

THE INFLUENCE OF BRAND IMAGE AND DISCOUNT GIVING ON SHOPEE FOOD CUSTOMER LOYALTY WITH CUSTOMER TRUST AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the effect of brand image and discount giving on Shopee Food customer loyalty, with customer trust as a mediating variable. A quantitative survey was conducted involving 150 active Shopee Food users selected through purposive sampling, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that brand image has a positive and significant influence on customer trust and customer loyalty. Discount giving also positively affects customer trust and loyalty, although its direct impact on loyalty is relatively weaker. Customer trust is identified as the most influential factor driving customer loyalty and plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between brand image, discount giving, and customer loyalty. These findings suggest that customer loyalty in digital food delivery services is not merely driven by short-term price incentives, but is strongly shaped by trust and long-term relational factors. The study provides theoretical support for Social Identity Theory and Relationship Marketing Theory and offers practical insights for Shopee Food to strengthen brand image, implement transparent discount strategies, and consistently build customer trust to achieve sustainable customer loyalty.

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INTRODUCTION

Online food delivery services have experienced rapid growth in Indonesia, supported by digital transaction systems and partnerships with various restaurants and food outlets. Shopee Food is one of the fastest-growing platforms in this industry and currently faces intense competition from similar services such as GoFood and GrabFood (Adi et al., 2022). Compared to its competitors, Shopee Food benefits from Shopee's strong umbrella brand, which allows customers to identify not only with the service itself but also with the broader Shopee user community. This identification encourages affective loyalty beyond functional usage. Based on Social Identity Theory, individuals tend to develop loyalty toward brands that possess a positive image and social prestige. In this context, Shopee Food can attract customer loyalty when its brand image is perceived as modern, practical, and aligned with consumers' digital lifestyles through its integration with the Shopee ecosystem, including e-commerce services, ShopeePay, and integrated promotional features. This market growth is reflected in the estimated total transaction value of the online food delivery industry in 2025 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Estimated Total Transaction Value in the OFD Industry



Source : (Tenggara Strategics, 2022)

In marketing management, branding plays a crucial role in differentiating a company from its competitors and shaping consumer perceptions. Brand image represents the set of perceptions and associations formed in consumers' minds based on their experiences and information exposure (Fadila & Mahmud, 2025). In the context of digital food delivery services, brand image reflects consumers' perceptions of service quality, reputation, and reliability. A strong brand image is expected to generate positive experiences and emotional attachment, which may lead to higher customer loyalty. Shopee Food, for instance, is commonly perceived as affordable, promotion-oriented, and easy to use. However, empirical evidence regarding the effect of brand image on customer loyalty in digital service platforms remains inconsistent, indicating the need for further investigation (Priyatna et al., 2023).

Discounts are a commonly used marketing strategy in online food delivery services to attract and retain customers, particularly in highly competitive markets such as Shopee Food. Previous studies indicate that discounts can stimulate short-term purchasing behavior, encourage product trials, and enhance perceived value (Fransiskho et al., 2021; Hulu et al., 2025). When communicated effectively, discounts may also support a positive brand image (Meitasari & Sinduwiatmo, 2024; Akbar & Irawati, 2023). However, reliance on discounts carries the risk of creating price-sensitive customers with weak long-term loyalty. This raises an important question regarding whether discounts contribute to sustainable loyalty or merely temporary transaction increases. In app-based services, customer trust plays a critical role due to the absence of face-to-face interaction. Trust in system security, service reliability, and transactional transparency can strengthen the impact of both brand image and discounts on customer loyalty. From a relationship marketing perspective, trust functions as a key mechanism that transforms short-term incentives and brand perceptions into long-term relational outcomes. Accordingly, this study positions customer trust as a mediating variable that explains how brand image and discounts influence customer loyalty within the Shopee Food context.

Customer loyalty represents a long-term objective in marketing, reflected in customers' willingness to engage in repeat purchases, recommend services to others, and maintain ongoing relationships with a brand (Aryatinigrum & Insyirah, 2020). In digital service contexts, customer loyalty is strongly influenced by trust, particularly because consumers face higher perceived risks in online transactions. Trust is formed through consistent service performance, reliability, and the fulfillment of customer expectations, which reduce uncertainty and encourage relationship continuity. From the perspective of Relationship Marketing Theory, trust serves as a fundamental driver of relationship commitment and is therefore a key determinant of sustainable customer loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This perspective underscores the importance of trust in strengthening long-term customer relationships within online food delivery platforms.

