



Strategy for building customer loyalty amidst shifting consumer behavior: Mediating role of purchase intention

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative study investigates the factors influencing the brand awareness, brand association, brand image on customer loyalty through purchase intention, employing a survey of 150 buyers of Uniqlo products. Using structural equation modeling, we examined the relationships between constructs with a mediation role. This study reveals that while brand association and brand image significantly influence purchase intention, brand awareness does not. Furthermore, brand awareness and brand image directly impact customer loyalty, whereas brand association does not exhibit a significant direct effect. Notably, purchase intention fully mediates the relationship between brand association and customer loyalty, and partially mediates the impact of brand image on customer loyalty, but does not mediate the relationship between brand awareness and customer loyalty. Organizations should strategically prioritize enhancing brand association and image to drive purchase intention and cultivate customer loyalty, while recognizing that brand awareness alone may not directly translate to immediate purchase decisions or loyalty. Future research could explore the nuanced mechanisms through which specific dimensions of brand awareness indirectly influence loyalty, potentially through other mediating factors beyond purchase intention, or investigate the moderating roles of consumer characteristics and contextual factors in these relationships.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Customer loyalty is crucial amidst shifting consumer behavior in the digital era due to several factors. Digital communication significantly enhances the relationship between brands and customers, fostering repeat purchasing behavior and loyalty (Tran, 2025). The integration of social media influencers and virtual influencers in marketing strategies has proven effective in building trust and engagement, which are key components of customer loyalty (Hsu & Hung, 2024; Reddy et al., 2025). Personalized digital experiences, such as tailored content and real-time support, are essential for maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty in competitive markets (Jain et al., 2024). Additionally, the use of digital marketing platforms and omni-channel strategies empowers customers by providing seamless shopping experiences, further driving loyalty (Chiyem et al., 2024). Loyal customers contribute to business success by spreading positive word-of-mouth and resisting switching to competitors, thus enhancing overall business performance (Singh et al., 2019). Customer loyalty is intricately linked to brand awareness, brand association, and brand image, as higher levels of brand awareness enhance consumer recognition, positive brand

associations foster emotional connections, and a strong brand image cultivates trust, all of which contribute to a customer's commitment to repeatedly choose a brand over its competitors. Brand awareness is the main foundation that allows consumers to recognize and remember brands, so it is a prerequisite for the formation of customer loyalty (Keller, 1993). Brand associations create emotional connections and added value that strengthen consumers' purchase intent, which contributes to customer loyalty (A Aaker, 1991). While brand image is an overarching picture that shapes consumer attitudes and beliefs, it plays a direct role in building customer loyalty (Kotler & Lane Keller, 2015)

Brand awareness plays a crucial role in influencing purchase intention and customer loyalty. Studies have shown that brand awareness significantly impacts purchase intention by acting as a foundational step in building brand value, which is further mediated by perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty (Azzari & Pelissari, 2020). Brand awareness enhances brand loyalty, which in turn directly influences purchase intention (Gusti Noorlitaria et al., 2020). Firm-generated content on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook also boosts brand awareness and loyalty, thereby increasing purchase intention. Moreover, brand loyalty has been identified as a strong predictor of purchase intention, often mediating the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention. The interplay between these factors suggests that increasing brand awareness can lead to higher brand loyalty, which ultimately drives purchase intention (Budiono et al., 2021). Therefore, companies should focus on strategies that enhance brand awareness to foster customer loyalty and encourage purchase intentions

Brand association significantly influences both purchase intention and customer loyalty. Studies have shown that brand associations, along with brand loyalty, are positively correlated with consumer purchase intentions, indicating that strong brand associations can lead to higher purchase intentions and reinforce customer loyalty (Lee et al., 2019). Brand loyalty has been found to directly impact purchase intentions, suggesting that loyal customers are more likely to continue purchasing from the brand (Bakhshizadeh & Aliasghari, 2023). Fostering strong brand associations can enhance customer loyalty and drive purchase intentions, creating a virtuous cycle that benefits the brand (Phong et al., 2020). Another factor that influences consumer loyalty is brand image, strong brand image significantly influences both purchase intention and customer loyalty (Huang et al., 2020). Studies have shown that brand image positively impacts brand trust, which in turn enhances customer loyalty and purchase intention (Zaharia Seinfeld & Talledo Flores, 2022). Brand image fully mediates the relationship between perceived service quality and purchase intention, indicating that a positive brand image can lead to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty (Liao et al., 2022). Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that a positive brand image not only directly affects purchase intention but also indirectly influences it through brand loyalty, highlighting the critical role of brand image in fostering long-term customer relationships (Rana, 2024).

