



Brand image, customer satisfaction, and loyalty in Mineral Water industry: a mediation analysis

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of brand image of Aqua bottled water products and other bottled water brands on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction acting as a mediating factor. The intense competition within Indonesia's bottled water industry, coupled with the shifting consumer perceptions driven by external socio-political issues, highlights the need to understand the factors that drive customer loyalty. This research employs a quantitative approach with a causal research design, involving 150 respondents from Padang City, selected by employing purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire (Google Forms) and analyzed with Partial Least Squares (PLS) using SmartPLS software. The findings indicate that Aqua's brand image positively and significantly impacts customer loyalty, both in a direct manner and through the mediation of customer satisfaction as a mediator. Conversely, the brand image of competing bottled water brands negatively affects customer loyalty. Furthermore, customer satisfaction plays a crucial mediating role, strengthening the connection between brand image and customer loyalty. These findings emphasize the importance for companies to maintain a strong brand image and continuously improve customer satisfaction to enhance consumer loyalty in an increasingly competitive market.

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INTRODUCTION

Mineral water serves as a vital function in preserving human health by providing essential minerals such as calcium, magnesium, and sodium, which are naturally sourced from protected springs without artificial additives (Slamet, 2020). In Indonesia, the bottled water industry has experienced significant growth, with consumption tripling over the past decade, driven by demographic changes, increasing incomes, and shifts in social behavior (Litbang Sukowati, 2021). Aqua, produced by PT Aqua Golden Mississippi, has long dominated the Indonesian bottled water market, offering premium quality through rigorous source selection and high-standard hygienic production processes (Boer, 2018).

Despite Aqua's strong market position and positive brand image, competition has intensified with the emergence of new players such as Le Minerale, Ades, and Cleo, who have employed aggressive marketing strategies to capture market share (Mutiarra & Rotinsulu, 2020). These developments illustrate that brand image is increasingly vulnerable to external factors beyond product quality alone. Customer loyalty is recognized as a strategic asset for companies, where loyal

customers not only make repeat purchases but also act as brand advocates (Harzaviona & Syah, 2020). Studies have consistently shown that a strong brand image significantly influences customer loyalty, either directly or indirectly By means of customer satisfaction (Gani et al., 2021; Hsieh et al., 2020). Customer satisfaction itself Serves as a crucial mediator, strengthening the positive relationship between brand image and sustained customer loyalty (Supriyanto & Dahlan, 2024).

In this context, understanding the extent to which Aqua's brand image, compared to other bottled water brands, influences customer loyalty influenced by customer satisfaction as a mediator becomes highly relevant. This research intends to resolve this research gap by analyzing consumer perceptions of Aqua and its competitors, providing insights for companies to better manage brand strategies and customer relationships in an increasingly competitive bottled water market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Loyalty

Based on to Oliver, Richard L. (2019), customer loyalty is defined as a strong dedication from consumers to reliably repurchase and use products or services offered by a company. This commitment remains intact despite various external factors that may influence consumer decision-making.

In their study, Wiguna and Yasa (2021) identified several criteria that can be applied to measure customer loyalty. The following are explanations of these indicators:

1. Frequency of Repeat Purchases
2. Willingness to Recommend
3. Positive Feelings Toward the Brand
4. Consistent Preference in Choosing the Brand
5. Commitment to Continue Choosing the Brand

Brand Image

Brand image can be described as the unique perspective formed in the minds of consumers regarding a brand. This perception encompasses impressions, beliefs, and personal experiences held by consumers, thereby creating a different image for each individual. This concept reflects how consumers view a brand based on attributes they consider relevant, such as quality, value, or the brand's reputation compared to its competitors (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2019). There are five indicators to measure brand image that is reflected based on brand associations, namely:

1. Purity
2. Health
3. Cleanliness and Hygiene
4. Coolness and Freshness
5. Natural Mountain Water

Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction can be described as a condition in which consumers feel content after assessing the products or services they have purchased, concluding that the quality or benefits received are at least equal to, or even surpass, their expectations (Budiono, 2021).