Previous studies have examined the relationship between brand image, discounts, and customer loyalty, showing that brand image positively influences loyalty (Kartika, 2025) and that discounts can enhance loyalty when aligned with customer needs (C. N. B. Simangunsong et al., 2025). Existing research has largely focused on general e-commerce platforms and online food delivery services such as GrabFood and GoFood (Hasibuan & Dirbawanto,

2024 ; Putra & Harris, 2024). However, empirical studies that specifically investigate customer loyalty in the context of Shopee Food remain limited. This gap indicates the need for further research to understand the loyalty formation mechanism within Shopee Food's distinct platform ecosystem.

This study addresses the research problem concerning the inconsistent findings on whether brand image and discounts are capable of generating sustainable customer loyalty in online food delivery services or merely driving short-term transactional behavior. To fill this gap, the study examines the role of customer trust as a mediating variable in the relationship between brand image, discounts, and customer loyalty within the context of Shopee Food in Indonesia, where empirical evidence remains limited. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by extending the application of Social Identity Theory and Relationship Marketing in digital service platforms. Practically, this study provides managerial insights for Shopee Food and similar platforms in designing marketing strategies that balance brand image development, effective discount utilization, and trust-building efforts to foster long-term customer loyalty in a highly competitive digital market.

Literatur Review

Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Relational Marketing Theory

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner) explains that individuals form their identities based on membership in specific social groups. Individuals tend to classify themselves into groups (social categorization), identify with these groups (social identification), and demonstrate preference and loyalty to groups that form part of their identity (social comparison). In a marketing context, brands are viewed as symbols of social identity that represent specific values, lifestyles, and status. Customer trust acts as a psychological mechanism that strengthens social reinforcement. When customers trust Shopee Food as a safe, honest, and reliable platform, their social identification with the brand strengthens. This buildup then manifests in loyal behaviors, such as repeat use and recommendations. Thus, trust mediates the influence of brand image on customer loyalty. Relational marketing theory emphasizes the importance of building long-term relationships between companies and customers through trust, commitment, satisfaction, and ongoing value. The primary focus is not on short-term transactions, but rather on mutually beneficial and sustainable relationships.

Brand Image

Brand image is the perceptions, impressions, and associations formed in consumers' minds about a brand based on experiences, information, marketing communications, and long-term interactions with the brand (Setiawan et al., 2025). Brand image is a crucial element influencing consumer decisions when choosing a product or service (Maulana et al., 2025). Brand image is not just about a logo or name, but encompasses the symbolic and emotional meanings felt by consumers, namely how consumers view a brand based on media exposure and consumer interactions with the product or service (Hartono & Tjiptodjojo, 2024). Brand image describes how consumers perceive a brand based on their perceptions, associations, and experiences. Brand image is a collection of beliefs and impressions inherent in consumers' minds about a product or service, which plays a crucial role in shaping consumer trust and preferences (Maharani & Saptaria, 2025). A positive brand image can encourage positive conversations that build consumer loyalty (Khasanah et al., 2021). In this study, brand image is measured based on three indicators adopted based on previous research (Hajar et al., 2022), as follows.

1) Positive association (favorability)

Favorability of brand association indicates the extent to which consumers associate a brand with a positive and favorable brand. This indicator is reflected in: the perception that the brand provides benefits that meet consumer needs, a positive assessment of service or product quality, and a pleasant impression and satisfaction when using the brand. In the context of Shopee Food, favorability is reflected when consumers perceive Shopee Food as a profitable, convenient service that provides added value through convenience and promotions.

2) Strength of recall (strength)

Strength of recall describes the strength and depth of brand associations in consumers' memories. This indicator is reflected in: the ease with which consumers recall the brand, the consistency of positive experiences, and the intensity of brand exposure through advertising, the app, and user experience. The more frequently and consistently consumers interact with Shopee Food, the stronger the brand associations formed in their minds.

3) Uniqueness of differentiation (uniqueness)

Uniqueness of brand association indicates the degree to which a brand is unique and differentiates it from competitors. These indicators include: unique service features not offered by competitors, differentiated promotional programs or app features, and a recognizable and distinct brand identity. For Shopee Food, uniqueness stems from integration with the Shopee ecosystem, the use of ShopeePay, and a unique promotional model.

