INFLUENCE OF SERVICE MARKETING MIX AND BRAND EQUITY ON CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION OF AIMA BRAND ELECTRIC BIKES IN FANGSHAN DISTRICT, BEIJING, CHINA

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ABSTRACT
The objectives of this research were to investigate the personal factors that influence consumer purchase decisions of AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China. To investigate the factors of the service marketing mix that influence consumer purchase decisions of AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China. To investigate the impact of brand equity on consumer purchase decisions for AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China. The research population consisted of consumers who use AIMA brand electric bikes and reside in Fangshan District, Beijing, China. Data was collected from a sample of 267 people. The questionnaire was administered to collect data using convenient sampling methods. Data analysis included descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Hypothesis testing using t-tests, F-tests, and multiple regression analysis. The analysis of personal factors revealed that the majority of survey respondents are female, aged 21-40, hold a bachelor's degree, are employed in the government/state enterprise sector, and have an income of 4,001-5,000 CNY. The study revealed that personal factors, such as educational and occupational differences, significantly influence the consumer purchase decisions of AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China, with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. The elements of the service marketing mix, including product, place, and physical evidence, have a statistically significant impact on the consumer purchase decision of AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China, at the 0.05 significance level. Brand equity, which encompasses brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, has a statistically significant impact on consumer purchase decisions for AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China, at the 0.05 significance level.
Keywords: Service Marketing Mix, Brand Equity, Purchase Decisions

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, the global market demands sustainable and environmentally friendly transportation options more than ever. This is due to growing concerns about environmental pollution and the necessity for effective transportation management solutions. As a result, there has been a significant and crucial transformation in the automotive industry, with a focus on developing and producing electric vehicles to meet the changing needs of society (Sperling, 2018).

An electric vehicle is a vehicle that is powered solely by electric motors or a vehicle that combines an internal combustion engine with an electric motor. Electric vehicles represent the new era of mobility, also known as next-generation mobility, and are advancing in four main areas: Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), Autonomous Vehicles, Connected Vehicles, and Car Sharing. Currently, electric vehicles are classified into four types: Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), and Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEVs) (Mom, 2013).

Electric bikes are among the types of electric vehicles that are in demand worldwide. According to Global Market Insights (2018), the electric bike market is projected to reach a value of up to 22 billion US dollars by 2024. The market's growth is attributed to the support for environmental concerns and the impact of rising fuel prices, which have driven its expansion in line with the automotive industry. Among the countries with the largest market share worldwide, China takes the lead, as shown in Figure 1.1. In 2017, the market value in China exceeded 7.7 billion US dollars, and it is projected to increase to 12.5 billion US dollars by 2024.

Electric bikes, or e-bikes, have become increasingly popular in China. China, as the largest producer and consumer in the world, has made a significant contribution to the remarkable growth of this industry (Salmeron-Manzano & Manzano-Agugliaro, 2018). In recent years, consumers have increasingly opted for electric bikes because of their affordability, convenience, and user-friendly nature. Electric bikes have become a popular mode of transportation for many Chinese, particularly those residing in urban areas such as Beijing (Campbell, Cherry, Ryerson & Yang, 2016). During the period from 2017 to 2019, the global e-bike market experienced significant expansion and sustained continuous growth. The market size of e-bikes reached 15.42 billion US dollars in 2019. However, in 2020-2021, the e-bike market, like other industries, was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to noticeable declines in sales and revenue as a result of its effects on consumer income and purchasing power (Cision PR Newswire, 2020). According to the Electric Bikes Worldwide Report (EBWR) depicted in Figure 1.2, the global e-bike market was valued at 22.1 billion US dollars in 2020 and increased to 31.2 billion US dollars in 2021, with year-on-year growth rates of 16.9% and 41.2%, respectively. However, China also experienced the consequences of the trade war with the United States, leading to the rejection of some electric bikes for export from China (Market News, 2022).