According to Wiguna and Yasa (2021), the key indicators of customer satisfaction include:

1. Consumers' perceptions of product quality
2. The quality of customer service
3. The value delivered by the product
4. The overall impression experienced when using the product
5. How the company responds to customer feedback

The Influence of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty

A strong brand image has the potential to enhance customer loyalty. Consumers are generally more inclined to stay loyal to brands they perceive as reputable and reliable (Ismani, 2020). Brand image exerts a positive and significant impact on brand loyalty, suggesting that the stronger a product's brand image, the more likely customers are to remain loyal to it. This implies that a favorable brand image helps foster a deeper connection between consumers and the product, ultimately promoting greater customer loyalty (Pangestika & Khasanah, 2021).

The Influence of Brand Image on Customer Satisfaction

Brand image not only has a direct impact on customer loyalty but also influences it indirectly through satisfaction and trust. These findings support the idea that a strong brand image enhances customer loyalty (Pangestika & Khasanah, 2021). Moreover, the study highlights that customer satisfaction acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty, although the direct effect of brand image remains significant. A positive brand image significantly affects customer loyalty by first increasing customer satisfaction. Additionally, a strong relationship between the customer and the brand contributes positively to both satisfaction and loyalty. In this context, customer satisfaction functions as a crucial bridge connecting brand image with customer loyalty (Arimbi, 2023).

The Impact of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

Data analysis reveals that satisfied customers are more likely not only to make repeat purchases but also to recommend the product to others, indicating a higher level of loyalty. This demonstrates that customer satisfaction plays a vital role as a key factor in fostering and sustaining long-term brand loyalty (Aini, 2023). Research by Mujayana (2020) further emphasizes that customer satisfaction significantly contributes not only to the creation of short-term loyalty but also to long-term customer retention. When customers feel satisfied, they are more inclined to continue using the products or services offered by the company over an extended period. In other words, satisfied customers tend to develop a lasting commitment to the brand, which in turn strengthens the relationship between the customer and the company. This highlights that customer satisfaction affects not just immediate purchasing behavior but also serves as a fundamental driver in achieving sustainable customer loyalty.

Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator between Brand Image and Customer Loyalty

Customer satisfaction plays a vital role as a mediating variable in the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty. Although brand image directly influences customer loyalty, the study reveals that this effect becomes stronger when customer satisfaction is taken into account. This finding affirms that a positive brand image not only fosters loyalty directly but also indirectly by increasing customer satisfaction, which acts as a bridge that strengthens the overall relationship (Supriyanto & Dahlan, 2024). Further analysis by Herman et al. (2024) indicates that customer satisfaction not only functions as a mediator but also reinforces the connection between service quality, brand image, and customer loyalty. These results suggest that customer satisfaction has a strategic role in enhancing the impact of both service quality and brand image on improving overall customer loyalty.

