consisted of all customers of prominent domestic and international sports goods brands in Iran. Given the unlimited population size, the sample size was estimated to be 384 individuals using Krejcie and Morgan's table. A random cluster sampling method was employed for participant selection.

Due to the concentration of authorized retailers of major sports brands in major urban centers, stores located in Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad were selected as sampling clusters. Several stores were randomly chosen from these cities, and questionnaires were distributed randomly among their customers. To ensure adequate sample size, 400 questionnaires were distributed, of which 370 fully completed questionnaires were included in the final statistical analysis.

The research instruments included the following validated scales: Perceived Value Questionnaire (Ebrahimi et al., 2017), Brand Equity Questionnaire (Buil et al., 2013), Purchase Intention

and Brand Preference Questionnaire (Chang & Liu, 2009), and a composite questionnaire measuring product and service quality adapted from Ebrahimi et al. (2009) and Goldoziyan and Esmaeelpor (2012).

Content validity of the questionnaires was assessed and confirmed by a panel of experts in sports marketing management. Furthermore, construct validity was evaluated through divergent and convergent validity tests, while reliability was assessed using both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability measures.

Data analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase employed descriptive statistics for raw score categorization, development of tables and graphs, frequency distribution analysis, and calculation of central tendency and dispersion measures including mean and standard deviation. The second phase utilized inferential statistics where confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to validate all measurement instruments, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was implemented to test the conceptual research model. All analyses were performed using SPSS 19 and SmartPLS 3 software packages.

## 3. Findings of the Research

Demographic characteristics of the study sample are presented in Table 1. The results indicate that males constituted 55.1% of the participants, while females accounted for 44.9%. Regarding age distribution, 47.8% of respondents fell within the 21–25-year age range, followed by 32.4% in the 25–

30-year category, with the remainder distributed across other age intervals. In terms of educational attainment, 63% of participants held bachelor's or master's degrees, while the remaining 37% possessed diplomas or associate degrees.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	15-20 years	27	7.3
	21-25 years	177	47.8
	26-30 years	120	32.4
	31-40 years	40	10.8



	Above 50 years	6	1.6
<b>Gender</b>	Male	204	55.1
	Female	166	44.9
<b>Education Level</b>	Diploma/Associate	137	37.0
	Bachelor's	152	41.1
	Master's/PhD	81	21.9

To assess reliability, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability indices were employed, with values exceeding 0.70 considered acceptable (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). Furthermore, convergent validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE), for which the minimum

acceptable threshold was set at 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As presented in Table 2, all values for Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and convergent validity were confirmed to meet these established criteria.

**Table 2.** Reliability and Validity Assessment of Research Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Perceived Quality	0.833	0.864	0.501
Brand Equity	0.877	0.900	0.557
Perceived Value	0.700	0.814	0.524
Brand Preference	0.803	0.865	0.566
Purchase Intention	0.863	0.907	0.709

To evaluate the discriminant validity of the measurement model, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was applied. According to the results presented in Table 3, discriminant validity is established when the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (values on the main diagonal) for each construct exceeds the shared variance (correlations)

between that construct and all other constructs in the model. As demonstrated in Table 3, all constructs exhibited stronger correlations with their own indicators than with those of other constructs, confirming that discriminant validity was satisfactorily achieved.

**Table 3.** Discriminant Validity Assessment: Fornell-Larcker Matrix

Fornell-Larcker Matrix	Brand Equity	Brand Preference	Purchase Intention	Perceived Value	Product and Service Quality
Brand Equity	0.771				
Brand Preference	0.727	0.752			
Purchase Intention	0.738	0.708	0.842		
Perceived Value	0.646	0.736	0.747	0.751	
Product and Service Quality	0.570	0.478	0.597	0.537	0.688

Following the assessment of the reliability and validity of the measurement models, the structural model was examined by analyzing the relationships among the latent variables. In the structural model, criteria such as significance coefficients (t-values), coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ), and predictive power ( $Q^2$ ) were evaluated. The primary criterion

