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THE ROLE OF BRAND IMAGE, BRAND TRUST, AND INTIMACY ON CONSUMER COMMITMENT

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Abstract:

The restaurant products quality issues have emerged in some developing countries. This research investigates how restaurant brand image and brand trust influencing consumers' intimacy, subsequently mediates the relationship between brand image and brand trust as predictor on consumers' commitment. The sample consists of 107 consumers obtained through an online survey. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to examine the research hypotheses. The empirical results indicate that brand image and brand trust have significant and positive effects on consumers' intimacy. Furthermore, as mediator variable, consumers' intimacy play important role in mediates the relationship between brand image and brand trust on consumers' intimacy. This study was validated Indonesian restaurant consumer or food firms, therefore, future study is required to analyze across the culture, region and sector. It can help restaurant managers and scholars to observe the correlation between brand image and consumers' behavior. The current study provided enlighten the consumers' principal operation from the perspective of marketing. Moreover, this study can be a reference for the government and culinary tourism business owners in an effort to increase consumer commitment and sustainable growth of the restaurant sector.

Keywords:

Brand Image, Brand Trust, Culinary Tours, Consumers Intimacy

Introduction

Today, international marketing segmentation has become a crucial issue worldwide. For instance, This phenomenon robust the demand for brands, products, and services compliant with their culture and religion (Junaidi, 2024). In some Muslim countries, restaurant have become the massive development sector (Junaidi, 2021) and a vast of Muslims have a strong commitment to Halal products and services due to provided by Islamic rule, which is permissible (halal) and prohibited (Haram). Restaurant operational based on Halal principle. It has become the main difference with the conventional food. The business sector is experiencing rapid growth, particularly in the culinary tourism sector. The growing level of competition among business people reflects the development of the fast-growing culinary tourism sector (Arzety & Hadita, 2023). Businesses will continue to organize strategies aimed at increasing sales. (Jumawan et al., 2023). The emergence of various eating places in North Luwu Regency, offering a variety of unique culinary specialities, a cool natural atmosphere, playground rides, and comfortable and instagrammable places, has contributed to the growth of culinary tourism. However, amidst this increasingly competitive competition, managers of culinary tourist attractions must understand and manage the factors that can influence consumer commitment to return.

One of the factors that influence consumer commitment is brand image (Nida et al., 2023). Brand image is a consumer's perception of a brand, which is born from the experiences, information, and interactions they have with it (Arham et al., 2022). A culinary tourist spot can benefit from a positive brand image by enhancing consumer attractiveness and loyalty, thereby encouraging repeat visits and word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations. Previous researchers have demonstrated that brand image significantly influences consumer commitment (Veronika et al., 2018). Consumers who are satisfied with a product from a particular brand are more dominant in committing to continue using the product (Tabrani et al., 2018). Tabrani et al. (2018). Apart from brand image, brand trust also plays a significant role in building consumer commitment and encouraging long-term involvement. (Husna & Aryani, 2023). Brand trust will arise when a product or service is considered Halal and health; when consumers believe in a brand instinctively, they will make purchases or repeat visits to products or services that they trust (Sulistiyowati & Baehaqi, 2022). Culinary tourist attractions that succeed in building high trust in their consumers will find it easier to maintain loyalty and reduce the likelihood of consumers switching to other places.

On the other hand, in the midst of increasingly fierce competition, businesses cannot rely on brand image and brand trust alone in shaping consumer commitment. Intimacy or emotional closeness are other factors that contribute to maintaining consumer relationships with brands and trust, and they should not be overlooked. Intimacy is able to describe how far consumers feel connected and have a personal relationship with a brand. In the culinary industry, a pleasant dining experience, the quality of service, brand image, and trust in a brand all contribute to forming intimacy. Despite numerous researchers exploring the relationship between brand image, brand trust, and consumer commitment, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the role of intimacy as an intervening variable. Previous research mostly focuses on the direct effect of brand image and brand trust on consumer commitment, as previous research found a significant influence between brand image, trust, and consumer commitment on customer loyalty. (Nida et al., 2023). Hence, the role of brand image and trust on consumers' commitment need to confirm.

