

The Influence of Product Quality and Brand Image on Repurchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the influence of product quality and brand image on repurchase intention for Mixue Ice Cream & Tea products, with a specific focus on the mediating role of customer satisfaction. This research employed a quantitative approach using a structural equation model with partial least squares (PLS-SEM). The sample consisted of 105 Mixue consumers in Kupang, Indonesia, selected through quota sampling. Data was collected via a structured questionnaire and analyzed using SmartPLS 4 to evaluate both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The results indicate that product quality has a significant and strong positive influence on repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.551, p < 0.001$) and customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.386, p = 0.001$). Brand image also shows a significant positive effect on both repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.373, p = 0.010$) and customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.360, p = 0.001$). Unexpectedly, customer satisfaction demonstrates a significant negative influence on repurchase intention ($\beta = -0.379, p = 0.005$). Furthermore, customer satisfaction was found to negatively mediate the relationship between both product quality and brand image on repurchase intention. The findings provide crucial insights for Mixue's management, emphasizing that while product quality and brand image are direct drivers of repurchase, customer satisfaction does not automatically translate into repeat purchases in this specific market context. Strategies should focus on maintaining consistent product quality while exploring other factors beyond mere satisfaction to foster true customer loyalty. This study contributes to consumer behavior literature by examining these relationships in the context of a rapidly expanding international F&B franchise in an emerging market. The counter-intuitive finding regarding the negative effect of customer satisfaction highlights the complexity of consumer decision-making and suggests the presence of other contextual variables that warrant further investigation.

Keywords: Product Quality, Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, Repurchase Intention, Mixue.

1. Introduction

The global food and beverage industry has witnessed exponential growth, characterized by the rapid expansion of international franchises into emerging markets. One prominent example is Mixue Ice Cream & Tea, a brand originating from China that has established a significant presence in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. The success of such brands hinges not only on initial market penetration but, more critically, on their ability to foster repeat purchase behavior, which is a cornerstone of long-term profitability and market sustainability (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Understanding the drivers of repurchase intention is therefore of paramount importance for both academics and marketing practitioners.

Previous research extensively documents the role of factors like product quality, brand image, and customer satisfaction in shaping consumer behavior (Ghazali et al., 2016). High product quality is often considered a fundamental prerequisite for customer retention, as it directly relates to the core offering of a firm (Dahrani & Syahfitri, 2022). Similarly, a strong brand image can create a cognitive and emotional connection with consumers, influencing their purchasing decisions and fostering trust (Arianty & Andira, 2021). These factors are believed to cultivate customer satisfaction, which, in turn, is widely theorized to be a direct antecedent of repurchase intention (Tjiptono, 2019; Oliver, 1997).

However, despite a wealth of research, the dynamics of these relationships within the unique context of a low-cost, high-volume franchise in a specific regional market like Kupang, Indonesia, remain under-explored. Preliminary observations indicate a potential gap between perceived satisfaction and actual repurchase drivers. Some customers express satisfaction yet are primarily motivated to repurchase by social factors (peer invitations) rather than intrinsic desire, while others question the value proposition despite the brand's strong image. This suggests that the conventional model where satisfaction straightforwardly mediates the path to repurchase may not fully apply. This study, therefore, aims to bridge this gap by empirically testing a model that investigates the direct and indirect effects of product quality and brand image on repurchase intention, mediated by customer satisfaction among Mixue consumers in Kupang.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

This study is grounded in the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which posits that behavioral intention is the most immediate determinant of behavior. This intention is shaped by an individual's attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In this context, a consumer's intention to repurchase (behavioral intention) is influenced by their evaluation of the product's quality and brand image (attitude), leading to satisfaction and ultimately, the decision to buy again.

2.1. The Effect of Product Quality

Product quality refers to a product's ability to meet stated or implied customer needs (Daulay et al., 2021). A positive experience with a product's features, reliability, and taste is a powerful motivator for consumers to make repeat purchases. When a product consistently meets or exceeds expectations, it reduces perceived risk and builds trust, directly encouraging future consumption (Purnama et al., 2022). Furthermore, high-quality products are a primary driver of customer satisfaction, as satisfaction is an evaluation of the consumption experience (Tirtayasa et al., 2021). Numerous studies have confirmed the significant positive relationship between product quality and both customer satisfaction and repurchase intention (Ghazali et al., 2016; Ramadhan & Santosa, 2017).