Electric bikes, also known as e-bikes, have become increasingly popular in recent years because of their convenience and eco-friendly features. These innovative vehicles are designed to provide pedal assistance with the addition of an electric motor. As a result, riders can enjoy the benefits of both a regular bicycle and a scooter. However, electric motorcycles in China continue to be a complex issue that demands careful consideration and action. While electric motorcycles offer numerous benefits, there are significant challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the safety and sustainability of transportation in China (Ruan, Hang & Wang, 2014). One of the primary safety concerns associated with electric motorcycles is speed. Electric motorcycles can reach speeds of up to 30 miles per hour, which is faster than traditional bicycles. This could increase the risk of accidents for riders, pedestrians, and drivers of other vehicles. Additionally, many electric motorcycle riders do not wear helmets or other protective

gear, which could increase the risk of injuries in the event of an accident (Tang, Guo, Zhou, Labi & Zhu, 2021).

Another concern regarding electric motorcycles is their environmental impact. While electric motorcycles release fewer pollutants than traditional gasoline-powered vehicles, the disposal of their batteries poses a challenge, leading to environmental hazards. Furthermore, the rapid proliferation of electric motorcycles has led to heightened traffic congestion in numerous cities in China. The increasing popularity of e-bikes for transportation has caused congestion on roads and bike lanes, leading to longer travel times and presenting new difficulties for commuters (Qian, Sun, Fei, Li, Stallones, Xiang, & Zhang, 2020).

AIMA e-bikes are a popular brand in China that offers a variety of electric motorcycle models for various purposes. The brand has a strong presence in the Chinese market and is recognized for its quality, reliability, and competitive pricing. AIMA electric motorcycles are available in various models, such as city bikes, folding bikes, mountain bikes, and cargo bikes. The brand also offers various types of batteries, such as lithium-ion batteries and lead-acid batteries, to meet diverse needs and preferences. AIMA electric motorcycles are mainly sold online through platforms such as Taobao and JD.com, as well as in general stores and dealerships across China. They have a widespread presence with over 2,000 service centers throughout the country, making AIMA a prominent and appealing electric bike brand compared to others (Tyfield, 2017).

From the aforementioned situation, researchers recognize the importance of studying the impact of service-related factors and brand value on the decision to purchase AIMA electric motorcycles. Both of these factors have a significant impact on consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. The service marketing mix in the past consisted of four components: product, price, place, and promotion. Furthermore, there have been additional elements related to service, including employees, processes, and physical evidence. These additional components directly impact customer experience, service quality, and customer satisfaction (Jain, 2013). On the other hand, brand value is a factor that illustrates the additional worth of products and services in the eyes of consumers. This worth is derived from their perception of brand reputation, perceived quality, brand association, and brand loyalty. A strong brand identity not only shapes consumer perception and preference but also plays a crucial role in cultivating long-term relationships with customers through brand loyalty (Budac & Baltador, 2013).

Hence, it is crucial to examine the influence of service-related marketing factors and brand value on the decision to purchase AIMA electric motorcycles for the formulation of effective marketing strategies and the sustenance of a competitive edge. However, China is a vast country with the world's largest population. To address the geographical and market-specific survey gaps, researchers decided to concentrate on the population living in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China. Understanding the specific context in this area is crucial for identifying the impact of the particular group, and it is essential for expanding the research scope to other areas facing similar challenges.

This research aims to investigate the personal factors that influence consumer purchase decisions of AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China. To investigate the factors of the service marketing mix that influence consumer purchase decisions of AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China. To investigate the impact of brand value on consumer purchase decisions of AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Concepts and theories of the service marketing mix factors

The service marketing mix consists of product, price, place, and promotion, all of which the company can determine and control to meet consumer needs. Service marketing mix strategies involve integrating marketing activities to determine the optimal combination for achieving maximum customer satisfaction (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012; Alma, 2011; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2013; Yoyada & Kodrat, 2017). Kotler, Burton, Deans, Brown, and Armstrong (2015) assert that the service marketing mix comprises a set of marketing tools that companies utilize to accomplish marketing objectives. These variables are elements that the company can adjust and control, significantly impacting consumers in specific market segments. Leveraging the benefits of all four components of the service marketing mix, namely product, price, place, and promotion. Czinkota, Ronkainen, and Cui (2022) assert that the service marketing mix provided by different companies allows them to effectively reach target groups, create value, and distinguish themselves from competitors. Fundamentally, the service marketing mix serves as a crucial factor that helps companies adjust their strategies to align with the constantly evolving market conditions, consumer preferences, and competitive landscape through ongoing evaluation and adaptation. However, companies must also continuously monitor market changes and consumer behavior in order to promptly respond to their needs. This ultimately leads to increased customer satisfaction and the achievement of marketing objectives. Previous research by Mohammad (2015) has shown the significant influence of service marketing mix strategies on customer satisfaction. Lovelock and Patterson (2015) explained the components of the service marketing mix as a framework to assist in business development and the implementation of effective marketing strategies.