Discounts Giving

Discounts giving is a pricing strategy used by companies to attract consumers through temporary price reductions, thus encouraging increased interest and purchasing decisions. Appropriately offered discounts can create a higher perceived value because consumers perceive significant economic benefits (M. D. Sari et al., 2025). Discounts are a form of price incentive offered by sellers to consumers to encourage purchasing decisions (W. Sari & Derajat, 2025). Discount offers are often accompanied by a time limit, creating a sense of urgency for consumers. This encourages them to purchase products immediately before the offer expires, sometimes without careful consideration. Discounts have been shown to trigger impulse buying and accelerate the purchasing decision-making process, particularly in the context of online shopping, which is characterized by easy access and limited promotional time. However, the effectiveness of discounts is determined not only by the size of the discount but also by the clarity, relevance, and ease of understanding of the promotional information (Syamruddin et al., 2022). Well-designed and communicated discounts can create a higher perceived value, as consumers perceive significant economic benefits (Cipta et al., 2021). In this study, the effectiveness of discounts is reflected through several key indicators (W. Sari & Derajat, 2025), as follows:

1) Perceived Price Reduction

Perceived price reduction refers to the extent to which consumers perceive a significant price reduction compared to the normal or reference price. This indicator is reflected in: consumer perception that the discounted price is significantly lower than the original price, clarity of information about the discount amount, and belief that the discount truly provides cost savings. The higher the perceived price reduction, the more likely consumers are to be attracted to a purchase due to the perceived direct economic benefit.

2) Perceived Transaction Value

Perceived transaction value describes consumers' overall assessment of the value of the transaction benefits derived from a discount, considering the comparison between the benefits received and the costs incurred. This indicator includes: the feeling that the transaction provided value commensurate with or exceeding the cost, consumer satisfaction with the decision to purchase a product or service at a discount, and the perception that the discount increases value for money. This indicator emphasizes the evaluative and emotional aspects of consumers regarding the benefits of the transaction, not simply the amount of the discount.

3) Purchase Attractiveness

Purchase attractiveness indicates the level of purchase appeal generated by a discount. This indicator is reflected in: the level of consumer interest in making a purchase immediately, the urge to try the product or service offered, and increased purchase interest due to time constraints or promotional quotas. Discounts with high purchase attractiveness tend to encourage impulse buying and accelerate purchase decision-making. These three indicators explain how discounts not only influence consumers' cognitive aspects but also drive affective and behavioral responses.

Customer Trust

Customer trust is a consumer's belief that a company or brand can consistently provide reliable, honest, and responsible service. In the context of digital marketing and services, customer trust is a key variable in building customer loyalty and commitment to a brand or service (Rahmawati, 2025). As demonstrated in his research by (Fakhrana, 2020), trust significantly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty. From a relationship marketing perspective, trust is a key prerequisite for forming long-term relationships; trust drives commitment, while commitment generates customer loyalty. Recent studies of e-commerce and digital service companies show that customer trust positively and significantly influences loyalty, especially when the company maintains service consistency and information transparency (Surya et al., 2025). Thus, customer trust, reflected in perceptions of credibility, service consistency, and service provider commitment, not only underlies repeat purchase decisions

but also forms the basis for word-of-mouth recommendations and long-term loyalty. In this study, customer trust was measured using the following four indicators (Triandini et al., 2025).

1) Reliability

Reliability indicates the extent to which a company is able to fulfill its service promises to customers. Reliability indicators include: consistency of product or service quality, timeliness of delivery or completion of services, and consistency between information provided and the service received. High reliability strengthens customer confidence that the company can be relied upon in every transaction.

2) Integrity

Integrity reflects the company's level of honesty and transparency in interacting with customers. Integrity indicators include: clarity of pricing information, promotions, and terms of service, the absence of practices that harm or mislead customers, the company's commitment to complying with applicable rules and policies, and strong integrity that builds a sense of security and customer confidence in the brand.

3) Competence

Competence demonstrates a company's ability to manage services professionally and effectively. Competence indicators include: the ability of systems or applications to function properly, the speed and accuracy in handling customer complaints, and the professionalism of human resources and service partners. High competence builds customer confidence that the company has the capability to meet their needs.

4) Benevolence
 Benevolence reflects the extent to which a company prioritizes the interests and well-being of customers, not just short-term profits. Indicators of benevolence include: willingness to help customers when problems arise, responsiveness and empathy in customer service, fair treatment, and attention to customer needs. Benevolence strengthens emotional bonds and increases long-term customer commitment.

Customer Loyalty

The success of building customer loyalty is often influenced by a combination of service quality, customer trust, and customer satisfaction (Aprelyani, 2025) and (Puspita & Saktiana, 2025). High trust creates a stable and sustainable consumer identity as a brand user. Relationship marketing theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) emphasizes that loyalty is the result of long-term, mutually beneficial relationships. Key factors include trust, relationship commitment, ongoing satisfaction, effective and transparent communication, and long-term relationship value. Trust and service quality significantly influence customer loyalty (D. A. Y. Simangunsong et al., 2023). Research (Ikaningtyas et al., 2025) also supports that service quality and perceived value, which shape trust and satisfaction, have a significant impact on customer loyalty. Therefore, companies that consistently prioritize service quality and maintain customer trust have a greater chance of achieving long-term customer loyalty. In this study, customer loyalty was measured using the following indicators (Aurelia & Susanti, 2025).