Indeed, there are several previous studies related to mediation patterns on customer loyalty. For instance, a study in the retail banking sector demonstrated that customer advocacy impacts brand loyalty through the serial mediation of brand trust and brand relationship quality (Quaye et al., 2022). Another study confirmed that trust significantly influences customer loyalty, with commitment and customer intimacy acting as mediators (Tabrani et al., 2018). Additionally, research on electronic customer relationship management (E-CRM) revealed that customer experience and satisfaction mediate the relationship between E-CRM and customer loyalty (Mokha & Kumar, 2024). However, remains a notable gap in understanding the intricate relationships between brand awareness, brand association, and brand image as they relate to customer loyalty, particularly through mediation patterns. While existing studies have explored these individual components, few have examined how brand awareness influences customer loyalty through brand association and brand image as mediators. This lack of comprehensive analysis leaves a void in the literature regarding the sequential impact of these variables on customer loyalty. Furthermore, understanding the mediation effects could provide valuable insights for marketers aiming to enhance customer loyalty through strategic brand management. Addressing this research gap could lead to a more nuanced understanding of how brand-related factors collectively influence customer loyalty, ultimately benefiting both academic research and practical applications in marketing strategies.

This research endeavors to elucidate the mediating role of purchase intention in the relationships between brand awareness, brand association, and brand image on customer loyalty within the context of Uniqlo products in Surakarta. Given the observed increase in Uniqlo sales in Indonesia, and Uniqlo has invested significantly in digital marketing (Kurniawan et al., 2022), and has proven effective in driving purchases at Uniqlo (Ahdiat, 2025). The market penetration of Uniqlo products is notable for its success across a substantial age spectrum, encompassing individuals from 18 to 55 years old (Kusuma et al., 2022). Uniqlo Indonesia demonstrates how adapting to digital consumer behavior through data-driven marketing strategies, optimal user experience, and a deep understanding of consumer needs can lead to significant success in the fashion e-commerce market in Indonesia (Dewi & Cahyaningrum, 2024). Uniqlo Indonesia managed to increase sales by up to 3.6 times through a persona-based marketing campaign guided by AiSensum. The campaign focuses on increasing consumer awareness of Uniqlo's e-commerce platform, both through its website and app, as well as achieving optimal sales and Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) targets (AiSENSUM, 2023). Recognizing the varied lifestyles of this consumer group and their potential influence on buying decisions, the research will explore the role of branding and technology use in the decision to buy Uniqlo products. this study aims to further scholarly understanding by examining the following hypotheses.

Several hypotheses are proposed to elucidate the factors influencing consumer behavior concerning Uniqlo products. It is hypothesized that brand awareness exerts a positive influence on both purchase intention and customer loyalty. This suggests that increased consumer familiarity with the Uniqlo brand correlates with a higher propensity to purchase its offerings and a greater likelihood of developing loyalty. Furthermore, brand association is hypothesized to positively impact purchase intention and customer loyalty, implying that favorable brand-related thoughts and feelings strengthen both the desire to buy and the inclination towards loyalty. Brand image is also expected to positively affect purchase intention and customer loyalty, indicating that a positive overall perception of the brand enhances consumers' intention to purchase and fosters loyalty. Additionally, the mediating role of purchase intention in the relationship between brand awareness, brand association, and brand image on customer loyalty is hypothesized. association has a positive influence on purchase intention towards Uniqlo products.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The population of this research was undefined. The sample size was determined based on the total number of indicator items used, multiplied by a factor of 5 up to 10 (Ferdinand, 2006). This resulted in a target sample size of 150 respondents, who will be reached through the distribution of questionnaires via Google Forms and direct, in-person administration. A rigorous screening protocol was applied by the authors during the collection of respondent data (Pickering & Blaszczynski, 2021). To mitigate bias, the questionnaire explicitly outlined the criteria for target respondents. Subsequently, a snowball sampling technique was employed, whereby initial participants identified and referred additional potential participants, who then continued the referral process. Monitor and direct the recruitment process, named initial participants to ensure that recruited participants meet the research criteria. Due to temporal constraints faced by the researchers, the data collection period was limited to two months. This snowball method is a non-probabilistic method, where not all members of the population have the same chance of being selected as a sample. Therefore, the external validity of the research results needs to be interpreted carefully due to limitations in generalization to the wider population (Ferdinand, 2006). The researcher conducted direct observations of Uniqlo customers in interpreting the results of the study .The data obtained from 150 respondents were subsequently analyzed using the SmartPLS v4 software. The demographic characteristics of the study's respondents are presented below.