However, no one has considered how intimacy can strengthen or mediate these relationships. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring how intimacy can influence the relationship between brand image, brand trust, and consumer commitment. Knowing and understanding what factors influence consumer commitment, culinary tourism managers can formulate more effective strategies to build and maintain strong relationships with their consumers. This study possible to boost consumer commitment, encourage repeat visits, and foster the sustainable growth of the culinary tourism industry in North Luwu. In addition to other development strategic agendas like energy, food, and infrastructure, tourism is one of the fastest-growing development sectors. This study aims to address this gap by examining the role of brand image, and trust, on consumer commitment directly and indirectly toward consumers' intimacy.

Literature Review

Brand Image

Brand image is an image that is formed in the minds of consumers when they hear a brand, through various things such as design, logo and consumer experience. (Angelina et al., 2023). Meanwhile, according to (Laksono & Suryadi, 2020) Brand Image is a characteristic used by consumers in choosing a product when they do not have more knowledge about a product. As a result, there is a tendency for consumers to choose a good product based on the experience of using the product or based on information obtained from various sources. If a brand has formed a positive image in the minds of consumers, it is likely that consumers will make purchases based on brand image. Kotler and Keller (2016), brand image consists of 5 dimensions, namely: Brand Identity (logo, color, packaging, location, corporate identity, slogan, and so on).

Brand Personality (firm character, rigid, authoritative, smiling, social, and so on). Brand Association (sponsorship or social responsibility, and issues that are strongly associated with the brand), Brand attitude and behavior (communication behavior, activities and attributes attached to a brand when dealing with consumers such as the behavior of employees and brand owners), Brand benefits and advantages (values and benefits can be functional, emotional, and social. Image can be measured by consumer opinions, impressions and responses in knowing what consumers think about a brand. So that a brand can understand what the target consumer likes or dislikes, both from the brand and the products and services produced by a brand. (Iswadi et al., 2023, Junaidi, 2022). Brand image consists of 2 components, namely, brand association (brand association) and favorability, strength and uniqueness of brand association or positive attitude, strength and uniqueness of the brand. (Maharini, 2020).

H1: Brand image has a significant and positive influence on Intimacy

Brand Trust

Brand trust is a marketing activity to achieve customer satisfaction in building and maintaining consumer trust to remain consistent with a brand by providing positive values, called Brand Trust. (Kurnia, 2022). Brand trust is a reference to the desire for a brand to be trusted through consumer confidence in the perceived product in fulfilling the promised value and good intentions of the brand offered (Widiyastuti & Setyawan, 2024).

Indicators of brand trust consists of 4, namely (Shelly, 2022) : a). Brand Credibility, is brand credibility as a product source trust that is in the brand to be able to improve brand quality and

value, b). Brand competence can be felt when consumers realize the quality of the product or service being promoted according to demand, c). Brand Goodness, is the positive attitude of the brand describing the company's image to consumers. Value benefits such as health, social, and conditions can be enjoyed by consumers when buying these products, d). Brand Reputation, is the brand reputation in the minds of consumers who realize that the brand will be stable when creating product quality. So that consumers are willing to pay a pricy price.

H2: Brand Trust has a significant and positive influence on Intimacy.

Consumer Commitment

Commitment is a consumer's trust to maintain a relationship that provides functional and emotional benefits. (Mutria Farhaeni et al., 2023). Similar opinion (Sofya et al., 2022) also states that customer commitment is an ongoing desire in the minds of consumers to maintain a good relationship or a relationship that provides benefits (value relationship). Meanwhile, according to (Nida et al., 2023) commitment is one factor that should not be forgotten in supporting the success of good relationships that create long-term relationships between consumers and companies, both products and services. Commitments that have been formed in consumers are unlikely to be easily influenced by promotions offered from competitors, because an emotional bond has been created with a company. (Khairunnisa & Inayatillah, 2023). Indicators of consumer commitment (Junaidi, 2024) consists of 4, namely, 1) adjusting to consumer relationships, 2) offering personalized products to meet consumer needs, 3) flexibility when there are product changes, 4) flexible in serving consumer needs.

H3: Intimacy has a positive influence on consumer commitment.