1) Repeat Purchase Intention

Consumers' willingness to continue using the same product or service repeatedly over the long term.

2) Resistance to Switching

Consumers' tendency not to switch to another brand despite more attractive price offers or promotions.

3) Brand Commitment

Consumers' level of psychological and emotional attachment to the brand.

4) Positive Word of Mouth

Consumers' willingness to recommend the brand to others as a form of support and social pride.

5) Brand Preference

Consumers' tendency to make a brand their primary choice over other alternatives.

Research Hypothesis

The Influence of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty

Brand image is a collection of perceptions, associations, and impressions formed in the minds of consumers about a brand. A positive brand image creates positive consumer perceptions that form the basis for loyalty, as consumers tend to maintain relationships with brands that provide a sense of security and psychological satisfaction. According to Social Identity Theory, consumers tend to be loyal to brands that represent their self-identity and social values. Therefore, brand image directly influences affective loyalty, which is loyalty driven by

emotional bonds and social identity. Previous research has shown that a strong brand image can ingrain consumers' memories of a product and encourage repeat purchases, a form of customer loyalty (Majid & Akbar, 2025). A positive brand image shapes perceptions of quality, increases trust, and strengthens consumers' emotional attachment to the brand. This leads to customers tending to repurchase the same product or platform even when numerous alternatives are available. Shopee Food is a frequently used and repeated platform, fostering customer loyalty (Herman et al., 2024). The first hypothesis is:

H1: Brand Image has a positive effect on customer loyalty

The Effect of Discount Giving on Customer Loyalty

Discount giving is a form of price promotion that provides direct economic benefits to consumers. Discounts perceived as significant and fair will increase: perceived transaction value, purchase attractiveness, and short-term satisfaction. These benefits encourage consumers to make repeat purchases, which are the initial components of loyalty. Discounts have been proven to increase customer loyalty because they are perceived to provide added value directly when customers make a purchase. When customers receive a discount, they experience an economic benefit that drives satisfaction and a desire to repurchase in the future. Research results (Khairani, 2023) show that discounts have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. Discounts are not merely a short-term promotional tool, but a relationship strategy that has the potential to strengthen customer loyalty if managed appropriately. The second hypothesis is:

H2: Discount giving has a positive effect on customer loyalty

The Effect of Brand Image on Customer Trust

Brand image represents a collection of consumer perceptions and associations with a brand, such as quality, reputation, and consistent performance. In social identity theory, consumer identification with a brand creates a psychological bond that fosters a sense of security and confidence. The stronger this identification, the higher the consumer's level of trust in the brand. A strong and consistent brand image reduces uncertainty and risk, increases perceptions of reliability and integrity, and forms the basis for building customer trust. This trust, in turn, plays a crucial role in fostering customer loyalty and sustaining long-term relationships between consumers and companies. The third hypothesis is:

H3: Brand image has a positive effect on customer trust.

The Effect of Discount Giving on Customer Trust

Discount giving has been shown to have a positive effect on customer trust in the context of e-commerce platforms and app-based food delivery services. One study found that price promotions and discounts increase perceived value and customer satisfaction, which in turn strengthens consumer trust in the ShopeeFood platform (Hasbi & Sanjaya, 2024). Therefore, a well-designed discount strategy not only encourages short-term transactions but can also build and strengthen customer trust in the long term. According to Relationship Marketing Theory, discounts are viewed as a form of relationship investment. Discounts that are transparent, relevant to consumer needs, and not misleading will strengthen perceptions of a company's integrity and concern for customers. This perception fosters trust, which is the main foundation of long-term relationships. The fourth hypothesis is:

H4: Discount giving has a positive effect on customer trust

The Effect of Customer Trust on Customer Loyalty

Customer trust is the customer's belief that a company or brand has the reliability, integrity, and competence to fulfill its service promises. When customers trust a brand, they feel secure and comfortable in transactions, making them more willing to maintain long-term relationships (Meria et al., 2025). Previous research has shown that trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty and ultimately drives loyal behavior (Hulu et al., 2025). According to (Afrelia et al., 2020), customer trust is a key factor determining customer loyalty in digital services and e-commerce platforms. When consumers feel confident in transaction security, service reliability, and the quality of information provided, they are more likely to have long-term commitments and potentially make repeat purchases. The fifth hypothesis is:

