

The Mediating Role of Brand Awareness and Customer Satisfaction in the Relationship Between Brand Image, Service Quality, Product Quality, and Customer Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of brand image, service quality, and product quality on customer loyalty through the mediating roles of brand awareness and customer satisfaction at PT Kao Indonesia, Surabaya. Using a quantitative causal approach, data were collected from 260 customers using structured questionnaires. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed for the analysis. The results indicate that brand image, service quality, and product quality have direct, positive, and significant effects on customer loyalty. Brand awareness significantly mediates the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty. However, customer satisfaction does not mediate the brand image-loyalty relationship due to the pragmatic characteristics of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) consumers, who prioritize functional product performance over abstract brand prestige. Brand awareness and customer satisfaction significantly mediated the effects of product and service quality on customer loyalty. These findings contribute to marketing theory by demonstrating that in low-involvement product categories, cognitive brand recall dominates loyalty formation over satisfaction-based pathways. Practical implications suggest that FMCG companies should prioritize product quality and service excellence over abstract brand image campaigns to maintain sustainable customer loyalty.

Keywords: Brand Image, Service Quality, Product Quality, Brand Awareness, Customer Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry in Indonesia is one of the most dynamic economic sectors, characterized by high consumer demand and rapidly changing market trends. FMCG products typically have short life cycles and high turnover rates, requiring companies to continuously innovate to maintain their relevance and competitiveness (Ansurullah et al., 2025). In the third quarter of 2023, traditional trade dominated the FMCG market with an 83% share, while minimarkets followed with 7%. However, the overall FMCG growth rates declined sharply from 7.2% in Q3 2022 to 2.6% in Q3 2023. Indonesian households allocate approximately 19.6% of their total expenditure to FMCG products (Saputro, Sari, and Huliselan 2026).

This condition reveals that despite strong demand and significant household consumption, the FMCG sector faces challenges of slowing growth and increasing market competition complexity. Companies can no longer rely solely on sales volume or distribution channel dominance; they must develop comprehensive customer-oriented strategies. Chun and Nyam-Ochir (2020) emphasize that in the face of increasingly dynamic business competition, companies must orient themselves not only toward products and sales but also toward creating value and experiences that meet and exceed customer expectations (Chun and Nyam-Ochir 2020).

Brand image represents the lifestyle desired by consumers. Brands that align with consumer values can enhance brand loyalty, while a damaged brand image due to scandals or low-quality products can drastically reduce customer loyalty. Stii and Kishchenko (2025) demonstrated that an enhanced brand image significantly contributes to increased customer loyalty to Wardah skincare products (Strii and Kishchenko 2025).

Service quality is also a primary factor influencing customer loyalty, as satisfied customers with positive moods toward the service exhibit higher loyalty. Customer disloyalty often stems from poor service or declining service quality below expectations (Anubhav Mittal 2025). Service quality involves meeting and satisfying the needs and desires of customers. Kumari (2025) emphasized that service quality includes the fundamental aspects of products and services designed to consistently meet customer needs. Positive perceptions of service meeting expectations form the basis of customer satisfaction, which subsequently shapes

loyalty, as demonstrated through consistent purchase decisions (V. L. L. Kusuma Kumari 2025).

Product quality represents the ability of product characteristics to meet predetermined and latent needs. Higher quality relative to competitors influences satisfaction levels and consequently affects consumer loyalty: the higher the perceived quality value, the greater the likelihood of continued relationships or transactions. Budiyantri (2023) showed that product quality directly influences customer loyalty, confirming that better product quality increases customer loyalty to Miniso products (Budiyantri 2023).

Brand awareness has become crucial for gaining a competitive advantage. Companies must measure brand awareness to develop it as a competitive advantage (F. and J. 2026). Strong brand awareness facilitates customer recall and recognition when making purchase decisions. Dhirtya and Warmika (2022) found that customers aware of a product brand tend to choose it consistently, demonstrating a close relationship between brand awareness and loyalty. Brand awareness positively and significantly influences customer loyalty; —higher consumer awareness correlates with higher loyalty levels (Dhirtya and Warmika 2022).

PT Kao Indonesia, a Japanese multinational company operating in Indonesia since 1985, faces significant challenges in maintaining its position, particularly in Surabaya, —one of Indonesia's highest consumption cities. Internal data reveal a consistent decline in the customer satisfaction index over five years, from 79.2 in 2020 to 69.3 in 2024, far below the company's 80-point target. This reflects the weakening of emotional and functional bonds between companies and their customers.