- H₁: Product quality has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.
- H₃: Product quality has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction.

2.2. The Effect of Brand Image

Brand image is the set of perceptions and associations consumers hold about a particular brand (Pratama et al., 2023). A strong, positive brand image serves as a mental shortcut, signaling quality and reliability, which can directly influence a consumer's willingness to repurchase a product (Arianty & Andira, 2021). A reputable brand reduces uncertainty and can create emotional bonds with customers, leading to higher levels of satisfaction (Setyorini et al., 2023). The positive perception of a brand's identity often translates into a more favorable evaluation of the overall consumption experience, thereby enhancing satisfaction (Damaryanti et al., 2022).

- H₂: Brand image has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.
- H₄: Brand image has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction.

2.3. The Role of Customer Satisfaction and Mediation

Customer satisfaction is defined as a consumer's emotional response to the evaluation of their consumption experience, arising from a comparison between pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase performance (Tjiptono, 2014; Sunyoto, 2013). According to established marketing theory, satisfied customers are more likely to engage in repeat purchases, making satisfaction a critical link between initial drivers (like quality and brand image) and behavioral loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Therefore, customer satisfaction is hypothesized to act as a mediator, where the positive effects of product quality and brand image on repurchase intention are channeled through the creation of a satisfying customer experience (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

- H₅: Customer satisfaction has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.
- H₆: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between product quality and repurchase intention.
- H₇: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention..

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design and Sample

This study utilized a quantitative, explanatory research design to test the proposed hypotheses. The population for this research comprised all Mixue customers in Kupang, whose exact number is unknown (Putra & Sugiyono, 2019). Due to the infinite nature of the population, a non-probability sampling technique, specifically quota sampling, was employed. A total sample size of 105 respondents was determined, collected proportionally from the five major Mixue outlets in the city, with 21 respondents from each location to ensure representation.

3.2. Data Collection and Measurement

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to customers who had just made a purchase at Mixue outlets. The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale for all measurement items. The variables in this study are Product Quality (X1), Brand Image (X2), Customer Satisfaction (Z) as the intervening variable, and Repurchase Intention (Y) as the dependent variable (Huda et al., 2025).

3.3. Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) via the SmartPLS 4 software. This method is suitable for predictive research and effectively handles complex models with both direct and indirect effects (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis was conducted in two stages:

- Measurement Model (Outer Model) Assessment: To evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs, we assessed convergent validity (factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted - AVE) and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion, Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio - HTMT).
- Structural Model (Inner Model) Assessment: To test the hypotheses, we examined the path coefficients (β), their significance (t-statistics and p-values), the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Result

The analysis of the structural model was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. The results for both direct and indirect effects are presented below.

4.1.1. Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model demonstrated strong validity and reliability. All indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7, confirming convergent validity. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs was above the 0.5 benchmark (Kualitas Produk = 0.554, Brand Image = 0.625, Kepuasan Pelanggan = 0.799, Minat Beli Ulang = 0.722), indicating that the constructs explained more than half of the variance of their indicators. Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs were well above 0.7, affirming high internal consistency. Discriminant validity was also established, as the HTMT ratios were below 0.90, and the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlation with other constructs.

4.1.2. Structural Model Assessment

The structural model analysis was conducted to test the hypothesized relationships. The R^2 value for Repurchase Intention was 0.437, indicating that 43.7% of its variance is explained by product quality, brand image, and customer satisfaction. The R^2 for Customer Satisfaction was 0.487, indicating that 48.7% of its variance is explained by product quality and brand image. The results of the hypothesis testing are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Path Coefficient Analysis (Hypothesis Testing)

<i>Path</i>	<i>Original Sample (β)</i>	<i>T Statistics</i>	<i>P Values</i>	<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Result</i>
X1 -> Y	0.551	4.456	0.000	H1	Supported
X2 -> Y	0.373	2.584	0.010	H2	Supported
X1 -> Z	0.386	3.470	0.001	H3	Supported
X2 -> Z	0.360	3.243	0.001	H4	Supported
Z -> Y	-0.379	2.797	0.005	H5	Not Supported
X1 -> Z -> Y	-0.146	1.986	0.047	H6	Supported (Negative)
X2 -> Z -> Y	-0.136	2.108	0.035	H7	Supported (Negative)

Source: Processed Data from SmartPLS 4 (2025)