H5: Customer Trust has a positive effect on customer loyalty

The Effect of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty with the Mediation of Customer Trust

In the context of Social Identity Theory, a strong and prestigious brand image encourages consumers to

identify with the brand. This identification creates a psychological bond that strengthens feelings of security and confidence, thereby increasing customer trust. Customer trust is understood as customer confidence in a brand's reliability, integrity, and competence in delivering on service promises. In Relationship Marketing Theory, trust is the foundation for long-term relationships and a key prerequisite for relationship commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The combination of these two theories suggests that brand image not only directly influences loyalty but also through the formation of customer trust. The sixth hypothesis is:

H6: Brand image has a positive effect on customer loyalty through the mediation of customer trust.

The Effect of Discount Giving on Customer Loyalty Through the Mediation of Customer Trust

Discounts will be effective in building customer loyalty if they are perceived as fair and valuable, communicated clearly and transparently, and are able to increase customer trust. Thus, customer trust is the primary mechanism explaining how discounts can transform from mere short-term promotions into a strategy for building customer loyalty. Conceptually, the mediation process of customer trust in the relationship between discounts and customer loyalty is that discounts increase perceptions of transaction value and price fairness, while these positive perceptions foster customer trust. Trust, in turn, drives commitment and repurchase intentions, and customer loyalty is formed through repeat purchasing behavior and positive recommendations. The seventh hypothesis is:

H7: Discount giving has a positive effect on customer loyalty through the mediation of customer trust.

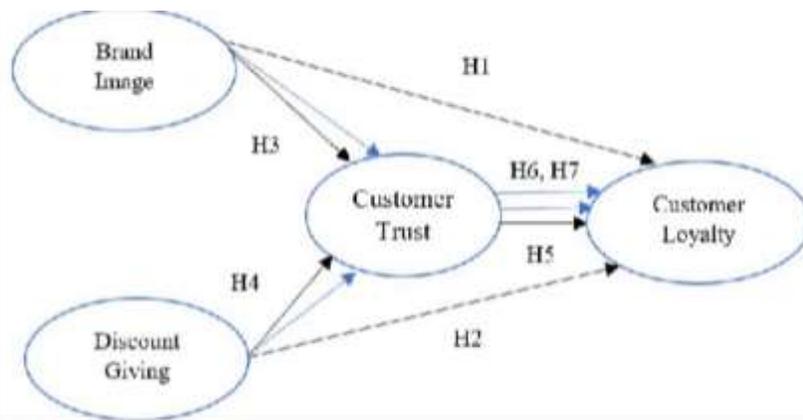


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative research design with a survey approach to examine the influence of brand image and discount provision on Shopee Food customer loyalty, with customer trust as a mediating variable. The conceptual model is developed based on prior studies in digital marketing and consumer behavior. The variables examined in this study include brand image (X1), discount giving (X2), customer trust (Z), and customer loyalty (Y). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire as the primary research instrument. The population of this study consists of active Shopee Food users. Since the exact population size is unknown, a non-probability sampling technique was applied using purposive sampling. The sample size was determined based on the guideline proposed by Hair et al., which recommends a minimum sample of 5–10 times the number of indicators (Suandevin & Kusumah, 2025). With 15 measurement indicators used in this study, a total of 150 respondents were considered sufficient to ensure adequate statistical power. Respondents were selected based on the following criteria: (1) users of the Shopee Food application, (2) individuals who have made more than two purchases on Shopee Food within the last six months, and (3) respondents aged over 17 years. These criteria were applied to ensure that participants had sufficient experience and decision-making maturity in using the Shopee Food service. Data were analyzed

using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS 4.0 software. This method was selected because it is suitable for analyzing complex models involving latent variables and mediating relationships (Maharani & Saptaria, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

Respondent Characteristics

The sample in this study consisted of 150 respondents using the Shopee Food app for food and beverage delivery. Descriptive characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Description	Frequency (N = 150)	Percentage
Gender	Male	64	43%
	Female	86	57%
	Total	150	100%
Age	18-24 Years	51	34%
	25-31 Years	40	27%
	32-38 Years	36	24%
	>39 Years	23	15%
	Total	150	100%
Pendidikan	Education High School or Equivalent	62	41%
	Diploma 3	46	31%
	Bachelor's Degree	22	15%
	Master's Degree	20	13%
	Total	150	100%

Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

The majority of respondents were female (57%). This indicates that Shopee Food services are more widely used or more relevant to female consumers. This could be attributed to women's high interest in the ease of service, promotions, and discounts offered by food delivery platforms. The largest age group is under 18-24 years old (34%). This age group is highly familiar with digital technology and mobile applications, resulting in relatively high adoption of food delivery services. Younger consumers tend to be responsive to discounts, promotions, and digital campaigns. Loyalty within this group is still dynamic and volatile, making customer trust a key factor in maintaining long-term usage. Approximately 41% of respondents in this survey had a high school education or equivalent. Consumers with a high school education are generally more sensitive to price and economic value, making discounts a primary attraction. They rely on direct experience and social recommendations to build trust in brands. They tend to judge brands based on the app's ease of use, clarity of information, and practical benefits.

Measurement Model Evaluation Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed by examining outer loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct. The measurement model meets the convergent validity criteria when indicator loadings exceed 0.70 and AVE values are greater than 0.50. In addition, construct reliability was evaluated using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, with values above 0.70 indicating satisfactory reliability (Hair et al., 2020). The detailed outer loading results are presented in Figure 3.

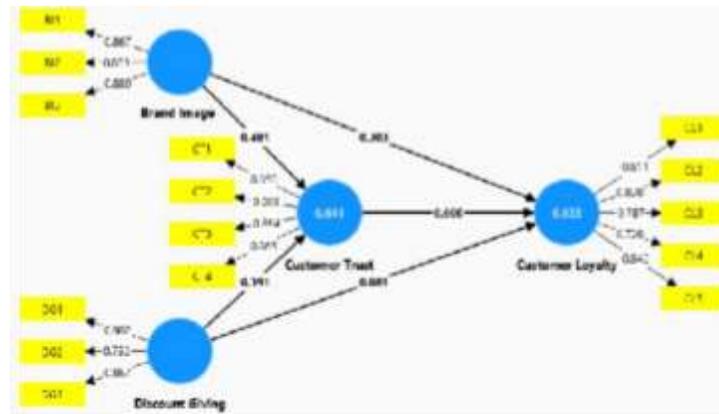


Figure 3. Outer Loading Values

Source: Data processing results using Smart-PLS (2025)

Based on Figure 3, it is known that all indicators have outer loading values > 0.70, thus meeting the convergent validity criteria.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity indicates the extent to which a construct can be empirically distinguished from other constructs in the research model, reflecting the uniqueness of each latent variable. In this study, discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which is considered an effective criterion for evaluating discriminant validity. A construct is regarded as having adequate discriminant validity when the HTMT value is below 0.90. The results of the HTMT assessment are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) Value

	Brand Image	Customer Loyalty	Customer Trust	Discount Giving
Brand Image				
Customer Loyalty	0,845			
Customer Trust	0, 871	1,010		
Discount Giving	0.822	0,857	0,853	

Source: Results of data processing using Smart-PLS (2025)

The HTMT value for each construct was <0.90, indicating that each construct had good discriminant validity. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used to evaluate convergent validity by measuring the proportion of variance captured by a construct relative to the variance due to measurement error. An AVE value of 0.50 or higher indicates that the construct is able to adequately explain the variance of its indicators. The results of the AVE measurement are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Composite Reliability and Average Extracted Variance

	onbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability rho_a	Composite Reliability rho_c	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Image	0,850	0,850	0,909	0,770
Customer Loyalty	0,863	0,868	0,901	0,647
Customer Trust	0,869	0,872	0,910	0,718
Discount Giving	0,814	0,816	0,890	0,731

Source: Results of data processing using Smart-PLS (2025)

The AVE values for all constructs exceed the minimum recommended threshold of 0.50, confirming that each construct demonstrates satisfactory convergent validity and that the indicators appropriately represent their respective latent variables. Reliability testing in this study was conducted using Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement instruments. A construct is considered reliable when both Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha values exceed 0.70. As presented in Table 4, all constructs demonstrate Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha values above the minimum threshold, indicating that the measurement instruments are reliable and suitable for use in the subsequent structural model analysis.