Customer satisfaction results from comparing product or service performance with expectations. Shie et al. (2022) emphasized customer satisfaction as an independent element influenced by service quality. When customers feel satisfied with the products and services they receive, brand loyalty grows, generating beneficial referrals and encouraging companies to continue producing excellent products (Shie et al. 2022).

Despite extensive research on these variables, several gaps remain. First, most studies examine these relationships in high-involvement product categories, with limited investigation in FMCG contexts, where consumer behavior differs significantly. Second, the mediating mechanisms between brand image and loyalty through customer satisfaction versus brand awareness remain underexplored, particularly regarding which pathway dominates pragmatic consumer segments. Third, the specific dynamics of the Indonesian FMCG market, especially in major urban centers such as Surabaya, require a localized investigation given the cultural and economic peculiarities.

This study addresses these gaps by examining how brand image, service quality, and product quality influence customer loyalty through brand awareness and customer satisfaction among PT Kao Indonesia's customers in Surabaya. This study contributes to the literature by testing dual mediation pathways in the FMCG context and providing evidence-based recommendations for enhancing customer loyalty strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing Management

Marketing management encompasses the art and science of selecting target markets and acquiring, retaining, and growing customers by creating, delivering, and communicating superior customer value (Magsi et al. 2026). Marketing management involves planning, implementing, coordinating, and controlling all marketing activities to fulfill consumer needs effectively and efficiently. This theoretical foundation underpins all marketing strategies, including brand development, service delivery, and product quality management.

Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior examines how individuals select, purchase, use, and evaluate products and services to satisfy their needs. Understanding consumer behavior is crucial for designing effective marketing strategies. According to Susanto and Indrawati (2024), consumer behavior is influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. The dynamic interaction between affect, cognition, behavior, and environmental factors shapes purchase decisions (Permata Susanto and Indrawati 2024).

Brand Image

Brand image represents consumer perception, assessment, or mental picture of a brand based on information, experience, and interactions. It comprises three main components: corporate image (credibility and popularity), user image (lifestyle and social status), and product image (product features) (F. and J. 2026). Kotler et al. (2021) identified four dimensions: brand identity, brand personality, brand association, and brand attitude and behavior.

Product Quality

Product quality refers to the totality of the features and characteristics of a product or service that satisfy stated or implied needs. Three influencing factors were identified: product function, external appearance, and cost. Five indicators were identified: product features, conformance to specifications, durability, reliability, and design.

Service Quality

Service quality reflects the difference between customer expectations and perceived service delivery. It has five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility. When the perceived service exceeds expectations, the service quality is perceived as ideal.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is the ability of consumers to recognize and recall a brand in a specific product category. Keller identified four indicators: recall, recognition, purchase consideration, and consumption identification (Hadiyati et al. 2023).

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is defined as a deep commitment to consistently repurchase preferred products or services in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts that might cause switching behavior.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative approach based on the positivist philosophy (Sugiyono. 2019). The causal-correlational design measures the relationships or influences between variables without providing treatment or manipulation (Arikunto 2017). The research proceeded through four systematic stages: planning (problem identification, literature review, framework development, and hypothesis formulation), data collection (questionnaire development and distribution), analysis (data validation and processing using PLS-SEM), and report compilation (interpretation and conclusion drawing).

Population and Sample

The population comprised all PT Kao Indonesia consumers in Surabaya. The population size was unidentified due to the company's lack of comprehensive consumer data and dynamic consumer characteristics. Sample selection employed purposive sampling with specific criteria: active consumers in Surabaya who had consumed or purchased products of PT Kao Indonesia within the past year.

Sample size determination followed Ferdinand's (2014) guidelines for multivariate analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) or path analysis, recommending 5-10 times the number of indicators (26 indicators $\times$ 10 = 260 respondents). Thus, 260 respondents were included, meeting the minimum sample requirements for representative analysis.

Variables and Operational Definitions

Brand Image: Consumer perceptions and mental images of brand identity, personality, and reputation based on information and past experiences. The indicators were brand identity, brand personality, brand association, and brand attitude/behavior.

Product Quality: Total features and characteristics satisfy the stated and implied needs. Indicators: product features, conformance to specifications, durability, reliability, and design.

Service Quality: Assessment comparing expected versus actual received service (Exreana et al., 2021). The indicators are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Maulana et al., 2023).

Customer Loyalty: Long-term positive asset for sustainable business growth. The indicators were repeat purchases, retention, and referrals.