Concepts and theories of brand equity

Concepts and theories of brand equity are highly intriguing to both academia and the business world. Currently, numerous scholars are endeavoring to discover methods to enhance brand value beyond other marketing strategies. This is because a strong brand equity in any business organization can enhance competitive advantages. For example, it allows for maintaining competitive positions and setting higher product prices. Moreover, it can foster customer loyalty and brand recognition. Various scholars have defined brand value in different ways. According to Elliott, Rosenbaum-Elliott, Percy, and Pervan (2015), brand value holds significance in both business and academia. There are two motivating factors behind the exploration of this concept: financial motivation and strategic motivation. The financially motivated approach involves evaluating brand value for financial and accounting purposes, treating brand equity as an asset with monetary value. On the other hand, strategy-based motivation involves understanding consumer behavior to make informed marketing strategy decisions accurately. Brand value is also defined as a collection of relationships and behaviors associated with the brand equity of customers, distribution channels, and companies, which contribute to increased profitability. Additionally, if brand equity becomes stronger, it can lead to a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Lieven, Grohmann, Herrmann, Landwehr, and Van Tilburg (2014) assert that brand value is a concept that businesses rely on to enhance their products and services by creating experiences communicated through brand equity that consumers can perceive. Understanding and managing the various dimensions of brand equity enables businesses to create a robust and valuable brand that appeals to consumers and stands out in the market (Wantini & Yudiana, 2021). Brand value refers to customers' perceptions of a brand's reputation and equity (Sadek et al., 2018). Seo, Park, and Choi (2020) define brand value as a collection of assets and liabilities associated with brand equity in both its name and symbol representations. If the brand's name or symbol changes, it may affect some or all of these assets.

Concepts and theories of consumer purchase decisions

The concepts and theories related to purchase decisions are fundamental for marketers to understand in order to explore processes or methods that can motivate or stimulate desired purchasing behaviors. Many scholars emphasize that consumer behavior has a significant impact on purchase decisions, as it is linked to addressing problems and fulfilling consumer needs and desires. Alma (2011) stated that purchasing decisions are influenced by a variety of factors, including economics, technology, politics, culture, products, prices, distribution channels, physical attributes, people, and processes. These factors influence consumer attitudes, data processing, and, ultimately, the decision to purchase a product. When selecting a product, customers take into account various factors such as price, product quality, and brand equity, which play a crucial role in establishing differentiation and brand recognition. Brand equity helps consumers remember and differentiate products from competitors. For brands aiming to establish strong relationships with consumers based on image and quality, they must be perceived as high-quality. Furthermore, assessing and comprehending the actual quality of a product can be challenging for consumers (Jasmani & Sunarsi, 2020). Mothersbaugh (2016) defines decision making as the process of choosing to take action or make a choice, which can include purchasing products or services in daily life. Consumers must be willing to accept the risks associated with products or services, which may include physical characteristics or higher prices in relation to the product's quality. This is influenced by societal acceptance or psychological factors that manifest as feelings within the consumer's mind. Moreover, investing time in purchasing products or services can mitigate risks by selecting items from brands with loyal customer bases or choosing products or services with strong reputations and multiple locations. Rana and Paul (2017) define decision-making as the process through which individuals encounter social and personal phenomena that are influenced by embedded values and beliefs. Maity and Dass (2014) explain that decision-making is a process of deliberating and taking action on different options through thoughtful consideration and assessment. When making purchasing decisions, individuals aim to achieve their objectives and goals through the products or services they choose. It reflects agreements or compromises resulting from conflicts or disputes to prompt actions in a particular direction. Consumers' decisions are typical human decisions that result from learning and perceiving various things, leading to experiences as a consequence. Schiffman, O'Cass, Paladino, and Carlson (2013) noted that consumers go through a series of steps before and after making purchase decisions. They make rational decisions by carefully considering the benefits of the products.