R-Square Test

The R-square value was used to evaluate the explanatory power of the structural model for each endogenous variable. According to established criteria, R-square values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 indicate weak, moderate, and strong model explanatory power, respectively (Ringle et al., 2023). The results of the R-square analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. R-Square Test Results

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Customer Loyalty	0,833	0,832
Customer Trust	0,641	0,639

Source: Results of data processing using Smart-PLS (2025)

Based on Table 5, the R-square value for Customer Loyalty is categorized as strong, indicating that a substantial proportion of the variance in customer loyalty is explained by the variables included in the model. Meanwhile, the R-square value for Customer Trust falls within the moderate category, suggesting that the model adequately explains customer trust, although other factors outside the research framework may also contribute. Overall, these results demonstrate that the proposed structural model has satisfactory explanatory power in explaining customer loyalty and customer trust within the Shopee Food context

F-Square Test

The f-square (f²) test was used to assess the effect size of each exogenous variable on the endogenous variables in the structural model. Based on established criteria, f² values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate small, medium, and large effects, respectively (Hair et al., 2020). The results of the f² analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. F-Square

	Brand Image	Customer Loyalty	Customer Trust	Discount Giving
Brand Image		0,218	0,343	
Customer Loyalty				
Customer Trust		0,776		
Discount Giving		0,017	0,227	

Source: Results of data processing using Smart-PLS (2025)

The results show that Brand Image has a large effect on Customer Trust and a moderate effect on Customer Loyalty, indicating that brand perception plays a crucial role in strengthening trust and, subsequently, loyalty. In addition, Customer Trust demonstrates a very strong effect on Customer Loyalty, confirming its dominant role in driving sustained customer loyalty. Conversely, Discount Giving shows a relatively small direct effect on Customer Loyalty but exerts a moderate influence on Customer Trust. These findings suggest that discounts are

more effective in building customer trust rather than directly fostering long-term loyalty. Overall, the f^2 results highlight Customer Trust as the most influential variable in shaping customer loyalty, followed by Brand Image. Discount Giving contributes indirectly by strengthening trust, but its direct impact on loyalty remains limited. This indicates that strategies focused on trust-building and brand image enhancement are more effective for achieving sustainable customer loyalty than relying solely on price-based promotions.

Path Coefficients Test

The path coefficients test aims to ensure that the causal relationship between variables in the research model is empirically proven, both in terms of direction, strength, and significance. The results of the path coefficients test are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Path Coefficients Test Results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Hypothesis Results
Brand Image -> Customer Loyalty	0,303	0,304	0,050	6,028	0,000	Accepted
Brand Image -> Customer Trust	0,481	0,480	0,050	9,703	0,000	Accepted
Customer Trust -> Customer Loyalty	0,600	0,598	0,053	11,370	0,000	Accepted
Discount Giving -> Customer Loyalty	0,081	0,081	0,035	2,291	0,022	Accepted
Discount Giving -> Customer Trust	0,391	0,392	0,045	8,695	0,000	Accepted
Brand Image -> Customer Trust -> Customer Loyalty	0,087	0,088	0,031	2,779	0,005	Accepted
Discount Giving -> Customer Trust -> Customer Loyalty	0,208	0,206	0,055	3,780	0,000	Accepted

Source: Results of data processing using Smart-PLS (2025)

The Influence of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty

The results indicate that brand image has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. This finding suggests that a favorable brand image strengthens customers' willingness to maintain long-term relationships with the service, reinforcing loyalty formation in the digital food delivery context.

The Influence of Discount Giving on Customer Loyalty

Discount giving is found to have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, although the magnitude of this effect is relatively smaller compared to other variables. This indicates that discounts can encourage repeat usage, but their role in fostering long-term loyalty is limited when considered independently.

The Influence of Brand Image on Customer Trust

Brand image shows a strong and significant influence on customer trust. This result highlights the importance of brand credibility and consistency in enhancing consumers' confidence in the service, which is particularly crucial in app-based transactions.

The Effect of Discount Giving on Customer Trust

Discount giving also has a positive and significant effect on customer trust. This finding implies that transparent and reliable discount programs contribute to customers' perceptions of fairness and honesty, thereby strengthening trust toward the platform.

The Effect of Customer Trust on Customer Loyalty

Customer trust has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty and represents the strongest relationship in the model. This confirms that trust plays a central role in driving sustained loyalty, as customers who trust a platform are more likely to continue using and recommending the service.

The Influence of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty, Mediated by Customer Trust

The indirect effect analysis shows that customer trust partially mediates the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty. This indicates that brand image not only influences loyalty directly but also strengthens loyalty indirectly by enhancing customer trust.

The Influence of Discount Giving on Customer Loyalty, Mediated by Customer Trust

Customer trust also mediates the relationship between discount giving and customer loyalty. The indirect effect through trust is stronger than the direct effect, suggesting that discounts contribute more effectively to long-term loyalty when they first build customer trust rather than merely offering short-term price incentives.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that brand image, discounts, and customer trust are strongly interrelated in shaping loyalty, with trust acting as a dominant mediator. These findings align with previous research findings and can be explained by Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Relational Marketing Theory. The success of building loyalty in this model is not solely about functional incentives (discounts), but primarily about how the brand is able to build a social identity and the quality of long-term relationships that foster trust.