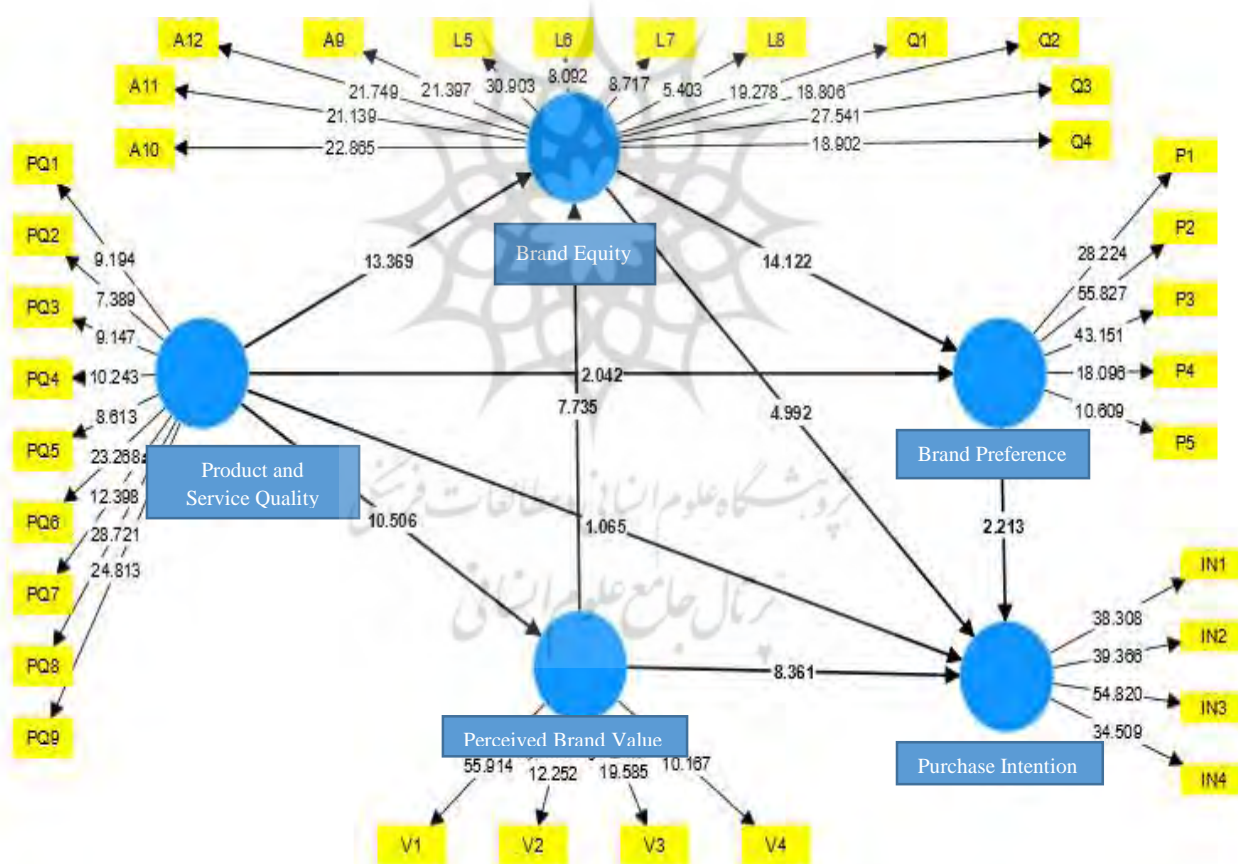
for assessing the relationships between constructs in the structural model is the magnitude of the t-statistics. Values exceeding 1.96 indicate statistically significant relationships between the constructs. The corresponding t-statistics are presented in Figure 2 and Table 4.

**Table 4.** Significance of Path Coefficients Among Main Constructs

Relationship Between Main Constructs	t-value	p-value	Result
<b>Product and Service Quality → Brand Equity</b>	13.369	0.001	Supported
<b>Product and Service Quality → Purchase Intention</b>	1.065	0.287	Not Supported
<b>Product and Service Quality → Brand Preference</b>	2.042	0.041	Supported
<b>Product and Service Quality → Perceived Value</b>	10.506	0.001	Supported
<b>Perceived Value → Brand Equity</b>	7.735	0.001	Supported
<b>Perceived Value → Purchase Intention</b>	8.361	0.001	Supported
<b>Brand Equity → Brand Preference</b>	14.122	0.001	Supported
<b>Brand Equity → Purchase Intention</b>	4.992	0.001	Supported
<b>Brand Preference → Purchase Intention</b>	2.213	0.001	Supported

According to the findings reported in Table 4, the t-statistics for all direct paths—except for the path from product and service quality to purchase intention—exceeded the critical value of 1.96 and were statistically significant. This significance

confirms the accurate prediction of the relationships hypothesized in the research model. The final research model derived from the path analysis is presented in the figure 2.