It encompasses the act of making choices and the individual's decisions to achieve desired outcomes.

Based on the literature review, the conceptual framework can be depicted as shown in Figure 1.

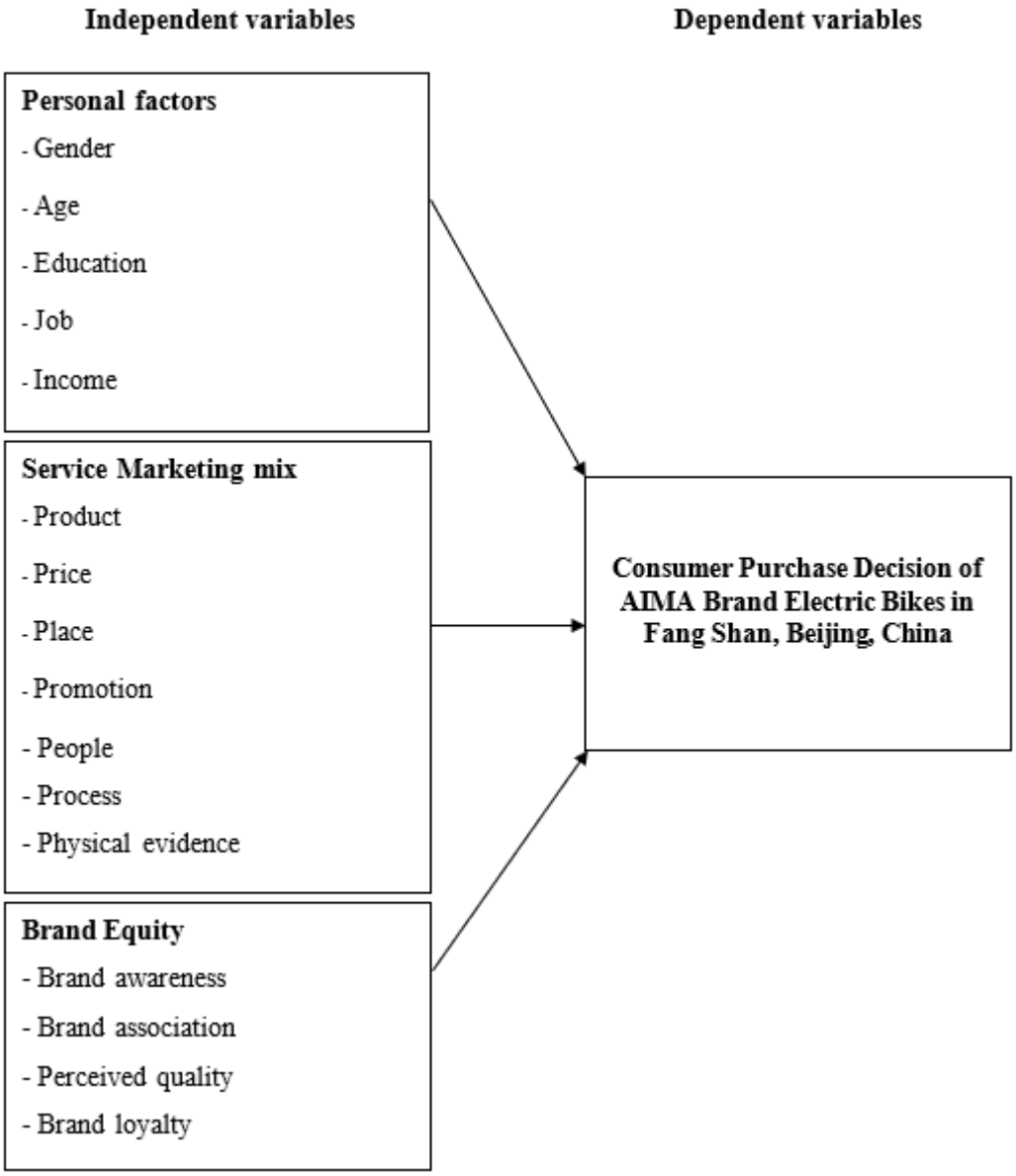

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research population consisted of consumers who use AIMA brand electric bikes and reside in Fangshan District, Beijing, China. The exact population size is unknown, but data was collected from a sample of 267 people. The sample size was determined using the G*power program and selected through a convenient sampling method.