Brand Awareness: Ability to recognize and recall a brand within a product category. The indicators were recall, recognition, purchase, and consumption.

Customer Satisfaction: Fulfilled expectations of received products. Indicators: satisfying service, satisfying products/jasa, guaranteed cleanliness/safety, recommending services, and enhanced good experiences.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed online and offline, containing Likert-scale statements measuring five response levels (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree). The questionnaire comprised 26 items representing all variable indicators, which were designed to maintain consistency and prevent respondent fatigue.

Analytical Technique

Data analysis employed descriptive statistics and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software. The analysis proceeded as follows:

Outer Model Evaluation: Testing construct validity and instrument reliability through outer loading (>0.70), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (>0.50), and Composite Reliability (>0.70) (Hair et al., 2021).

Inner Model Evaluation: Assessing predictive power through R-squared values and path coefficients (Ghozali & Latan, 2020).

Hypothesis testing: t-statistics (>1.96) and p-values (<0.05) were used for significance testing. Mediation effects were analyzed using path analysis to examine direct and indirect effects.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristic

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	80	30.8
	Female	180	69.2
Age	<25 years	52	20.0
	26-35 years	109	41.9
	36-45 years	77	29.6
	>45 years	22	8.5
Education	SMA/SMK	117	45.0
	Diploma (D3)	25	9.6
	Bachelor (S1)	94	36.2
	Postgraduate (S2/S3)	24	9.2
Customer Status	Active	260	100.0
Tenure	1-3 years	87	33.5
	4-6 years	94	36.2
	>6 years	79	30.4
Domicile	Surabaya City	218	83.8
	Outside Surabaya	42	16.2

Table 1 demonstrates female dominance (69.2%), indicating that women are the primary consumers of FMCG products. The age distribution was concentrated in the 26-35 years (41.9%), representing productive consumers with high consumption activity. Education variation with SMA/SMK dominance (45.0%) reflects

a broader population. All respondents were active customers with significant experience; 36.2% had 4-6 years tenure. Surabaya residents comprised 83.8% of the sample, confirming the study's focus on the primary operational area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Brand Image: Mean score 3.96 (high). The highest indicator was brand association (4.16 for "PT Kao Indonesia product quality is better than similar products"), demonstrating that superior quality perception dominates brand image formation. The lowest score was for behavior/attitude (3.84 for "information clarity about safety, expiration, halal, BPOM permits"), indicating room for improved communication about product certifications.

Product Quality: Mean = 3.94 (high). Highest: reliability (4.07 for "safe to use according to instructions"), confirming safety as a key strength. The lowest score was for durability (3.77 for "packaging is strong and not easily damaged"), suggesting an opportunity for improvement in packaging robustness.

Service Quality: Mean = 3.87 (high). Highest: assurance (3.98 for "complete and easy-to-understand product information"), building customer trust. Lowest: empathy (3.77 for "cares about customer satisfaction"), indicating the need for enhanced customer care perception.

Customer Loyalty: Mean 3.92 (high). The highest score was for referrals (4.12 for "willing to recommend products to others"), demonstrating that satisfaction transforms into advocacy. Lowest: retention (3.85 for "willing to pay set price because quality is proportional to benefits"), suggesting price sensitivity despite loyalty.

Brand Awareness: Mean = 4.02 (high). Highest: purchase (4.10 for "often becomes my choice when buying household or personal care needs"), confirming that strong brand recall drives purchase decisions. The lowest was recall (3.96 for "can directly remember brand without seeing advertisements first"), still high but indicating advertising reinforcement remains beneficial.

Customer Satisfaction: Mean = 3.90 (high). Highest: recommendation (4.00 for "willing to recommend products to others"), indicating that satisfied customers become brand advocates. The lowest score was cleanliness/safety (3.73 for "feel safe using products"), suggesting the need for enhanced safety communication despite actual product safety.

Outer Model Evaluation

Convergent Validity: All indicators exceeded the outer loading threshold (>0.70), ranging from 0.844 to 0.945. All constructs achieved AVE >0.50 (0.715 to 0.889), demonstrating satisfactory convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity: Cross-loading analysis confirmed that each indicator loaded highest on its respective construct, meeting the discriminant validity requirements. No indicator showed a stronger correlation with other constructs, confirming distinct construct measurements.

Reliability: Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.907 to 0.930, and Composite Reliability from 0.926 to 0.941, both exceeding the recommended thresholds (>0.70), confirming strong internal consistency and measurement stability.