The direct coefficient of brand image on loyalty indicates that the stronger the brand image, the greater the tendency for customers to remain loyal, repurchase, and persist despite alternatives. This finding is consistent with research showing that brand image and brand trust have a significant positive effect on brand loyalty (Suandevin & Kusumah, 2025). A credible and consistent brand image strengthens the belief that a company is reliable, and this trust then becomes a key driver of loyalty. This aligns with the literature stating that a positive brand image increases trust, satisfaction, and ultimately loyalty.

The direct effect of discounts on loyalty encourages repeat purchases, but the effect is not as strong as that of brand image or trust. Research on the influence of discounts and pricing also found that discounts have a positive but often moderate effect on loyalty, particularly as a short-term trigger for repeat purchases (C. N. B. Simangunsong et al., 2025). Conversely, discounts have a positive but often moderate effect on trust, and the indirect effect of discounts on loyalty through trust is much greater than the direct effect. This finding supports the view that transparent, honest, and consistent discounts enhance perceptions of price fairness and company integrity, thereby fostering trust that then engages customers more sustainably.

For brand image, the indirect effect through trust coexists with the direct effect, indicating partial mediation. Brand image influences loyalty both directly and through trust. This pattern aligns with research showing that brand identity/image influences loyalty through value, satisfaction, and, ultimately, trust. For discounts, the indirect effect through trust (0.208) is much greater than the direct effect (0.081), making trust a key mediator explaining how discount programs can be internalized into long-term loyalty, rather than simply an opportunistic response to price. This aligns with research suggesting that perceived price fairness, promotional transparency, and consistent offerings enhance trust and ultimately loyalty.

Social Identity Theory explains that consumers tend to be loyal to brands that are part of their social identity; they feel in-group with brands whose image aligns with their values, lifestyle, or desired status. A strong brand image (e.g., modern, trustworthy, customer-focused) makes it easier for customers to identify with the brand, thus strengthening their sense of belonging and commitment to loyalty. Within this framework, a positive brand image increases customer identification with the brand, which in turn strengthens trust and loyalty, as demonstrated by the social identity perspective on brand loyalty, which positions trust as a key psychological pathway to loyalty. Discount programs designed exclusively for members or specific communities can also strengthen group identity and a sense of community, making discounts not just price incentives but symbols of membership and social recognition.

Relational Marketing Theory emphasizes that the primary goal of marketing is to build long-term, mutually

beneficial relationships with customers, based on trust, commitment, and satisfaction, not just a single transaction. The finding that trust has the highest coefficient on loyalty (0.600) supports the view that relationship quality, particularly trust, is at the heart of customer loyalty.

From this perspective, a consistent brand image, honest communication, stable service quality, and fair and transparent discount programs are forms of relationship marketing strategies that foster trust, strengthen emotional bonds, and encourage loyal behavior such as repeat purchases and word-of-mouth recommendations. Thus, the research findings support that the success of building loyalty cannot be separated from long-term relationship management, where brand image, discount policies, and customer trust complement each other within the relationship marketing framework.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that brand image and discount strategies influence customer loyalty both directly and indirectly through customer trust, with trust emerging as the most dominant factor in shaping sustainable loyalty. These findings indicate that customer loyalty in online food delivery services is not driven merely by short-term price incentives, but is primarily formed through trust-based relationships and positive brand identification. The results support Social Identity Theory by showing that a strong brand image fosters a sense of belonging that enhances trust and loyalty, as well as Relationship Marketing Theory, which emphasizes trust as a central foundation for long-term customer relationships.

From a practical perspective, Shopee Food should balance functional strategies such as discounts with relational approaches that strengthen trust, including consistent service quality, transparent promotions, and brand communication that emphasizes shared values and customer connection. This integrated approach is expected to be more effective in building long-term loyalty than reliance on promotional incentives alone. Future research may expand the model by incorporating additional psychological variables or applying the framework to different service contexts and customer segments to further examine the stability of trust as a key mediating mechanism.

Limitation

Methodologically, the research data is cross-sectional from a questionnaire survey, so it only captures relationships at a single point in time and cannot prove true causality or the dynamics of change over time. The model only includes three independent variables (brand image, discount giving, customer trust), so the R^2 of loyalty may not explain significant variance, leaving room for other variables such as satisfaction, brand love, or perceived value. Further research is recommended using longitudinal designs, larger and more diverse samples, or mixed methods to validate causality and reduce bias.

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