

ANALYSIS OF BRAND IMAGE, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND VALUE PERCEPTION ON CONSUMER LOYALTY MEDIATED BY CONSUMER PREFERENCE FOR HEALTHY INSTANT NOODLE PRODUCTS

Sigma Prayitno Putri^{1a*}, Rina Sulistiyani^{2b}, Bambang Raditya Purnomo^{3c}

¹⁻³Master of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Dr. Soetomo, Surabaya, Indonesia

^aE-mail: sigma.putri8815@gmail.com

(*) Corresponding Author

sigma.putri8815@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of brand image, social media, and value perception on consumer preference and loyalty toward healthy instant noodles. While previous research has discussed these factors, few have explored the mediating mechanism of preference in the context of healthy products in Indonesia. The sample consisted of 172 parents and members of the Muhammadiyah 24 Surabaya Elementary School Committee, aged over 18 years, who had consumed the product at least twice, selected through purposive sampling. Analysis using SEM-PLS was conducted to test the direct and indirect effects among the variables. The results indicate that brand image, social media, and value perception have a positive and significant influence on consumer preference. However, brand image and value perception do not have a significant direct effect on loyalty. Consumer preference is proven to positively and significantly mediate the influence of all three variables on loyalty. These findings emphasize that marketing strategies focusing on strengthening preference through brand image enhancement, social media interaction, and improving product value perception can indirectly boost consumer loyalty. This study provides a scientific contribution by identifying the mediating mechanism of preference and practical implications for developing marketing strategies for healthy products.

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer loyalty is a primary goal for companies, especially in the era of Industry 4.0 digitalization, characterized by increasingly intense and dynamic business competition. In a hypercompetitive market environment, companies are required to possess the ability to understand consumer preferences in order to survive and thrive. The shift in marketing approach toward a customer-driven concept emphasizes value creation, where consumers and competitors are interconnected and inseparable elements. A company's inability to recognize consumer needs, wants, and interests can potentially lead to less effective marketing strategies and negatively impact company performance.

The study of consumer behavior serves as an important foundation for understanding how consumers select, purchase, use, and evaluate products to meet their needs. Consumer behavior studies assist marketing managers in designing marketing mixes, market segmentation, product differentiation, and marketing research development, while also providing information on consumer orientation and human behavioral patterns in purchase decision-making (Zusrony, 2020). Understanding this behavior is relevant for building loyalty, as loyalty reflects a consumer's commitment to consistently make repeat purchases and demonstrates resistance to the appeal of competing brands.

Consumer loyalty is closely linked to the preferences consumers hold for a product or brand (Megananda & Sanaji, 2021). Consumer preference refers to the tendency of choice based on product attributes, quality, price, benefits, and design that are perceived to align with consumer needs and expectations. Consumers with strong preferences tend to be less likely to switch to other products even when presented with promotions for new ones. Hence, understanding consumer preferences is crucial for companies to accurately develop and market products and reduce the risk of new product failure (Kusumaningrum et al., 2021).

Beyond preference, brand image also plays a vital role in shaping consumer loyalty. Brand image is the perception formed by consumers through experiences, interactions, communication, and received information, creating specific associations in the consumer's mind. Brand image serves as a differentiating identity that helps consumers recognize and distinguish a brand from competitors (Wandasari et al., 2020). Brands with a strong image aligned with consumer values tend to build emotional connections, enhance trust, and strengthen consumer preference and loyalty (Layarda & Achmadi, 2024; Megananda & Sanaji, 2021). Measuring brand image for food products can be done through indicators of brand association strength, uniqueness, and superiority (Almindo & Wahyuningsih, 2023).