Inner Model Evaluation

Predictive Relevance (Q^2): All endogenous variables exceeded zero (Brand Awareness 0.138, Customer Satisfaction 0.136, Customer Loyalty, 0.180), indicating good predictive relevance.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2): Brand Awareness (0.238), Customer Satisfaction (0.247), and Customer Loyalty (0.267) showed weak to moderate explanatory power, suggesting that additional variables not included in this model influence these constructs.

Effect Size (f^2): Brand Awareness $\rightarrow$ Customer Loyalty (0.170) demonstrated a medium effect. Other relationships showed small effects (0.001-0.108), indicating a stronger relative impact of Brand Awareness on loyalty.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coeff	T-Stat	P-Value	Result
H1	Brand Image $\rightarrow$ Customer Loyalty	0.083	3.425	<0.001	Supported

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coeff	T-Stat	P-Value	Result
H2	Service Quality → Customer Loyalty	0.145	4.312	<0.001	Supported
H3	Product Quality → Customer Loyalty	0.136	4.688	<0.001	Supported
H4	Brand Image → Brand Awareness → Loyalty	0.078	3.466	<0.001	Supported
H5	Brand Image → Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.005	0.380	0.704	Not Supported
H6	Product Quality → Brand Awareness → Loyalty	0.068	2.767	0.006	Supported
H7	Product Quality → Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.068	3.042	0.002	Supported
H8	Service Quality → Brand Awareness → Loyalty	0.083	2.988	0.003	Supported
H9	Service Quality → Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.062	2.875	0.004	Supported

Discussion

H1: Brand Image → Customer Loyalty (Supported): Brand image positively and significantly influences customer loyalty ($\beta=0.083$, $t=3.425$). This aligns with the findings of Yum and Yoo (2023). Descriptive analysis confirms that brand association dominates perceptions, with consumers recognizing PT Kao Indonesia's superior quality. A strong brand image establishes trust and commitment, translating into repurchase intentions and recommendations (Yum and Yoo 2023).

H2: Service Quality → Customer Loyalty (Supported): Service quality significantly influenced loyalty ($\beta=0.145$, $t=4.312$). This is consistent with Sulhan (2025). Responsive, transparent, and consistent service delivery creates memorable interpersonal experiences, building retention against competitors' offerings (Sulhan 2025).

H3: Product Quality → Customer Loyalty (Supported): Product quality significantly influences loyalty ($\beta=0.136$, $t=4.688$). This confirms the findings of Susanto and Indrawati (2024). Functional reliability and physical perfection of daily commodities consistently meet consumer needs, driving repeat purchases and price acceptance (Permata Susanto and Indrawati 2024).

Mediation Effects

H4: Brand Image → Brand Awareness → Customer Loyalty (Supported): Brand awareness significantly mediates the effect of brand image on loyalty ($\beta=0.078$, $t=3.466$). This demonstrates that an impressive brand image must first convert to strong cognitive brand recall before generating loyalty. Visual recognition through appealing packaging and logos triggers spontaneous recall during purchase decisions, ultimately driving brand loyalty.

H5: Brand Image → Customer Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty (Not Supported): Customer satisfaction fails to mediate the relationship between brand image and loyalty ($\beta=0.005$, $t=0.380$). This contradicts theoretical expectations (Kotler et al., 2022; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2024) and previous findings (Salsabila & Kustiawan, 2025; Purnamasari et al., 2024). Rejection reveals pragmatic consumer characteristics in FMCG contexts. Descriptive analysis showed that brand image perceptions were dominated by product quality associations (score 4.16 for "quality better than similar products") rather than abstract prestige or visual identity elements (scores 3.83-3.84 for logo recognition and safety information).

Surabaya consumers evaluate brand image based purely on physical product performance and not abstract corporate prestige. When tested simultaneously, the contribution of brand image to satisfaction is absorbed by product and service quality variables. This creates a suppression effect, where brand image loses its unique explanatory power for satisfaction, making the mediated pathway nonsignificant.

This finding aligns with the low-involvement product characteristics of FMCG goods. Consumers make routine, habitual purchase decisions with minimal cognitive effort, focusing on functional attributes rather than symbolic brand meaning. Satisfaction leading to loyalty (repeat purchase score 4.05, recommendations 4.12) is determined by product performance and service reliability, not brand prestige narratives.

H6: Product Quality → Brand Awareness → Customer Loyalty (Supported): Brand awareness significantly mediates the relationship between product quality and loyalty ($\beta=0.068$, $t=2.767$). Superior product quality leaves deep cognitive impressions beyond satisfaction. Products perceived to be better than competitors and consistent over time reinforce spontaneous brand recall (score 3.92), driving loyalty through recommendations.