Intimacy

Intimacy is a service method that provides quality by involving strong intimacy. The closeness that exists has the potential to cause warm communication between consumers and the company so as to minimize misunderstandings. (Nafiah & Nugraha Pratama, 2021). This opinion is also in line with (Pratiwi, 2022) who say that intimacy is a company's effort to get to know consumers more deeply so that consumers feel more valued when all their opinions, criticisms and input are useful for the company. And opinion (Syakdiyah & Jadid, 2023) that in fulfilling the wants and needs of consumers, companies must take an approach with consumers through good communication, attention, and good relationships by communicating, caring, and providing comfort. According to (Sidabutar & Dharmayanti, 2020) intimacy has 5 dimensions including, namely, Communication, Caring, Commitment, Comfort, Conflict Resolution.

H4: Intimacy mediates the relationship between Brand Image and consumer commitment.

H5: Intimacy mediates the relationship between Brand Trust and consumer commitment.

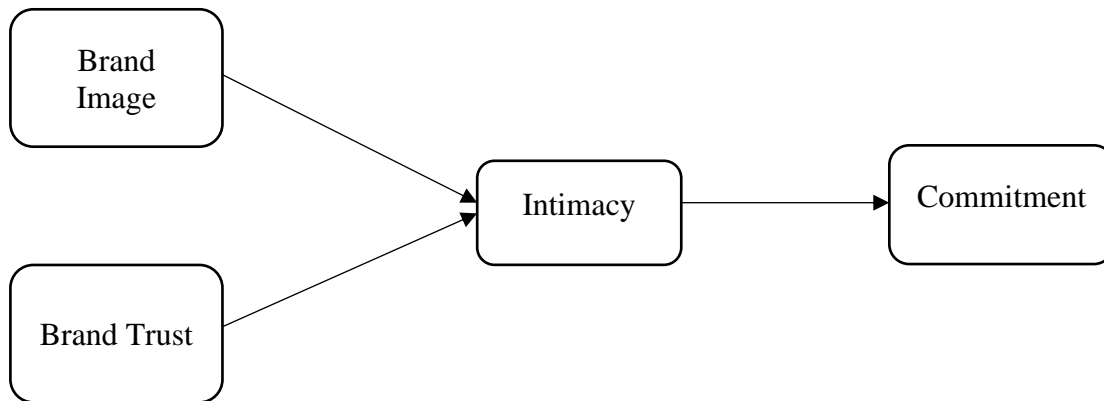


Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

Methodology

Tools and Technical Data analysis in this study was carried out using the SEM Analysis method with Smart PLS 3.0 software, then analyzed with Partial Least Square (PLS). The measurement model is used for validity and reliability tests. The bootstrapping method is used in this SEM model. By doing bootstrapping, PLS does not require a minimum number of samples so that research with a small sample size can still use PLS. The population in this study were all consumers who had visited culinary tours in North Luwu with a sample of 107 respondents. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, where the sample is taken from a population that meets certain criteria, such as consumers who have visited more than once and have experience with the brands in the culinary field trip. The data collection procedure was carried out through an online survey using google form.

Results And Discussion

Respondent Overview

Table 1. General Description of Respondents

Respondent Characteristics	Total	%
Gender		
Male	16	5,6
Female	91	54,2
Total	107	100
Age		
<18	6	5,6
18-25	58	54,2
26-35	37	34,6
36-45	4	3,7
>45	3	2,8
Total	107	100

Source: Author's Data Processing Results

In this study, the data collected were 107 respondents. Most respondents are women with 91 people and 16 men. Furthermore, most respondents were aged between 18-25 years with a total of 58 people, respondents 26-35 years with a total of 37 people, respondents under 18 years as many as 6 people, respondents 36-45 years as many as 4 people and respondents above 45 as many as 3 people.

Validity and Reliability Test

Table 2: Validity and Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Image (X1)	0,676	0,680	0,822	0,606
Brand Trust (X2)	0,877	0,891	0,915	0,730
Intimacy (Z)	0,860	0,882	0,899	0,641
Consumer Commitment (Y)	0,893	0,893	0,921	0,700

Source: Data Processed, 2024

Before conducting hypothesis testing, we first tested the validity and reliability of the data. The results of the data processing conducted show that the Cronbach's Alpha and CR values have a value greater than 0.6 for all variables. Furthermore, the AVE value for three variables is greater than 0.5 so that it can be said that valid indicators converge in forming their respective variables. It can be concluded that all variables and items used in this study meet the validity and reliability in variable measurement.