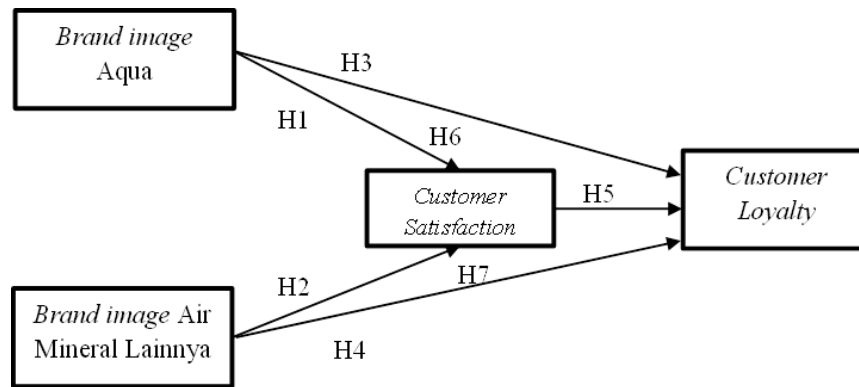


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

1. The brand image of Aqua mineral water positively affects customer loyalty, assuming the brand image of other mineral water products remains unchanged.
2. The brand image of other mineral water brands negatively affects customer loyalty, provided that the Aqua brand image stays constant.
3. Customer satisfaction has a positive influence on customer loyalty.
4. The brand image of Aqua mineral water has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.
5. The brand image of other mineral water products negatively influences customer satisfaction.
6. Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between the brand image of Aqua and customer loyalty.
7. Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between the brand image of other mineral water products and customer loyalty.

METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a causal research design, involving 150 respondents from Padang City selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire (via Google Forms) and analyzed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method with the help of SmartPLS software.

Tabel 1. Operationalization Variables

| No. | Variabel | Definisi | Indikator | Skala |
|-----|----------------------|---|--|--------|
| 1 | Customer Loyalty (Y) | Customer Loyalty is the loyalty of Aqua customers. | 1. Frequency of Repeat Purchases 2. Willingness to Recommend 3. Positive Feelings Toward the Brand 4. Consistent Preference in Choosing the Brand 5. Commitment to Continue Choosing the Brand | Likert |
| 2 | Brand Image (X) | Brand Image is the perception or image that customers possess about the Aqua brand. | 1. Purity 2. Health 3. Cleanliness and Hygiene 4. Coolness and Freshness 5. Natural Mountain Water | Likert |

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|--|--------|
| 3 | Customer Satisfaction (M) | Customer Satisfaction is the satisfaction felt by Aqua customers. | 1. Consumer Perception of Product Quality 2. Customer Service 3. Value Provided by the Product 4. Impression when using the product 5. Response to Customer Feedback | Likert |
|---|---------------------------|---|--|--------|

Source: Primary Data, 2025

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Description of Respondent Characteristics

In this study, the characteristics of the respondents are categorized based on gender, age, occupation, education level, and monthly income. The detailed data regarding respondent characteristics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of Research Respondents

| Characteristics | Category | Amount | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 67 | 55.30% |
| | Female | 83 | 44.70% |
| Age | 18 - 25 | 115 | 76.60% |
| | 26 - 33 | 25 | 16.70% |
| | 34 - 41 | 3 | 2% |
| | 42 - 49 | 3 | 2% |
| | Over 50 years old | 4 | 2.70% |
| Profession | Work | 51 | 34% |
| | Not Working | 99 | 66% |
| Education | SLTA | 49 | 32.70% |
| | Diploma | 16 | 10.70% |
| | S1 | 79 | 52.60% |
| | S2 | 6 | 4% |
| | S3 | 0 | 0% |
| Monthly Income | < Rp 1.000.000 | 56 | 37.40% |
| | Rp 1.000.000 - Rp 3.000.000 | 51 | 34% |
| | Rp 3.000.000 - Rp 5.000.000 | 26 | 17.30% |
| | > Rp 5.000.000 | 17 | 11.30% |
| Total respondents | | 150 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Validity Test

The validity testing procedure involves assessing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and outer loadings to determine whether each latent variable is distinct from the others. Convergent validity is considered to be met when the outer loading values exceed 0.5. In addition, discriminant validity can be evaluated by examining the cross-loading values, which involve comparing the correlation of a variable's indicators with indicators of other constructs. The results of the validity test are presented below:

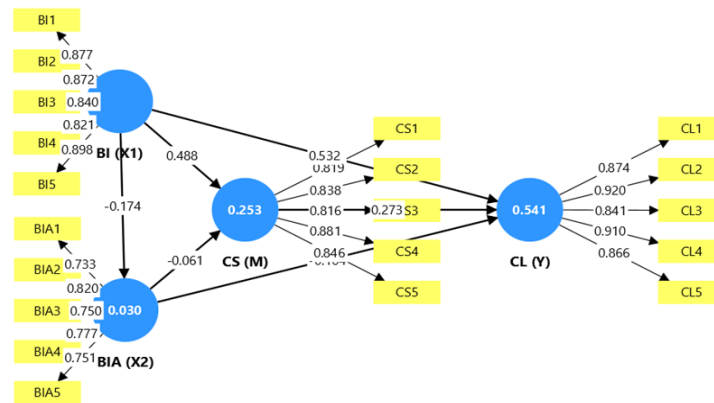


Figure 2. Result

Based on the outer loading results presented in Figure 2, it can be seen that the indicators for each variable demonstrate high convergent validity, as all loading factor values exceed 0.7. Similarly, the cross-loading values indicate strong discriminant validity, as each indicator shows a higher correlation with its corresponding construct than with other constructs.

Another method to assess discriminant validity involves comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with the correlations between that construct and the others within the model. If the AVE value is greater than 0.5, the construct is considered to have good validity.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

| Variabel | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Brand Image Aqua | 0.582 |
| Brand Image of other mineral water | 0.607 |
| Customer Loyalty | 0.779 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.706 |

Source: Result from the SmartPLS process

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that each construct has an AVE value greater than 0.5. Therefore, it can be inferred that all variables possess a good or acceptable level of validity.

Reliability Test

The reliability test is conducted by examining the values of Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. A construct is considered reliable if both values are greater than 0.7. The reliability test results are presented as follows:

Table 4. Reliability Test of Research Instruments

| Variabel | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Brand Image Aqua | 0.914 | 0.918 |
| Brand Image Air Mineral Lainnya | 0.834 | 0.845 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.929 | 0.932 |
| Customer Loyalty | 0.896 | 0.898 |

Source: Result from the SmartPLS process

All constructs in the estimated model have Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.7. Therefore, it can be concluded that all constructs meet the reliability criteria and are considered reliable.

R-Square

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination

| | R-Square |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Customer Loyalty | 0.541 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0.253 |

Source: Result from the SmartPLS process

Based on the table above, the R Square value for the Customer Loyalty variable is 0.541. This indicates that 54.1% of the variation in Customer Loyalty can be explained by the Customer Satisfaction variable, while the remaining 45.9% is influenced by other factors not included in this study. Meanwhile, the R Square value for the Customer Satisfaction variable is 0.253, meaning that 25.3% of the variation in Customer Satisfaction can be explained by the variables in the model, while the remaining 74.7% is affected by other variables not examined in this research.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis testing was conducted to examine and determine the direct, indirect, and total effects among the variables. This analysis was carried out using the bootstrapping method in the SmartPLS 4 software to assess the relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables.

Table 5. Path Analysis Results

| Relationship Path | Original Sample (O) | T Statistics (O/STDEV) | P Values |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Brand Image Aqua → Brand Image Air Mineral Lainnya | -0.174 | 1.58 | 0.114 |
| Brand Image Aqua → Customer Loyalty | 53.20% | 6.871 | 0 |
| Brand Image Aqua → Customer Satisfaction | 0.488 | 4.589 | 0 |
| Brand Image Air Mineral Lainnya → Customer Loyalty | -10.40% | 1.605 | 0.109 |
| Brand Image Air Mineral Lainnya → Customer Satisfaction | -0.061 | 0.783 | 0.434 |
| Brand Image Aqua → Customer Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty | 0.134 | 3.014 | 0.003 |
| Brand Image Air Mineral Lainnya → Customer Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty | -0.017 | 0.688 | 0.492 |

Source: Primary data processed by SmartPLS

1. Aqua Brand Image → Customer Loyalty

The Aqua brand image has a positive effect on customer loyalty. Hypothesis testing results show a T-statistic value of 6.871 (> 1.96), a P-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), and an original sample value of 0.532. These results indicate that H1 is accepted, confirming that Aqua's brand image significantly and positively influences customer loyalty.