H7: Product Quality → Customer Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty (Supported): Customer satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between product quality and loyalty ($\beta=0.068$, $t=3.042$). Superior physical quality creates functional satisfaction that crystallizes into loyalty, where consumers perceive the price proportional to the received benefits (score 3.85).

H8: Service Quality → Brand Awareness → Customer Loyalty (Supported): Brand awareness significantly mediates the service quality-loyalty relationship ($\beta=0.083$, $t=2.988$). Responsive and friendly service creates unique interpersonal memories that strengthen brand associations. Positive service experiences sharpen cognitive recall (score 3.92), translating into loyalty manifested as willingness to share positive experiences (score 3.95).

H9: Service Quality → Customer Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty (Supported): Customer satisfaction significantly mediates the service quality-loyalty relationship ($\beta=0.062$, $t=2.875$). Excellent, responsive, and empathetic service stimulates genuine emotional satisfaction. When operational and distribution services provide comfort and accuracy, customer commitment strengthens against competitor attraction (retention score: 3.88) and drives consistent repeat purchases (score: 4.05).

This study makes several theoretical contributions to the literature. First, it extends the dual mediation model in FMCG contexts by demonstrating its asymmetric mediation effects. Brand image requires cognitive processing (brand awareness) rather than affective processing (satisfaction) to influence loyalty, which contradicts conventional marketing theory, which typically emphasizes satisfaction as the primary loyalty driver.

Second, this study challenges the universal applicability of the service-satisfaction-loyalty chain in low-involvement contexts, revealing that when consumers evaluate brand image pragmatically based on functional attributes rather than symbolic meanings, satisfaction-mediated pathways collapse.

Third, the findings refine the understanding of the cognitive hierarchy (think→feel→do) in low-involvement product categories. Unlike high-involvement products, where brand attitudes strongly influence satisfaction, FMCG consumers' brand image perceptions are subsumed by direct product performance evaluations, bypassing the satisfaction stage in loyalty formation.

For PT Kao Indonesia management, the findings prioritize product quality, consistency, and distribution service excellence. The rejection of brand image→satisfaction mediation underscores that Surabaya consumers are pragmatic, evaluating brand image through tangible product performance rather than abstract prestige. Marketing strategies should focus on the following:

Quality Control Excellence: Maintaining consistent physical product quality to sustain already-high descriptive scores. Quality assurance programs should be reinforced to prevent this deterioration.

Service Competency Enhancement: Improving staff competence, friendliness, and service speed to maintain positive and effective interpersonal interactions. Training programs should emphasize empathy and responsiveness.

Campaign Restructuring: Shifting the promotional focus from abstract visual imagery to concrete benefit education campaigns. Emphasizing functional advantages and practical use cases strengthens spontaneous recall during in-store purchases.

Packaging Communication: Enhancing safety information clarity (current lowest score at 3.84) through improved packaging design and labeling to build consumer confidence.

For marketing practitioners, this study demonstrates that in FMCG contexts, loyalty is primarily driven by consistent product performance and reliable service rather than aspirational branding. Resource allocation should balance brand-building activities with operational excellence in manufacturing and distribution.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of brand image, service quality, and product quality on customer loyalty through brand awareness and customer satisfaction mediation at PT Kao Indonesia Surabaya. Key findings reveal that (1) brand image, service quality, and product quality directly and positively influence customer loyalty; (2) brand awareness significantly mediates the effect of brand image on loyalty; (3) customer satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between brand image and loyalty due to pragmatic consumer characteristics; and (4) both brand awareness and customer satisfaction significantly mediate the effects of product quality and service quality on loyalty. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating asymmetric mediation effects in FMCG contexts, where cognitive brand recall dominates loyalty formation compared to satisfaction-based pathways. The findings challenge the universal applicability of the satisfaction-mediated loyalty model for low-involvement products, where consumers evaluate brand image pragmatically based on functional attributes. Practically, PT Kao Indonesia should prioritize product quality and service excellence over abstract brand image campaigns. Marketing strategies should emphasize concrete product benefits and enhance safety communication to build consumer confidence. Staff training and quality control maintenance are essential for sustaining loyalty in the competitive FMCG market. Future research should explore additional moderating variables, such as perceived value, price sensitivity, or brand trust, that may explain the non-significant brand image→satisfaction pathway. Comparative studies across different FMCG product categories and geographic locations would further validate these findings.

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