The development of digital technology also strengthens the role of social media as a strategic marketing tool. Companies utilize social media to build interactions, communicate product information, and enhance brand awareness, impacting sales growth (Nabilah & Hasanah, 2021). Social media also functions as a space for forming digital social networks, enabling interactions, information sharing, and the creation of virtual relationships between consumers and brands (Sihotang et al., 2022). Consumers who actively follow product developments through social media tend to seek information regarding promotions or special offers, thereby increasing their tendency to repurchase (Effendy et al., 2021). Furthermore, positive reviews and recommendations from social media users have a high level of trustworthiness and influence consumer preferences (Angeline & Kusumo, 2024). The effectiveness of social media in marketing food products can be measured through indicators such as interaction, content sharing, accessibility, and reach (Mustapa et al., 2022).

Another factor influencing consumer preference and loyalty is perceived value. Perceived value is a consumer's overall assessment of a product's benefits by comparing what is gained with what is sacrificed, reflecting the level of consumer trust in the product's relative value compared to the cost incurred. Consumers tend to choose products that offer benefits commensurate with the price paid, especially when product quality is relatively equal to other more expensive products. Positive perceived value encourages repeat purchases and indicates a product's success in building consumer loyalty (Laksono & Suryadi, 2020).

The development of healthy instant noodle products creates different consumer behavior dynamics compared to conventional instant foods, as consumption decisions are driven not only by convenience but also by health considerations and the product's functional value. In marketing literature, brand image, social media marketing, and perceived value are often used to explain the formation of consumer loyalty (Holmlund et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2020). However, these relationships are generally analyzed directly without unpacking the evaluative processes occurring at the consumer level. In the context of healthy food, research often emphasizes attitudes and purchase intentions (Alam et al., 2022; Ammann et al., 2020), while consumer preference tends to be positioned as an independent or descriptive variable, rather than as a mediating mechanism. Yet, preference plays a crucial role in bridging perceived value, brand image, and social media exposure toward long-term loyalty (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024). Furthermore, studies integrating brand image, social media, and value perception within a single mediation framework for healthy instant noodle products are still very limited, especially in developing markets (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024). Therefore, the

novelty of this study lies in testing the mediating role of consumer preference in explaining the formation of consumer loyalty within the context of healthy instant foods.

In the context of food products, especially healthy instant noodles, the aspects of brand image, social media marketing, and perceived value become increasingly relevant. Healthy instant noodle products like Lemonilo, Ayumie, and Mie Sedap Baked are present as practical food alternatives emphasizing health aspects compared to conventional instant noodles. Their relatively lower sodium content and production processes using baking methods reflect producers' efforts to pay attention to food quality and safety. Preliminary observations of consumers show a tendency for preference toward healthy instant noodles, primarily due to considerations of nutritional content and production processes perceived as safer. Based on these conditions, this study examines consumer preference and loyalty toward healthy instant noodles, focusing on the roles of brand image, marketing through social media, and perceived value as experienced by consumers.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a population of Committee and Student Mothers (*Bunda Siswa*) of Muhammadiyah 24 Surabaya Elementary School totaling 502 people. Research samples were taken using Purposive Sampling technique through the Malhotra formula, which calculates the number of samples with the formula $5 \times$ number of indicators, so the minimum sample size used in this research is 5×20 indicators = 100 respondents (Hasanah et al., 2021). Respondents were selected based on specific criteria, namely being at least 20 years old, having consumed healthy instant noodles from various brands at least twice, and being a member of the school committee or a parent of a student at SD Muhammadiyah 24 Surabaya.

The selection of SD Muhammadiyah 24 Surabaya as the research site was based on academic considerations, namely the active involvement of students' mothers in household consumption decision-making, particularly concerning the selection of food products. Therefore, this location is relevant for studying consumer behavior towards healthy instant noodles. From a research ethics perspective, respondents were first provided with an explanation regarding the research purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and a guarantee of data confidentiality. Respondent consent (informed consent) was obtained before the questionnaire was filled out, and this research did not collect respondents' personal identities.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. Each variable was measured using several indicators adapted from previous studies to ensure the valid and reliable representation of the research constructs. The data analysis technique employed was Structural Equation Modeling using the Partial Least Squares approach (SEM-PLS). This method allows for the simultaneous testing of direct and indirect relationships among variables to prove the research hypotheses (Sholiha & Salamah, 2015).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Demographics