Table 3. R-Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Intimacy	0,360	0,348
Consumer Commitment	0,469	0,454

Source: Data Processed, 2024

This study has an R-Square value on the Intimacy (Z) and Consumer Commitment variables of 0.360 (36.0%) and 0.469 (46.9%), respectively. This figure shows that the brand image and brand trust variables have a contribution in explaining the intimacy variable by 36% while the other 60% is explained by other variables outside other indicators such as price, service, customer satisfaction and other variables. In addition, brand image, brand trust and intimacy variables are only able to explain the Consumer Commitment variable by 46.9% while 53.1% is influenced by other factors such as. Therefore, it is necessary to include other variables that are likely to explain the consumer commitment variable well.

Table 4. Model fit test

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
Chi-Square	0,080	0,080
d_ULS	0,986	0,986
NFI	0,478	0,478
d_G	287,769	287,769
SRMR	0,749	0,749

Source: Data Processed, 2024

Based on table 4. above, it is obtained that the SRMS value is 0.080 which is less than 0.08. In addition, the NFI value of 0.478 is less than 0.90. The resulting RMS_theta value is 0.194, which is close to the value of 0. From these three indicators it can be concluded that the model formed has met the suitability criteria so that the model can be used and is good at describing the relationship between variables.

Table 5. Direct and Indirect Effect Hypothesis Test

Variables	Direct Effect		Indirect Effect	
	T Statistics	P Values	T Statistics	P Values
Brand Image -> Intimacy	1,915	0,028		
Brand Image -> Consumer Commitment	2,636	0,004	1,566	0,059
Brand Trust -> Intimacy	7,052	0,000		
Brand Trust -> Consumer Commitment	1,745	0,041	3,270	0,001
Intimacy -> Consumer Commitment	3,366	0,000		

Source: Data Processed, 2024

Based on table 5 above, it is obtained that all direct relationships (direct effect) of all variables have a p-value less than the significance level of 0.05 so that it is significant. However, it was found that the brand image variable through an indirect relationship (indirect effect) has a p-value of 0.059 greater than 0.05 so it is not significant. Furthermore, it was found that the brand trust variable through an indirect relationship has a p-value of 0.001 less than 0.05 so it is significant.