**Figure 1.** t-values of Path Coefficients in the Research Conceptual Model

Based on the data presented in Figure 2 and Table 4, all relationships—except for the path from service and product quality to purchase intention—exhibit t-values exceeding 1.96. Thus, at

a 95% confidence level, the validity of the relationships among the constructs is confirmed.

According to Table 5, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), which connects the

measurement and structural components of the structural equation model, indicates the extent to which an exogenous variable explains an endogenous variable.  $R^2$  values range from 0 to 1

and reflect the structural model's fit at three levels: weak (0.19), moderate (0.33), and strong (0.67). The results in Table 5 demonstrate that the  $R^2$  values are at a desirable level.

**Table 5.** Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) for Endogenous Variables

$R^2$	Dimension
—	Service Quality
<b>0.647</b>	Brand Equity
<b>0.292</b>	Perceived Value
<b>0.683</b>	Purchase Intention
<b>0.536</b>	Brand Preference

Table 6 presents the  $Q^2$  index, which reflects the predictive power of the model.  $Q^2$  values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate weak, moderate, and strong predictive power, respectively, for the indicators of

an endogenous construct. Based on Table 6, the predictive power of the constructs is estimated to be good.

**Table 6.** Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ ) of the Model

SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$	Construct
<b>1,370.000</b>	850.835	0.234	Brand Equity
<b>5,480.000</b>	3,982.285	0.277	Perceived Value
<b>1,096.000</b>	588.177	0.463	Brand Preference
<b>822.000</b>	594.872	0.335	Purchase Intention

The overall model, comprising both measurement and structural components, was evaluated for global fit. The obtained goodness-of-fit (GOF) value is classified as follows: 0–0.01 (weak), 0.01–0.25 (moderate), 0.25–0.36 (strong), and above 0.36 (very strong). The GOF value for the model, calculated using the formula below, is 0.653, indicating a very strong overall fit:

$$GOF = \sqrt{\text{communalities} \times \bar{R}^2} = \sqrt{0.675 \times 0.633} = 0.653$$

After assessing the fit of the measurement model, structural model, and the overall model, the hypothesis testing results are summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Results of Main Hypotheses Based on the Final Research Model

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
<b>H1: Product and Service Quality → Brand Equity</b>	0.573	13.369	0.001	Supported
<b>H2: Product and Service Quality → Brand Preference</b>	-0.148	2.042	0.041	Supported
<b>H3: Product and Service Quality → Purchase Intention</b>	0.068	1.065	0.287	Not Supported
<b>H4: Product and Service Quality → Perceived Value</b>	0.540	10.506	0.001	Supported
<b>H5: Perceived Value → Purchase Intention</b>	0.404	8.361	0.001	Supported
<b>H6: Perceived Value → Brand Equity</b>	0.334	7.735	0.001	Supported
<b>H7: Brand Equity → Purchase Intention</b>	0.321	4.992	0.034	Supported
<b>H8: Brand Equity → Brand Preference</b>	0.837	14.122	0.001	Supported
<b>H9: Brand Preference → Purchase Intention</b>	0.144	2.213	0.027	Supported

Based on the data in Table 7 and Figure 3, it is evident that the quality of sports products and services directly influences brand preference and

purchase intention, and also exerts indirect effects through the mediating roles of brand equity and perceived value. These findings confirm that

perceived quality, transmitted via key mediating variables, significantly enhances brand preference

and repurchase intention for sports products sold in retail stores.