After distributing questionnaires to Committee and Student Mothers of Muhammadiyah 24 Surabaya Elementary School, 172 respondents were obtained with demographics as follows:

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Mother's Age		
18 - 25 years	7	4.1%
26 - 35 years	17	9.9%
36 - 45 years	89	51.7%
More than 45 years	59	34.3%
Latest Education		
SMA/SMK (High School)	49	28.5%
D3/D4/S1	120	69.8%

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
S2 / S3	3	1.7%
Mother's Occupation		
Housewife	57	33.1%
Private Employee	54	31.4%
Entrepreneur / Business Owner	30	17.4%
Civil Servant / Military / Police	9	5.2%
Professional (Lecturer, Medical Personnel, etc.)	22	12.9%
Healthy Instant Noodle Brand Consumed		
Lemonilo	86	50%
Ayumie	21	12.2%
Mie Sedap Baked	65	37.8%
Time of Consuming Healthy Instant Noodles		
When no time to cook	29	16.9%
During night time or midnight hunger	23	13.4%
When feeling very tired, stressed, and need "me time"	54	31.4%
When approaching menstruation (pre-menstruation)	15	8.8%
When not feeling well	51	29.5%
Social Media for Healthy Instant Noodle Ads		
Facebook	21	12.2%
Instagram	104	60.5%
TikTok	43	25%
Twitter	4	2.3%

Source: Respondents, 2024

Respondent demographics in table 1 show that the majority of respondents consuming healthy instant noodles are in the age range of 36 - 45 years (51.7%), with latest education D3/D4/S1 (69.8%), and working as Housewives (33.1%). The most consumed healthy instant noodle brand is Lemonilo (50%) and its advertisements are often seen on Instagram social media (60.5%). Respondents more often consume healthy instant noodles when feeling tired, stressed, and need "me time" (31.4%). The appearance of healthy instant noodle advertisements is often seen in media.

Construct Validity

This model is used to see construct values related to indicators in each variable through Outer Loading values and ensures all values are greater than 0.6 (Sholiha & Salamah, 2015).

Table 2. Outer Loading

Indicator	Brand Image (X1)	Social Media (X2)	Value Perception (X3)	Consumer Preference (Z)	Consumer Loyalty (Y)
CM.1	0.891				
CM.2	0.784				
CM.3	0.877				
CM.4	0.846				
CM.5	0.819				
SM.1		0.860			
SM.2		0.851			
SM.3		0.881			
SM.4		0.858			
PN.1			0.932		

Indicator	Brand Image (X1)	Social Media (X2)	Value Perception (X3)	Consumer Preference (Z)	Consumer Loyalty (Y)
PN.2			0.949		
PK.1				0.908	
PK.2				0.879	
PK.3				0.931	
PK.4				0.892	
PK.5				0.853	
LK.1					0.839
LK.2					0.858
LK.3					0.902
LK.4					0.889

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The outer loading results in the construct validity model are all greater than 0.6 so all indicators in each variable are valid or legitimate to be used in research.

Discriminant Validity

This model is used to compare each value in Cross Loading by looking at diagonal construct values larger than construct values below the diagonal to ensure no similarities are found between independent variables (Sholihah & Salamah, 2015).