The analysis confirms that product quality significantly and positively influences repurchase intention (H₁) and customer satisfaction (H₃). Similarly, brand image has a significant positive effect on both repurchase intention (H₂) and customer satisfaction (H₄). However, contrary to the proposed hypothesis, customer satisfaction was found to have a significant negative influence on repurchase intention (H₅ not supported). Consequently, the mediation analyses for H₆ and H₇ revealed that customer satisfaction acts as a significant negative mediator in the relationship between the independent variables and repurchase intention.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. Interpretation of Findings

This study's findings provide a nuanced understanding of consumer behavior toward Mixue products in Kupang. As expected, and in line with extensive literature (Ramadhan & Santosa, 2017), product quality and brand image emerged as strong, direct predictors of repurchase intention. This underscores that for fast-moving consumer goods, the core product offering and the brand's reputation are fundamental drivers of repeat business. Consumers are likely to return if they perceive the product as offering good value and the brand as credible.

The most striking and counter-intuitive finding of this study is the significant negative relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. This contradicts a large body of established marketing theory, which posits a positive link (Oliver, 1997; Tjiptono, 2019). Several explanations for this anomaly can be considered. First, in a low-cost, high-convenience market, "satisfaction" may be a weak, passive emotional state that does not translate into active loyalty. Consumers might be satisfied with the experience but are also highly susceptible to variety-seeking behavior or social influences, as suggested by the preliminary research. Second, this could be a statistical artifact known as a suppressor effect, where the inclusion of other variables (quality and brand image) reveals a negative partial correlation. Third, it is possible that while customers are satisfied, this satisfaction does not reach a threshold high enough to create a strong commitment, especially if competitors offer similar value propositions.

The negative mediation effect further complicates the narrative. It suggests that while better quality and brand image do lead to higher satisfaction, this increase in satisfaction paradoxically reduces the likelihood of repurchase when considered as a mediating path. This implies that for Mixue customers in this context, the drivers of satisfaction and the drivers of repurchase intention may operate independently or even in opposition. The decision to repurchase seems to be a more rational calculation based on product quality and brand perception, rather than an emotional response stemming from satisfaction.

4.2.2. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this research challenges the universal applicability of the satisfaction-loyalty chain in certain market contexts. It suggests that in emerging markets or for specific product categories, mediating variables other than satisfaction—such as perceived value, social norms, or switching costs—may play a more dominant role in predicting repurchase intention. This study calls for a more context-sensitive application of consumer behavior theories.

From a managerial perspective, the implications are clear and actionable. First, Mixue's management should continue to prioritize and maintain high product quality as it is the strongest direct driver of repeat business. Second, efforts to strengthen the brand image are also crucial. Third, managers should be cautious about using customer satisfaction scores as a sole proxy for customer loyalty. While keeping customers satisfied is important to avoid negative word-of-mouth, it is not sufficient to guarantee repurchase. Marketing strategies should instead focus on building deeper engagement, perhaps through loyalty programs, community building, or emphasizing unique value propositions that competitors cannot easily replicate.

4.2.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that open avenues for future research. The use of non-probability quota sampling limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the specific sample. Future studies could employ probability sampling for a more robust analysis. Second, the study's cross-sectional design captures data at a single point in time, which prevents the inference of causality. A longitudinal study could track consumer attitudes and behaviors over time to establish causal relationships. Finally, the research was conducted in a single city (Kupang), and the anomalous findings regarding customer satisfaction may be unique to this cultural and economic context. Future research should replicate this study in different geographical locations and explore other potential mediators and moderators (perceived value, customer engagement, variety-seeking tendency) to better understand the complex path to repurchase intention.

5. Conclusion

This study confirms that product quality and brand image are significant positive drivers of repurchase intention for Mixue Ice Cream & Tea in Kupang. These two factors are fundamental to building a loyal customer base. However, the research reveals a complex and unexpected dynamic where customer satisfaction negatively influences and mediates the relationship with repurchase intention. This suggests that while satisfaction is an outcome of good quality and a strong brand, it does not function as a direct catalyst for repeat purchases in this market. For practitioners, the key takeaway is to focus on the tangible aspects of product and brand while exploring more sophisticated strategies beyond simple satisfaction to foster genuine customer loyalty.

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Informed Consent

The authors declare that informed consent was not required as there were no human participants involved.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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