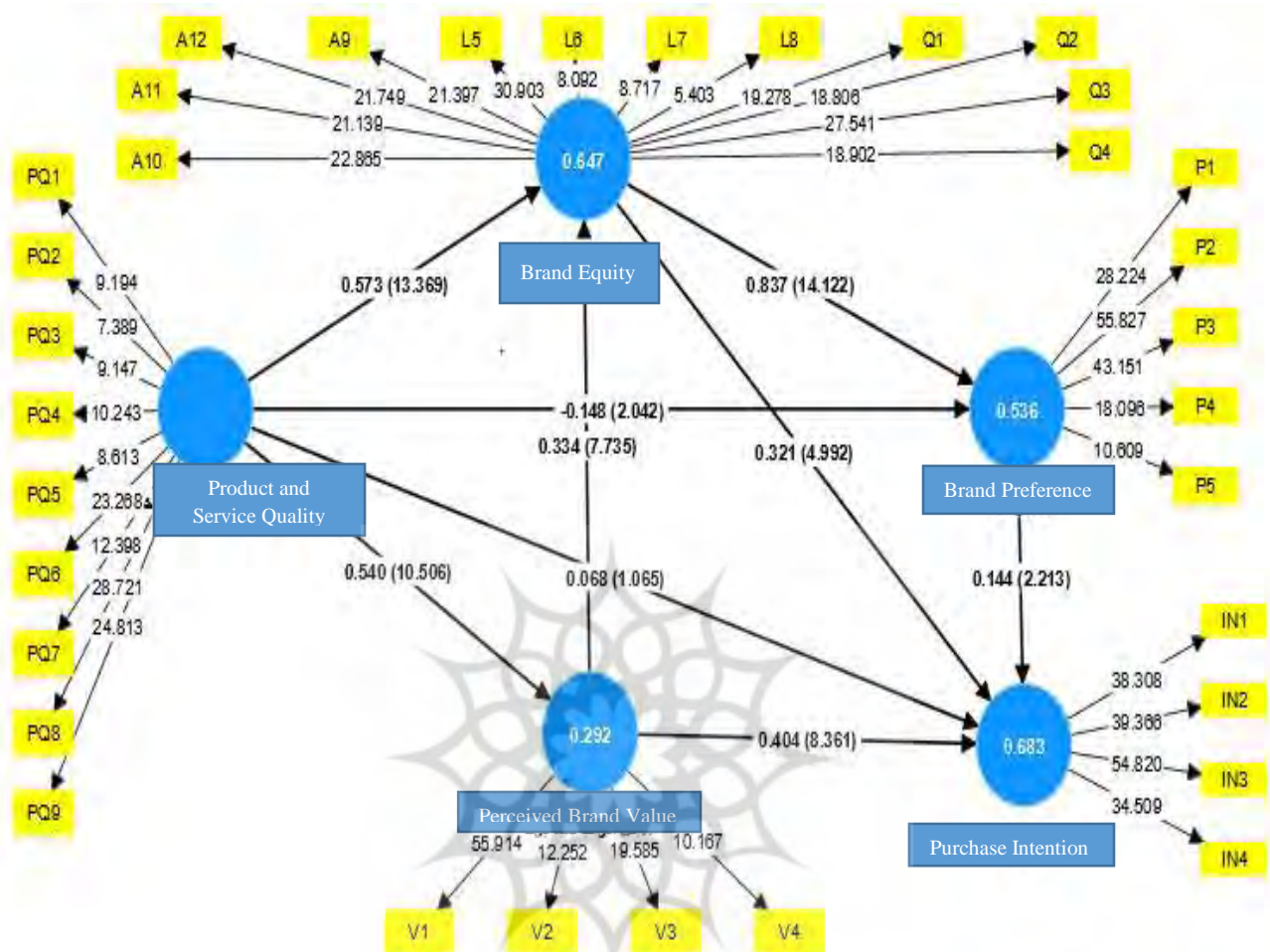


Figure 2. Path coefficients in the conceptual research model

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

In contemporary marketing, the significance of branding in consumer purchasing decisions is such that some experts refer to it as a "complete product," arguing that customers often buy brands rather than products themselves (Seifi, 2017). Understanding the factors influencing brand selection and preference is critically important, as the success of many companies is attributed to accurately identifying, prioritizing, and evaluating the impact of these factors (Kalashi et al., 2019).