Table 3. Cross Loading

Indicator	Brand Image (X1)	Social Media (X2)	Value Perception (X3)	Consumer Preference (Z)	Consumer Loyalty (Y)
CM.1	0.891	0.623	0.635	0.684	0.669
CM.2	0.784	0.568	0.500	0.570	0.521
CM.3	0.877	0.656	0.661	0.779	0.729
CM.4	0.846	0.561	0.681	0.709	0.618
CM.5	0.819	0.594	0.583	0.634	0.546
SM.1	0.580	0.860	0.501	0.584	0.603
SM.2	0.595	0.851	0.403	0.520	0.564
SM.3	0.611	0.881	0.607	0.668	0.622
SM.4	0.668	0.858	0.624	0.646	0.582
PN.1	0.639	0.527	0.932	0.737	0.627
PN.2	0.728	0.640	0.949	0.828	0.741
PK.1	0.743	0.646	0.700	0.908	0.756
PK.2	0.705	0.605	0.757	0.879	0.689
PK.3	0.759	0.648	0.787	0.931	0.789
PK.4	0.744	0.610	0.812	0.892	0.745
PK.5	0.640	0.642	0.661	0.853	0.752
LK.1	0.674	0.660	0.553	0.693	0.839
LK.2	0.579	0.513	0.632	0.697	0.858
LK.3	0.628	0.605	0.632	0.750	0.902
LK.4	0.685	0.618	0.726	0.771	0.889

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The cross loading results in the discriminant validity model all have diagonal construct values larger than construct values below the diagonal, so no similarities are found between independent variables and all indicators in each variable are valid or legitimate to be used in research.

Composite Reliability

This model is used to ensure each instrument in indicators is consistent through Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha values greater than or equal to 0.6 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) greater than or equal to 0.5 (Sholiha & Salamah, 2015).

Table 4. Composite Reliability

Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Brand Image (X1)	0.899	0.909	0.925	0.713
Social Media (X2)	0.885	0.889	0.921	0.744
Value Perception (X3)	0.870	0.882	0.939	0.884
Consumer Preference (Z)	0.936	0.939	0.952	0.797
Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.895	0.898	0.927	0.761

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The Composite Reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha results for each variable are greater than or equal to 0.6 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is also greater than or equal to 0.5, so all variables are reliable or suitable to be used in research.

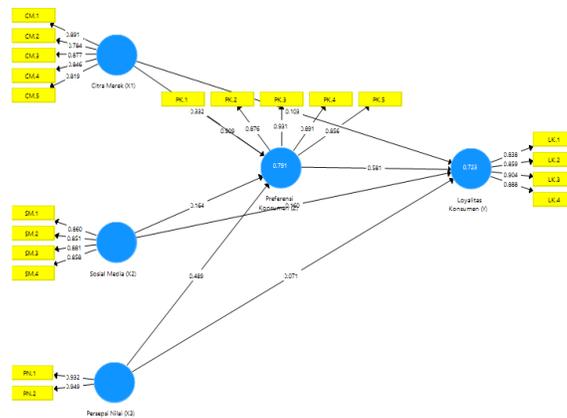


Figure 1. Inner Model

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

R-Square

This model is used to explain the magnitude of relationships formed between independent variables and mediating variables to become causes of changes in dependent variables. If the R Square value exceeds 50% then the relationship formed is strong or good, but if less than 50% then the relationship formed is weak or not good (Sholiha & Salamah, 2015).

Table 5. R-Square

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Consumer Preference (Z)	0.791	0.787
Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.723	0.717

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The consumer preference variable has an R-Square value of 0.791, meaning brand image, social media, and value perception simultaneously can influence consumer preference up to 79.1%. The influence formed between brand image, social media, and value perception on consumer preference is strong because it has a value exceeding 50%. The consumer loyalty variable has an R-Square value of 0.723, meaning brand image, social media, value perception, and consumer preference simultaneously can influence consumer loyalty up to 72.3%. The influence formed between brand image, social media, value perception, and consumer preference on consumer loyalty is strong because it has a value exceeding 50%.

F-Square

This model is used to assess the magnitude of the influence of independent variables and mediating variables on dependent variables. If the F Square value is less than or equal to 0.02 then the influence is small, if the F Square value is 0.03 - 0.15 then the influence is medium (moderate), but if the F Square value exceeds 0.15 then the influence is large (Sholiha & Salamah, 2015).