Table 1. The respondent demography

Criteria	Items	Amount	%
Range of Age	17 – 30	80	53,3
	31 – 40	32	21,3
	41 - 50	34	22,7
	>50	56	37,3
Gender	Male	94	62.7

Criteria	Items	Amount	%
Education Level	Female	32	12,5
	High School	34	22,7
	D3	23	15,3
	S1	89	59,3
Purchase experience	S2	4	2,7
	1 time	110	73,4
	2-5 times	36	24,0
	>5 times	4	2,6

The collected data were analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) technique via SmartPLS 4.0 software, with hypothesis testing contingent upon the data satisfying established validity, reliability, and model fit criteria.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

All Construct Indicator are reflective indicator, the validity was measured by the outer loading value, as below:

Table 2. Validity (outer loading)

Construct	Item indicator	Questioner Statement	Outer loading
Brand Awarness (BA)	BA1	Uniqlo products have brand equity that increases value for me	0.851
	BA2	Uniqlo products have brand trust so they can be relied on to bring product benefits.	0.876
	BA3	Uniqlo products are able to provide brand reference so that I have an increased desire to buy uniqlo product.	0.789
Brand Assosiation (BAS)	BAS1	Uniqlo products help me get the right information.	0.808
	BAS2	Uniqlo products provide an important basis in distinguishing them from similar products from other brands	0.762
	BAS3	Uniqlo products produce various attributes or benefits of the product for me	0.781
	BAS4	Uniqlo products create a positive attitude for me	0.734
	BAS5	Uniqlo products are able to provide a basis for repurchasing Uniqlo products	0.583
Brand Image (BI)	BI1	In my opinion, the image of Uniqlo manufacturer companies is good	0.848
	BI2	Uniqlo products have a good image in my eyes	0.856
	BI3	As a user, I feel that uniqlo products have a good image	0.795
Purchase Intention (PIR)	PI1	I am interested in making transactions on uniqlo products.	0.827
	PI2	I have an interest in referencing uniqlo products	0.850
	PI3	I have a preferential interest in uniqlo products.	0.880
	PI4	I am interested in exploring Uniqlo products,	0.779
Customer Loyalty (CL)	CL1	I will buy more uniqlo products	0.856
	CL2	I will refer uniqlo products to others	0.913
	CL3	I will still choose Uniqlo products even though there are similar products from other brands	0.793

Table 2 shown that the outer loading of 0.5 is still acceptable as long as AVE for the particular construct meets the requirement of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Cronbach'Alpha	Rho_a	Rho_c	AVE
Brand Awarness (BA)	0.790	0.803	0.877	0.705
Brand Assosiation (BAS)	0.789	0.808	0.855	0.544
Brand Image (BI)	0.779	0.781	0.872	0.694

Construct	Cronbach'Alpha	Rho_a	Rho_c	AVE
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.855	0.863	0.902	0.697
Customer Loyalty (CL)	0.815	0.818	0.891	0.732

The composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for all latent variables in this study exceeded 0.7, indicating robust internal consistency reliability. Consequently, the consistent reliability of these constructs and their indicators suggests that replication of this study with the same measures would yield similar results, affirming the consistency of the current findings. The model test was carried out in several steps, where in this study with endogenous latent R Square, where the model is said to be feasible if the value of R Square is more than 0.2. The model explains about 57.2% (as Table 5) variation in customer loyalty, which medium to strong category in social and marketing contexts. This suggests that purchase intention as a mediator has a significant role in predicting customer loyalty, but there is still about 42.8% variability that the model has not explained. Including moderator variables such as customer satisfaction, value perception, brand commitment, or social influence can help improve understanding of the relationship in the next research.

Table 5. Model assesment

Variabel dependen	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.601	0.590
Customer Loyalty (CL)	0.572	0.563

The Mediation role of Purchase Intention and the relation between construct indicated by the Path value and the specific indirect effect in Bootstrap operation, as Below.

Table 6. Path coefficient and specific indirect effect

Hypotes	Original sample	Sample Mean	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
H1: BA → PI	0.127	0.126	0.087	1.465	0.071
H2: BAS → PI	0.421	0.428	0.079	5.350	0.000
H3: BI → PI	0.327	0.321	0.080	4.071	0.000
H4: BA → CL	0.171	0.180	0.088	1.942	0.026
H5: BAS → CL	0.084	0.082	0.097	0.861	0.195
H6: BI → CL	0.216	0.217	0.091	2.382	0.009
H7: BA → PI → CL	0.055	0.051	0.037	1.473	0.070
H8: BAS → PI → CL	0.181	0.182	0.064	2.846	0.002
H9: BI → PI → CL	0.141	0.134	0.046	3.047	0.001