The findings of the present study indicate that the quality of sports products and services significantly influences brand equity. Similarly,

Zayekabe et al. (2012) demonstrated that service quality affects dimensions of brand equity, with brand image, brand judgments, and brand feelings significantly contributing to brand equity. Product quality, type, capabilities, and applications can influence consumer awareness and brand associations (Zayekabe et al., 2012). Consequently, the greater the alignment between product attributes (quality, price, design, aesthetics, etc.) and consumer needs and desires—and the more familiar and renowned the brand—the stronger the inclination and satisfaction toward it, leading to increased loyalty (Keshkar et al., 2013). Moreover, a wider distribution network and greater



accessibility of branded products appear to enhance market awareness among target customers. Extensive distribution ensures greater visibility of branded products across various retail outlets, reinforcing brand recall through repeated exposure, thereby increasing brand awareness and strengthening brand associations.

The results also revealed that the quality of sports products and services significantly affects perceived value. In marketing, perceived value is a crucial metric for gaining competitive advantage and is even regarded as the most important indicator of repurchase intention. Customers, influenced by their perceived quality, increase their loyalty and facilitate word-of-mouth promotion. Service quality is a primary means for service organizations to differentiate themselves from competitors. After receiving a service, customers mentally compare its value with their expectations; if the perceived value meets or exceeds expectations, they are more likely to revisit the service provider in the future (Gholipour et al., 2015). Similarly, Happ et al. (2020) found that customers' experiences with quality in sports retail stores significantly impact their satisfaction, repurchase intentions, and positive word-of-mouth referrals.

Path analysis in the current study indicated that perceived value of sports products and services explains 33% of the variance in brand equity ( $t$ -value = 7.735). Supporting this, Abbasi et al. (2015) showed that perceived quality positively influences brand value and brand trust, and enhancing the quality of a brand's products and services increases consumer perceived benefits. Gaurav et al. (2020) demonstrated that the comfort, suitability, and perceived quality of sportswear significantly affect brand preference and repurchase behavior, fostering customer loyalty to sports brands. Ahmad and Ahmad (2013) also found that awareness of sports brands and their perceived quality positively impact brand equity and loyalty.

Furthermore, the results indicated that the brand equity of sports products and services significantly influences brand preference, explaining approximately 84% of its variance ( $t$ -value =

14.122). Brand equity also affects purchase intention, with a path coefficient of 0.321, accounting for 32% of the variance in purchase intention. According to Rahimniya et al. (2013), brand awareness is the first step in building brand equity, reflecting the customer's ability to recognize a brand. Thus, managers and marketers strive to achieve high levels of brand awareness to influence customers' brand choices. By enhancing brand awareness through cultural initiatives and providing relevant information, the impact of brand equity on brand preference can be amplified. High brand equity guides consumers toward preferring one brand over competitors, fostering future purchases (Chang and Liu, 2009).

Additional findings revealed that brand preference directly explains 14% of the variance in purchase intention. The decision to prefer a brand is a critical step toward actual purchase, and the strong, significant relationship between brand preference and purchase intention underscores its importance. Ranjbariyan et al. (2014) and Haghshenas et al. (2013) similarly reported a positive and significant effect of brand preference on purchase intention, consistent with the current results.

The analysis also showed that the quality of sports products and services directly explains only 7% of the variance in purchase intention, suggesting that its influence is primarily mediated by other variables. Askariyan and Akbarzadeh (2016) identified quality as a key factor influencing preference for sports brands. Perceived quality is one of the most critical drivers of purchase and repurchase decisions. Azadi et al. (2015) emphasized the positive role of quality in enhancing brand equity in the sportswear industry, recommending that domestic manufacturers focus on improving product quality through extensive research and innovation in design to better meet customer expectations and strengthen brand equity.