Table 6. F-Square

Variable	Consumer Preference (Z)	Consumer Loyalty (Y)
Brand Image (X1)	0.189	0.012
Social Media (X2)	0.060	0.041
Value Perception (X3)	0.509	0.005
Consumer Preference (Z)	-	0.256

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

F-Square values for each variable are as follows:

1. The brand image variable on consumer preference has an F-Square value of 0.189 which is greater than 0.15, meaning brand image has a large influence on the formation of consumer preference.
2. The social media variable on consumer preference has an F-Square value of 0.060 which is between 0.03 – 0.15, meaning social media has a moderate influence on the formation of consumer preference.
3. The value perception variable on consumer preference has an F-Square value of 0.509 which is greater than 0.15, meaning value perception has a large influence on the formation of consumer preference.
4. The brand image variable on consumer loyalty has an F-Square value of 0.012 which is less than 0.02, meaning brand image has a small influence on the formation of consumer loyalty.
5. The social media variable on consumer loyalty has an F-Square value of 0.041 which is between 0.03 – 0.15, meaning social media has a moderate influence on the formation of consumer loyalty.
6. The value perception variable on consumer loyalty has an F-Square value of 0.005 which is less than 0.02, meaning value perception has a small influence on the formation of consumer loyalty.
7. The consumer preference variable on consumer loyalty has an F-Square value of 0.256 which is greater than 0.15, meaning consumer preference has a large influence on the formation of consumer loyalty.

Q-Square

This model is used for relevance of relationships between independent variables and mediating variables on dependent variables. If the Q Square value exceeds 0 then the relationship formed is relevant, but if less than 0 then the relationship is not relevant (Sholiha & Salamah, 2015).

Table 7. Q-Square

Variable	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Consumer Preference (Z)	860.000	325.802	0.621
Consumer Loyalty (Y)	688.000	315.521	0.541

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

Q-Square values for each variable are as follows:

1. The consumer preference variable has a Q-Square value of 0.621 which is greater than 0, meaning the relationship formed between brand image, social media, and value perception on consumer preference is relevant.
2. The consumer loyalty variable has a Q-Square value of 0.541 which is greater than 0, meaning the relationship formed between brand image, social media, value perception, and consumer preference on consumer loyalty is relevant.

Path Coefficient

Hypothesis testing with path coefficient is used to test direct influence between two variables.

1) The Influence of Brand Image on Consumer Preference

Table 8. Hypothesis Test of Brand Image on Consumer Preference

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Brand Image (X1) -> Consumer Preference (Z)	0.332	0.332	0.071	4.685	0.000

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The test results indicate that brand image has a positive and significant influence on consumer preference. This finding is align with the research by Megananda and Sanaji (2021), which affirms that brand image plays a crucial role in shaping consumer choice tendencies. Conceptually, brand image functions as a quality signal that assists consumers in evaluating products, particularly within food product categories closely tied to health and safety aspects. A strong brand image can build consumer trust as the brand is perceived to represent consistent quality, reliability, and product credibility. In the context of healthy instant noodles, the perception that the product can be consumed by various social strata reflects a brand image that is inclusive and universal. This perception reduces consumers' perceived risk and strengthens the belief that the product is safe and suitable for widespread consumption, regardless of social or economic background.

However, the influence of brand image on consumer preference does not automatically translate into the formation of loyalty. Theoretically, loyalty develops through repeated consumption experiences and long-term evaluations, whereas brand image plays a more dominant role in the initial stages of the decision-making process. This indicates that brand image functions as a trigger for initial preference, while consumer loyalty is likely more influenced by other factors such as satisfaction, actual experiences, and the long-term consistency of perceived value.

2) The Influence of Social Media on Consumer Preference

Table 9. Hypothesis Test of Social Media on Consumer Preference

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Social Media (X2) -> Consumer Preference (Z)	0.164	0.165	0.057	2.893	0.004

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The results show that social media has a positive and significant influence on consumer preference. This finding confirms that social media serves as a primary source of information shaping consumers' initial evaluation of a product. This result aligns with Angeline & Kusumo (2024) who reports that interactions and content on social media can influence consumer preference through the process of shaping perception and trust.