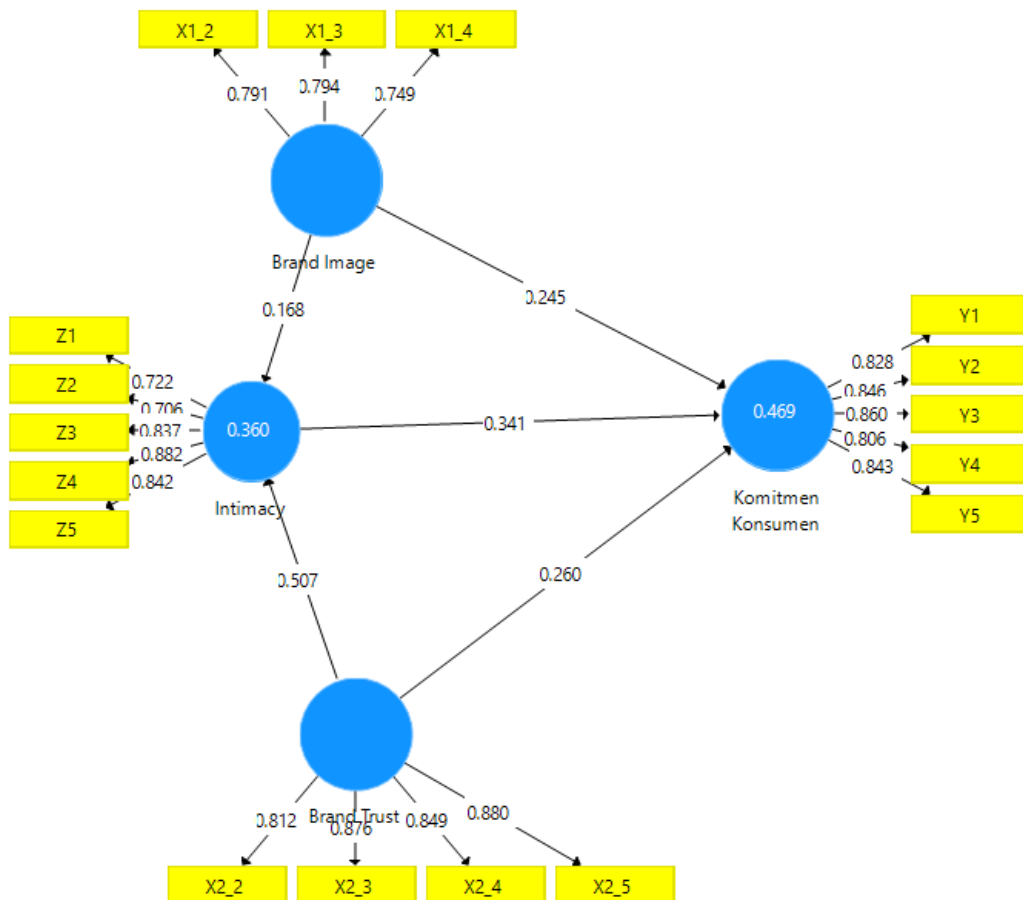


Figure 2. Hypotesis Test

Based on the results of hypothesis testing that has been carried out, the following results are obtained: The effect of brand image (X1) on intimacy (Z), the results of the analysis of H1 can be seen that the brand image variable has an influence on intimacy. The results of hypothesis testing directly the brand image variable has an influence on intimacy showing that the path coefficient is 1.915. This influence has a profitability value (P-Values) of 0.028. This shows that brand image has an influence on intimacy in North Luwu culinary tourism. The results of this study are in line with research conducted by (Eddi Oktavianus, n.d.) which proves that there is a significant and positive effect of brand image and intimacy variables. Furthermore, the effect of Brand Trust (X2) on intimacy (Z), the results of the analysis of H2 can be seen that the brand trust variable has an influence on intimacy. The results of hypothesis testing directly the brand trust variable has an influence on intimacy showing that the path coefficient is 7.052. This influence has a profitability value (P-Values) of 0.000. This shows that brand trust has an influence on intimacy in North Luwu culinary tourism.

The results of this study are in line with research conducted by (Mutria Farhaeni et al., 2023) that Trust, Commitment, and Service Quality have a positive and significant effect on Consumer Loyalty at Shotgun Social Bali. The Effect of Intimacy (Z) on Consumer Commitment (Y), the results of the analysis of H3 can be seen that the intimacy variable has an influence on consumer commitment. The results of hypothesis testing directly the intimacy variable has a significant and positive effect on consumer commitment which shows that the

path coefficient is 3.366. This influence has a profitability value (P-Values) of 0.000. This shows that intimacy has a significant and positive influence on consumer commitment in North Luwu culinary tourism. This is in line with research (Tabrani et al., 2018) which proves that there is a significant and positive influence on commitment mediated by customer intimacy in case studies of Islamic bank customers in Indonesia.

The Effect of Brand Image (X1) on Consumer Commitment (Y) mediated by Intimacy (Z), the results of the analysis of H4 can be seen that the brand image variable has no influence on intimacy-mediated consumer. The results of hypothesis testing indirect effect, the brand image variable does not have a significant and positive influence on intimacy-mediated consumer commitment which shows that the path coefficient is 1.566. This effect has a profitability value (P-Values) of 0.059. This shows that intimacy does not have a significant and positive influence on consumer commitment in North Luwu culinary tourism. The effect of Brand Trust (X2) on Consumer Commitment (Y) mediated by Intimacy (Z), the results of the analysis of H5 can be seen that the brand trust variable has an influence on intimacy-mediated consumer commitment. The results of hypothesis testing indirect effect, the brand trust variable has a significant and positive influence on intimacy-mediated consumer commitment which shows that the path coefficient is 3.270. This influence has a profitability value (P-Values) of 0.001. This shows that intimacy has a significant and positive influence on consumer commitment in North Luwu culinary tourism.

Conclusion

This study confirms that brand image and brand trust have a crucial role in influencing intimacy and consumer commitment. Consumers' intimacy also has a crucial role in consumers' commitment. The research and discussion results indicate that brand image and brand trust significantly and positively influence consumer commitment in North Luwu culinary tourism. However, brand image has no significant and positive effect on intimacy-mediated consumer commitment in North Luwu culinary tourism. Therefore, we can conclude that when culinary tourism business actors establish a positive brand image and brand trust in the minds of consumers through emotional ties, the consumer's commitment to revisit increases, thereby forming indirect consumer commitment in North Luwu culinary tourism.

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