The results further confirmed that the effect of sports product and service quality on brand preference, mediated by perceived value and brand equity, is significant (path coefficient = 0.151,  $t$ -

value = 6.081). This indicates that 15% of the total effect of quality on brand preference is indirectly explained through these mediators. Thus, sports product customers (whether preferring domestic or foreign brands) primarily seek the best quality. Most research on brand preference and selection recognizes quality as a vital factor in global producer-customer interactions, with its influence on demand mediated through income-demand relationships (Ahmadi et al., 2017; Seifi, 2018; Sadeghi Boroujerdi and Mansouri, 2018). The current findings affirm that the quality of sports products and retail services significantly influences preference for both domestic and foreign sports brands. Askariyan et al. (2017) found that perceived quality was the highest priority for customers of both domestic and international sports brands. High quality can expand a brand's commercial reach. When the link between brand and product quality is established before product attributes are evaluated, consumers are more likely to be influenced by perceived quality. In other words, perceived quality of sports products and services creates customer value, thereby enhancing brand equity and ultimately brand preference. These results align with studies by Keshkar et al. (2013) and Samei nasr et al. (2011). Azadi et al. (2015) contend that perceived quality is effective in creating value for sports brands, enabling differentiation from competitors. Customers influenced by perceived quality increase their loyalty and facilitate positive word-of-mouth.

The study also found that the effect of sports product and service quality on purchase intention, mediated by perceived value, brand equity, and brand preference, is significant (path coefficient = 0.058, t-value = 3.941). This indicates that 5% of the total effect of quality on purchase intention is indirectly explained through these mediators. Gholipour et al. (2015) showed that perceived quality indirectly affects repurchase intention through perceived value. The significance of brand equity as a mediator influencing brand preference and purchase intention implies that it can enhance

brand image through its dimensions—brand awareness, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty—leading to brand preference and repurchase intention. Ahmadifard et al. (2018) emphasized the positive direct effect of perceived value on brand preference. According to Askariyan and Akbarzadeh (2016), strong brand associations foster customer confidence and preference for a brand over others, as these associations are reinforced by their relevance to the customer's life and consistency over time. Brand recognition and loyalty depend on these associations. Liu and Smeesters (2010) identified perceived brand quality as a fundamental factor in consumer attitude-based brand evaluation, noting that brand preference is intertwined with perceived quality. Gholipour et al. (2015) also found that brand equity positively affects perceived value and repurchase intention, and perceived value positively affects repurchase intention. Askariyan and Akbarzadeh (2016) concluded that perceived value significantly influences repurchase intention, and prior customer satisfaction also affects repurchase intention.

Based on the current and previous research, quality can be considered a key variable in creating perceived brand value. This finding is rational, as consumers typically value high-quality products and devalue low-quality ones. High perceived quality guides consumers toward choosing one brand over competitors, thereby enhancing brand equity. Perceived quality is linked to information evaluation and brand loyalty and significantly influences purchase decisions (Ebrahimi et al., 2009). Quality is a fundamental intrinsic benefit expected by consumers and a critical component of brand vitality. Famous brands often convey a sense of quality that boosts consumer trust and acceptance, even at higher prices (Shadivand et al., 2016). Pillai et al. (2015) and Lau et al. (2006) identified quality as the most important factor in selecting and remaining loyal to sportswear brands. Consumers react to brands based on their perceived quality; if they perceive high quality, they demonstrate loyalty in their purchase decisions

(Ranjbariyan et al., 2014). Mathew et al. (2014), Askariyan and Akbarzadeh (2016), Keshkar et al. (2013), and Azadi et al. (2015) have all highlighted the important role of quality in enhancing brand equity and preference in the sports product industry. Junejo et al. (2018) identified product quality, style, brand name, store environment, and service delivery in sports retail stores as key factors influencing brand loyalty and preference.

Today, improving service quality is a key strategy for service-oriented organizations. Companies that provide higher-quality services and maximize customer satisfaction are more likely to survive. Enhanced service quality develops perceived value and brand equity from the customer's perspective, leading them to perceive the brand's products as more valuable and superior, ultimately stimulating purchase intention and behavior. Therefore, to strengthen perceived quality, attention should be paid to factors such as durability, product efficiency, style, design, and after-sales service through advertising, thereby

increasing brand preference and repurchase intention among customers.

The results demonstrated that the quality of sports products and retail services influences customer purchase intention through brand equity. Additionally, quality affects brand preference through the mediation of brand equity. Given that the current study used questionnaires with limited items, future research could employ qualitative methods and interviews to obtain more comprehensive and detailed insights.

## 5. Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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