Conceptually, the influence of social media on consumer preference can be explained through the theories of social proof and information credibility. Positive reviews, user recommendations, and shared real-life experiences on social media are perceived as more authentic compared to conventional marketing communications. This strengthens consumers' belief that the information received is relevant, honest, and corresponds to the actual product condition, thereby encouraging the formation of preference towards the consumed healthy instant noodle product. Conversely, the non-significant direct influence of brand image and value perception on consumer loyalty can be understood because both variables are evaluative in nature over the medium to long term. Loyalty is not formed solely based on brand image or value perception; it requires consistent repeated consumption experiences and actual satisfaction. In this context, social media functions more as an initial trigger for preference, while loyalty only develops after consumers directly experience the product's benefits. This finding implies that consumer preference acts as an intervening variable that bridges the influence of perceptual factors towards loyalty.

3) The Influence of Value Perception on Consumer Preference

Table 10. Hypothesis Test of Value Perception on Consumer Preference

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Value Perception (X3) -> Consumer Preference (Z)	0.489	0.488	0.077	6.364	0.000

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The results of the third hypothesis test show that perceived value has a positive and significant influence on consumer preference. This finding is similar with previous works (Chen et al., 2025; Permatasari & Jaelani, 2021), which affirm that perceived value is an important determinant in the formation of preference. Conceptually, perceived value reflects the consumer's evaluation of the balance between the benefits received and the sacrifices made, particularly concerning price, quality, and the product's functional benefits.

In the context of healthy instant noodles, a perceived competitive and affordable price strengthens consumers' belief that the product offers good value for money. Consumers tend to choose products that can deliver health benefits and material quality commensurate with the cost incurred, especially when the price difference with conventional products is not too significant. This explains why an increase in perceived value directly drives consumer preference for the product. Yet, this finding also indicates that perceived value, along with brand image, does not automatically lead to consumer loyalty. Theoretically, loyalty is a long-term behavioral construct influenced not only by rational evaluations like value and image but also by repeated consumption experiences, satisfaction, and emotional attachment. Thus, perceived value and brand image play a more significant role as initial triggers for the formation of preference, which subsequently needs to be mediated by satisfaction or positive experiences to evolve into loyalty. This finding reinforces the view that consumer loyalty is not formed instantly but rather through a gradual process from cognitive to affective and finally to behavioral.

4) The Influence of Brand Image on Consumer Loyalty

Table 11. Hypothesis Test of Brand Image on Consumer Loyalty

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Brand Image (X1) -> Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.103	0.113	0.079	1.300	0.194

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The test of the fourth hypothesis indicates that brand image does not have a significant effect on consumer loyalty. This finding aligns with Tahir et al. (2024) who explain that for low-involvement products, brand image plays a greater role in the introduction and initial purchase decision stages, rather than in building long-term loyalty. However, this result differs from Chen et al. (2025) who found that brand image can drive loyalty when consumers have strong emotional involvement and brand experience. This discrepancy suggests that the influence of brand image on loyalty is contextual and influenced by product characteristics and consumption patterns.

Conceptually, consumer loyalty is not formed merely from the perception of brand image, but through an ongoing evaluation process of consumption experiences, satisfaction, and consistently perceived functional and emotional value (Abbas, 2023). In the context of healthy instant noodles, the low familiarity with specific brands and situational repurchase patterns indicate that repeat purchases are more driven by practical needs and product availability, rather than strong brand attachment. This reinforces the perspective that brand image primarily functions as an enabler for initial decisions, while loyalty requires the involvement of other variables, such as brand experience and perceived value, as key mediators.

5) The Influence of Social Media on Consumer Loyalty

Table 12. Hypothesis Test of Social Media on Consumer Loyalty

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Social Media (X2) -> Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.160	0.158	0.066	2.419	0.016

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The results of the fifth hypothesis test show that social media has a positive and significant influence on consumer loyalty. This finding aligns with Effendy et al. (2021) who assert that social media serves as a strategic tool for building a sustainable relationship between brands and consumers. Conceptually, social media functions not only as an information channel but also as a two-way interaction medium that allows companies to convey brand value, build emotional closeness, and encourage ongoing consumer engagement. Consistent intensity and quality of communication through social media expose consumers more to product updates, promotions, and other brand activities, which ultimately strengthens their tendency to make repeat purchases.