2. Other Mineral Water Brand Image → Customer Loyalty

The brand image of other mineral water products negatively affects customer loyalty. The hypothesis test shows a T-statistic value of 1.605 (< 1.96), a P-value of 0.109 (> 0.05), and an original sample value of -0.104. Although the results suggest a negative relationship, the effect is not statistically significant. Therefore, H2 is rejected, indicating that the negative effect is not proven.

3. Customer Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty

Customer satisfaction has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty. The hypothesis test produces a T-statistic value of 3.282 (> 1.96), a P-value of 0.001 (< 0.05), and an original sample value of 0.273. Thus, H3 is accepted, supporting the notion that higher satisfaction leads to stronger loyalty.

4. Aqua Brand Image → Customer Satisfaction

The Aqua brand image positively affects customer satisfaction. The T-statistic value is 4.589 (> 1.96), the P-value is 0.000 (< 0.05), and the original sample value is 0.488. These results confirm that H4 is accepted, showing that Aqua's brand image significantly improves customer satisfaction.

5. Other Mineral Water Brand Image → Customer Satisfaction

The brand image of other mineral water products is found to have a negative effect on customer satisfaction. However, the hypothesis test yields a T-statistic value of 0.783 (< 1.96), a P-value of 0.434 (> 0.05), and an original sample value of -0.061. Therefore, H5 is rejected, indicating the negative effect is not statistically significant.

6. Aqua Brand Image → Customer Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty (Mediation)

Customer satisfaction is found to mediate the relationship between Aqua's brand image and customer loyalty. The T-statistic value is 3.014 (> 1.96), the P-value is 0.003 (< 0.05), and the original sample value is 0.134. Thus, H6 is accepted, indicating a significant indirect effect through satisfaction.

7. Other Mineral Water Brand Image → Customer Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty (Mediation)

Customer satisfaction is also tested as a mediator in the relationship between other mineral water brand images and customer loyalty. The test shows a T-statistic value of 0.688 (< 1.96), a P-value of 0.492 (> 0.05), and an original sample value of -0.017. These results indicate that H7 is rejected, as there is no significant mediating effect.

DISCUSSION

Aqua Brand Image has a positive effect on Customer Loyalty, if the Brand Image of other mineral water products does not change.

A brand's brand image can influence the loyalty of a consumer. When consumers have a positive perception of the brand, both in terms of quality, reputation, and emotional value offered, then their tendency to remain loyal and continue to use products from that brand will be higher. The better the brand image formed in the minds of consumers, the more likely they are to make repeat purchases, recommend products to others, and refuse to switch to competing brands. In other words, a strong brand image not only forms consumer trust, but also strengthens customer loyalty in a sustainable manner through long-term relationships between consumers and the brand in question.

Other Mineral Water Brand Image has a negative effect on Customer Loyalty, if Aqua Brand Image does not change.

Brand Image of other mineral water can have a negative influence on Customer Loyalty of Aqua products. This means that when the brand image of other mineral water increases, consumers may switch away from Aqua and switch to other brands that are considered superior, which in turn will reduce their level of loyalty to Aqua. Conversely, if the image of other mineral water brands decreases, customer loyalty to Aqua could potentially increase. This effect illustrates the existence of a competitive relationship between brands in the same industry, where consumers tend to choose brands that they trust more and are more in line with their needs and expectations.

Customer Satisfaction has a positive effect on Customer Loyalty.

Customer Satisfaction can have a positive influence on Customer Loyalty. When a consumer is satisfied with the quality of products, services, and experiences provided by a brand, then they tend to keep choosing that brand in the future. The satisfaction felt by consumers will strengthen their relationship with the brand, which in turn increases the level of loyalty. The more consumers feel satisfied and meet their expectations, the more likely they are to make repeat purchases, recommend the product to others, and show higher loyalty to the brand.

Aqua Brand Image has a positive effect on Customer Satisfaction.