The research questionnaire was developed based on a thorough literature review and related research to ensure that the questions were aligned with the research objectives. It was divided into 5 parts as follows: Part 1 General information about the respondents; Part 2 Questionnaire related to the respondents' opinions on the service marketing mix (7Ps); Part 3 Questionnaire Related to Respondents' Opinions on Brand equity; Part 4 Questionnaire related to respondents' opinions on purchase decision of AIMA brand electric bikes; and Part 5 Recommendations and other comments. The scores in questionnaire are interpreted based on a classification and ranking system consisting of five levels. The lowest score is set at 1, and the highest score is 5.

Data analysis involved using descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, percentages, means, and standard deviations to gain an initial understanding of the data. Inferential statistical analyses were conducted to test research hypotheses, using a significance level of 0.05. These analyses included t-tests, F-tests, and multiple regression analysis.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The data analysis results reveal that the majority of respondents are female (59.9%), aged between 21 and 40 years old (37.8%), hold a bachelor's degree (61.4%), are employed as government officials (49.1%), and have an average monthly income (32.6%). According to the survey, the respondents generally have a high opinion of the service marketing mix, brand equity, and purchase decisions related to AIMA brand electric bikes.

Table 1 Shows a summary of hypothesis testing of personal factors

Personal factors	Statistics used	Statistics	Sig.	Test results
- Gender	t-test	-0.926	0.355	-
- Age	F-test	1.650	0.178	-
- Education	F-test	4.728	0.010*	✓
- Job	F-test	3.509	0.004*	✓
- Income	F-test	1.528	0.208	-

According to Table 1, personal factors, such as educational and occupational differences, significantly influence the consumer purchase decisions of AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China, with statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

Table 2 Shows a summary of hypothesis testing of service marketing mix

Service Marketing mix	b	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.542	0.190		2.851	0.005		
-Product	0.287	0.063	0.295	4.558	0.000*	0.438	2.283
- Price	0.046	0.060	0.048	0.766	0.444	0.462	2.164
- Place	).129	0.064	0.134	2.020	0.044*	0.419	2.387
- Promotion	-0.017	0.047	-0.020	-0.366	0.715	0.633	1.580
- People	0.094	0.062	0.098	1.517	0.131	0.435	2.296
- Process	0.074	0.074	0.080	1.005	0.316	0.290	3.444
- Physical evidence	0.199	0.066	0.217	3.013	0.003*	0.354	2.823
$R = 0.724$, $R^2 = 0.525$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.512$, $SE_{EST} = 0.426$, $F = 40.874$, Sig. = 0.000*							

* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

According to Table 2, the components of the service marketing mix, including product, place, and physical evidence, have a statistically significant influence on the consumer purchase decision of AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China, at the 0.05 significance level. Furthermore, there is a predictive power of 51.2% in forecasting consumer purchase decisions based on these marketing mix elements.

Table 3 Shows a summary of hypothesis testing of brand equity

Brand Equity	b	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.466	0.165		2.828	0.005*		
- Brand awareness	0.252	0.057	0.266	4.411	0.000*	0.426	2.347
- Brand associations	0.344	0.058	0.356	5.956	0.000*	0.432	2.315
- Perceived quality	).158	0.058	0.156	2.723	0.007*	0.470	2.127
- Brand loyalty	0.121	0.047	0.136	2.591	0.010*	0.560	1.784
$R = 0.771$, $R^2 = 0.595$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.589$, $SE_{EST} = 0.391$, $F = 96.244$, Sig. = 0.000*							

* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

According to Table 3, brand equity, which encompasses brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, has a statistically significant impact on consumer purchase decisions for AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China, at the 0.05 significance level. Furthermore, there is a predictive power of 58.9% in forecasting consumer purchase decisions based on these marketing mix elements.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The complex relationship between personal factors, especially educational and occupational differences, and the consumer purchasing decision of AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district demonstrates the subtle nature of consumer behavior. The statistically significant influence observed at the 0.05 significance level emphasizes the importance for market strategists to explore the details of demographic segments. With educational backgrounds shaping perceptions and occupational roles influencing lifestyle choices, businesses must customize their marketing approaches to connect with the diverse demographics within the Fangshan district. A more profound comprehension of these personal factors can empower companies like AIMA to create tailored messages and products, thereby increasing their attractiveness and relevance to specific consumer groups. According to the findings of Yan and Zhu (2021), they conducted a study on quantifying the impact of COVID-19 on e-bike safety in China using multi-output and clustering-based regression models. The findings indicate a significant correlation between COVID-19 and e-bike safety in China on a national scale. The incidence of COVID-19 cases has been found to have a significant adverse effect on the number of e-bike fatalities and injuries. Moreover, two clusters of provinces/municipalities are identified: one with a lower number of e-bike fatalities/injuries and the other, which includes Hubei province, with a higher number. In the clustering-based regressions, the absolute coefficients of the COVID-19 feature for the cluster with higher e-bike fatalities/injuries are much larger. This suggests that the pandemic could significantly reduce e-bike safety issues in provinces with more e-bike fatalities/injuries. This study highlights the impact of COVID-19 on e-bike safety conditions in China and offers insights for policymaking and interventions to enhance e-bike safety during pandemic periods.

The significant influence of the service marketing mix, which includes product, place, and physical evidence, on the consumer purchase decision of AIMA electric motorcycles in Fangshan, highlights the strategic importance of marketing elements. The statistical significance at the 0.05 level indicates that consumers in Fangshan are not only influenced by the product itself, but also by how and where it is presented. Businesses need to carefully design their product offerings, ensuring not only superior quality but also optimizing their accessibility and the overall environment in which they are showcased. This finding emphasizes the importance of an integrated marketing approach, where every aspect of the service marketing mix plays a crucial role in influencing consumer perceptions and, consequently, purchase decisions. According to Zuev's (2020) findings, the findings of Zuev (2020) studied the topic

"E-bike as a technological innovation system in China: transition to the stage of institutionalized certainty?" The study found that the standardization process, integration of e-bikes into bike-sharing programs, establishment of charging infrastructure requirements, and smartification of e-bike propulsion systems have influenced the way e-bikes are ridden. These changes have also impacted the importance of new skills and capabilities, as well as the organization of social systems and material needs, including global transformation processes. These factors play a crucial role in the growing popularity of electric bicycles with two wheels. The revelation that brand equity, including brand awareness, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty, has a significant impact on the consumer purchase decision of AIMA electric motorcycles in Fangshan, suggests the enduring influence of branding. The statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 significance level indicates that consumers in this district are influenced not only by the practical aspects of the product but also by the intangible facets associated with the brand. As such, AIMA must recognize the holistic nature of consumer decision-making, investing not only in product features but also in building a strong brand identity. Cultivating positive associations and fostering brand loyalty should be integral components of AIMA's marketing strategy to effectively capture the hearts and minds of consumers in Fangshan. According to Li, Krishna Sinniah, and Li (2022) studied "The factors influencing residents' intentions on e-bike sharing usage in China" found that the research model effectively explains people's intentions to use e-bike sharing. Perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude, and perceived behavioral control are significant factors that positively influence the intention to use e-bike sharing. Among these, perceived ease of use has the most significant impact on the intention to use e-bike sharing. Additionally, supportive policies have a positive indirect effect on the intention to use e-bike sharing, helping to address attitudinal barriers along with observable indicators.

In summary, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence consumer purchase decisions for AIMA electric motorcycles in the Fangshan district of Beijing, China. Personal factors, such as educational and occupational differences, have been identified as significant determinants, highlighting the necessity for customized marketing strategies. Furthermore, the service marketing mix, which includes product, place, and physical evidence, had a significant impact, highlighting the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to marketing. Lastly, brand equity, which includes various dimensions, was identified as a critical influencer, emphasizing the lasting influence of brand perception on shaping consumer choices. This comprehensive perspective emphasizes the complexity of consumer decision-making and provides valuable insights for businesses, such as AIMA, that aim to navigate and thrive in the competitive market landscape of Fangshan.

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