In the context of healthy instant noodle products, social media has become a crucial tool for maintaining brand visibility amidst increasingly fierce competition. The ease of access to relevant content helps consumers quickly obtain product information, thereby strengthening brand recall and creating positive experiences that foster loyalty. Furthermore, continuous communication through social media enables companies to more responsively understand consumer needs and preferences, which impacts product competitiveness.

This finding also explains why brand image and value perception do not directly affect consumer loyalty. In low-involvement product categories like instant noodles, brand image and value perception tend not to be strong enough to directly drive loyalty without the stimulus of ongoing interaction. Social media acts as a connecting variable that activates that brand image and value through repeated communication, experiences, and engagement. Thus, consumer loyalty is formed more through the dynamic process of interaction on social media than through static perceptions of the brand or product value.

6) The Influence of Value Perception on Consumer Loyalty

Table 13. Hypothesis Test of Value Perception on Consumer Loyalty

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
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Value Perception (X3) -> Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.071	0.063	0.094	0.750	0.453
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Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The test of the sixth hypothesis shows that perceived value does not have a significant influence on consumer loyalty. This finding aligns with the research by Wibowo & Rahayu (2021). Theoretically, perceived value is considered one of the factors that can foster loyalty, as consumers tend to make repeat purchases when they feel the product's benefits are commensurate with the sacrifices made. However, in the context of this study, perceived value has not been able to become a primary driver of long-term loyalty. This indicates that the perceived match between price and quality only meets basic expectations (functional value) but is not strong enough to create an emotional attachment to the brand.

This result suggests that consumer loyalty toward healthy instant noodle products is not formed solely by rational considerations of price and quality. Consumers are likely more influenced by other factors, such as consumption habits, product availability, or the influence of competing brands, meaning perceived value is not directly translated into loyalty. Therefore, perceived value that is generic and does not offer a distinctive advantage tends to only result in momentary satisfaction, not sustainable loyalty. In terms of implications, this finding reinforces the view that building consumer loyalty requires value that is not only functional but also symbolic and emotional, so that consumers feel a stronger bond with the brand.

7) The Influence of Consumer Preference on Consumer Loyalty

Table 14. Hypothesis Test of Consumer Preference on Consumer Loyalty

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Consumer Preference (Z) -> Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.581	0.584	0.098	5.953	0.000

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

Consumer preference has a positive and significant influence on consumer loyalty. This finding supports the research of Christianti & Hasanah (2025) and Dini et al. (2025) which affirm that preference formed through actual consumption experiences plays a dominant role in sustaining consumer loyalty. A strong preference reflects positive and repeated evaluations of a product, thereby encouraging consumers to maintain their choice over the long term.

Conceptually, consumer preference is the result of integrating rational assessments of product attributes with affective responses developed from usage experiences. When price, quality, and product attributes consistently align with consumer needs, preference becomes increasingly stable and serves as the primary foundation for loyalty. This indicates that loyalty is more determined by internalized consumption experiences rather than merely by initial perceptions.

This finding also explains why brand image and perceived value do not have a direct effect on loyalty. Research by Zhi & Ha (2024) states that brand image and perceived value generally play a role in the formation of attitudes and purchase intentions, but their influence on loyalty is indirect. Without the reinforcement of preference through actual experiences, consumers are more susceptible to influence from alternatives, including advertisements for new products. In the context of healthy instant noodles, the alignment between price, quality, and product benefits strengthens consumer preference, leading them to remain loyal despite exposure to promotions from other brands.

Theoretically, these research results confirm that consumer preference functions as a key mechanism bridging brand and value perceptions with long-term loyalty. Consequently, marketing strategies should not only emphasize brand image building but also ensure consistency in quality and the relevance of product attributes so that consumer preference can be formed and sustained.