Hypothesis 1: The Brand Awareness has no affects on Purchase Intention indicated by P-value more than 0,05. Previous research has shown the same fenomen, Brand awareness only affects purchase intent when mediated by other dimensions of consumer-based brand equity, such as perceived quality, brand association, and brand loyalty (Azzari & Pelissari, 2020). In this case, brand awareness serves as an initial stage in the process of forming uniqlo consumer attitudes, but it is not enough to encourage purchase intent without a strengthening element, namely brand associations and brand images that are more emotional and contextual (Keller, 2001). In a highly competitive and dynamic fast fashion industry, consumers tend to be more influenced by value perception, brand experience, and a strong image than simply recognizing a brand (Huang & Huddleston, 2009). Therefore, loyalty and purchase intent are more determined by how consumers associate the brand with their needs and lifestyle, not just from the awareness of the brand's existence (Fournier, 1998).

Hypothesis 2: Brand Assosiation does not influence Purchase Intention indicated by P-value more than 0,05. Studies also show that brand associations, along with other components of brand equity such as brand loyalty and perceived quality, positively influence purchase intention (Thi Ngan & Huy Khoi, 2021).

Hypotesis 3: Brand Image has effluences to the Purchase Intention indicated by P-Value less than 0,05. This is in line with the results of apparel industry research, brand image significantly influences purchasing decisions, especially when mediated by self-conformity and perceived quality (Chen et al., 2021).

Hypotesis 4: Brand Awareness has effluences on the Customer Loyalty indicated by P-Value less than 0,05. Other studies have shown that brand awareness, along with perceived quality, significantly affects customer satisfaction, which in turn increases consumer loyalty (Rusdianti & Fajar, 2023).

Hypotesis 5: Brand association has no effluences on the Customer Loyalty, indicated by P-Value more than 0,05. Other research does show that brand associations influence consumer purchase intent but do not directly affect customer loyalty (Rungrisawat & Sirinapatpokin, 2019; Van Thuy et al., 2022).

Hypotesis 6: Brand Image effluences on customer loyalty, indicated by P-Value more than 0,05. A positive brand image increases consumers' perception of brand quality and satisfaction, which in turn fosters loyalty (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024; J. Liu et al., 2011; Nie & Zeng, 2024).

Hypotesis 7: Purchase Intention does not mediate the effect of Brand Awareness to Customer Loyalty, indicated by P-Value of specific indirect more than 0,05. Another study revealed that brand awareness positively affects brand loyalty, which in turn impacts purchase intent, but does not directly affect purchase intent itself (Sudhana et al., 2023).

Hypotesis 8: Purchase intention mediate the effect of Brand Assosiation to cutomer loyalty, indicated by P-Value of specific Indirect effect less than 0,05. Because of the 2nd hypothesis, where the Brand assosiation has no direct effect on the customer loyalty the role of mediation by Purchase intention is *Fulll mediation*. This means that the influence of Brand Assosiation on the customer Loyalty always been mediated by Purchase Intention construct. Thus, brand associations are strategically key in influencing purchase intent and, in turn, strengthening customer loyalty to the brand.

Hypotesis 9: Purchse Intention mediate the influence of Brand Image on the dcustomer Loyalty , indicated by P-Value of specific Indirect effect less than 0,05, with partial mediation role. Because of the 6th hypothesis, where Brand Image has a direct effect on the customer loyalty. This is in line with research conducted by Rana, (2024)

4. CONCLUSION

The study determined that while brand association and image positively influenced purchase intention, brand awareness did not exhibit a significant direct impact on it. Regarding customer loyalty, brand awareness and brand image showed significant direct effects, contrasting with the non-significant direct influence of brand association. Digital marketing content should reinforce positive associations with brands (e.g. lifestyle, values, and product uniqueness) and build a modern and relevant brand image. Leveraging TikTok, Instagram platform and Collaboration with influencers Furthermore, purchase intention fully mediated the relationship between brand association and customer loyalty, and partially mediated the effect of brand image on loyalty. Since purchase intent is a full mediator for brand associations, marketing tactics must facilitate young consumers to make purchases directly (e.g. flash sales, digital exclusive promos, seamless online shopping experience). However, purchase intention did not mediate the link between brand awareness and customer loyalty. The findings of this study are limited by its focus on a single product category (Uniqlo) within a specific geographical location (Surakarta), potentially restricting the generalizability of the results to other contexts or industries. Future research could broaden the scope by examining these relationships across diverse product categories and geographical regions to enhance the generalizability of the findings. For further research, it can be focused on testing the role of moderation variables such as brand trust, consumer lifestyle, and e-commerce platforms in strengthening or weakening the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty

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