Aqua Brand Image can have a positive influence on Customer Satisfaction. The better the image or perception that consumers have of the Aqua brand, both in terms of quality, reputation, and value provided, the level of customer satisfaction will also increase. Consumers who have a positive view of the Aqua Brand Image will feel more satisfied with the products they consume, because they feel that the product meets or even exceeds their expectations. This improved Brand Image not only creates trust, but also increases the positive experience felt by customers, which in turn strengthens their satisfaction with the Aqua brand.

Other Mineral Water Brand Image has a negative effect on Customer Satisfaction.

Brand Image of other mineral waters can have a negative influence on Aqua Customer Satisfaction. If the brand image of other mineral water increases, then customer perception and satisfaction with Aqua may decrease. This happens because consumers often compare products in the same category. If they feel that other mineral waters offer better quality or value, then their level of satisfaction with Aqua may decrease. Conversely, if Aqua's Brand Image is superior, then Aqua customer satisfaction will increase.

Customer Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Aqua Brand Image and Customer Loyalty.

Customer satisfaction plays a very important role in strengthening consumer loyalty to the Aqua brand. When customers are satisfied with the product and the experience they get, in terms of quality, price and service, they tend to build a stronger emotional connection with the brand. This satisfaction not only increases their sense of trust, but also creates an ongoing positive perception of the Aqua brand. This positive perception, in turn, reinforces consumers' desire to continue choosing Aqua over competing brands, as well as encouraging them to make repeat purchases and recommend the product to others. Thus, customer satisfaction serves not only as the result of a positive experience, but also as a factor that strengthens their loyalty to the Aqua brand in the long term.

Customer Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Brand Image of other mineral waters and Customer Loyalty.

This suggests that while the brand image of other mineral water brands may improve, it does not directly impact positively on Aqua customer satisfaction. In fact, despite improvements in the Brand Image of competing brands, customer satisfaction with Aqua is maintained if the quality and experience provided by Aqua continues to meet or exceed their expectations. Therefore, even if there is a competitor with a better image, this is not enough to reduce Aqua customer loyalty, as loyalty is driven more by consistent satisfaction and the emotional connection between customers and the Aqua brand.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of aqua brand image and other mineral water brand image on customer loyalty mediated by customer satisfaction when visiting tourist attractions in Padang City. From the findings and discussion above, we can conclude the following:

Tips:

1. Aqua Brand Image positively and significantly influences Customer Loyalty. This implies that the stronger the Aqua brand image in the perception of consumers, the greater the level of consumer loyalty to the product. Other Mineral Water Brand Image has a negative effect on Customer Loyalty. This shows that although some consumers may recognize other mineral water brands, the image they have is not strong enough to encourage customer loyalty.
2. Customer Satisfaction has a positive effect on Customer Loyalty. Customer satisfaction is proven to play an important role in shaping loyalty. Consumers who are satisfied with Aqua products tend to remain loyal and make repeat purchases.

3. Aqua Brand Image positively influences Customer Satisfaction. The more favorable the consumer perceptions of Aqua, the greater the level of satisfaction experienced by consumers.
4. Other Mineral Water Brand Image has a negative effect on Customer Satisfaction. The image of other mineral water brands has not satisfied consumers enough, so it does not contribute positively to satisfaction.
5. Customer Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Aqua Brand Image and Customer Loyalty. This shows that customer satisfaction is an important bridge in strengthening the influence of Aqua's brand image on customer loyalty.
6. Customer Satisfaction also negatively mediates the relationship between Brand Image of Other Mineral Water and Customer Loyalty. This indicates that although the perception of other mineral water brands has increased, it is not enough to provide satisfaction, so customer loyalty remains low.
7. Aqua Brand Image has a negative effect on Other Mineral Water Brand Image. This means that the stronger the Aqua brand image in the minds of consumers, the lower the likelihood that consumers will give a positive perception to competing mineral water brands.

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