Specific Indirect Effect

Hypothesis testing with specific indirect effect is used to test indirect influence between two variables through mediating variables.

1) The Influence of Brand Image on Consumer Loyalty Mediated by Consumer Preference

Table 15. Hypothesis Test of Brand Image on Consumer Loyalty Mediated by Consumer Preference

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Brand Image (X1) -> Consumer Preference (Z) -> Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.193	0.193	0.050	3.860	0.000

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The results of the eighth hypothesis test show that brand image has a positive influence on consumer loyalty through consumer preference as a mediating variable. This finding confirms that brand image does not directly drive loyalty; rather, it first shapes consumer preference, which then develops into loyalty. Therefore, consumer preference serves as a crucial psychological mechanism that bridges the influence of brand image on loyalty.

This finding aligns with previous research (Fernando & Mayliza, 2019; Megananda & Sanaji, 2021), which state that brand image influences how consumers evaluate and favor a product, and this preference ultimately determines loyalty. The novel contribution of this research lies in affirming the mediating role of consumer preference, indicating that loyalty is not merely the result of a positive brand perception but also stems from a repeated process of evaluation and selection based on the product's alignment with consumer needs. Theoretically, this result can be explained from a consumer behavior perspective, which posits that loyalty is an advanced stage following the establishment of stable consumer preference. Brand image builds trust and quality perception, but loyalty only forms when consumers experience a consistent match in value, benefits, and consumption experiences. This explains why brand image and perceived value do not always directly influence loyalty without first establishing preference.

In the context of healthy instant noodles, the majority of respondents view this product as universal and consumable by various social strata. This perception strengthens consumers' confidence in the product's safety and quality standards, thereby fostering a strong preference. Additionally, the alignment between price, quality, and product characteristics makes consumers feel comfortable and confident to consistently choose the same product, even when other brand alternatives are available in the market. This stable preference ultimately reinforces consumer loyalty. The theoretical implication of this finding is that marketing strategies should not focus solely on building brand image; they must also be directed toward strengthening consumer preference through product experience, value alignment, and benefit relevance. Hence, consumer loyalty can be built sustainably through a deeper psychological process, not merely through brand perception alone.

2) The Influence of Social Media on Consumer Loyalty Mediated by Consumer Preference

Table 16. Hypothesis Test of Social Media on Consumer Loyalty Mediated by Consumer Preference

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Social Media (X2) -> Consumer Preference (Z) -> Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.095	0.096	0.037	2.598	0.010

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The results of the ninth hypothesis test show that social media has a positive and significant influence on consumer loyalty through the mediation of consumer preference. This finding confirms that the role of social media in building loyalty is not direct; rather, it works by first shaping consumer preference. This result aligns with previous research (Angeline & Kusumo, 2024; Fernando & Mayliza, 2019), which state that social media influences consumer preference, and this preference subsequently drives the formation of loyalty. Thus, this research provides novelty by positioning consumer preference as the primary psychological mechanism that bridges the influence of social media on loyalty.

Conceptually, consumer preference functions as a relatively stable internal evaluation of a brand, formed through experiences, information, and social interactions, particularly on social media. Positive reviews, user recommendations, and authentic shared experiences on social media increase consumer trust in a product, thereby strengthening their tendency to choose and continue using that brand. Strong preference then reduces consumer attention to alternative brands and encourages repeat purchasing behavior.

This finding can also explain why brand image and perceived value do not directly influence consumer loyalty. In the context of healthy instant noodles, brand image and perceived value tend to be perceived as basic attributes that are relatively homogeneous across brands, making them insufficiently strong to directly create loyalty. Loyalty only forms when that brand image and perceived value are internalized into consistent personal preference. In other words, brand image and perceived value play a greater role as factors shaping preference, not as direct drivers of loyalty.

The respondents' perception that social media content about healthy instant noodles is credible, relevant, and aligned with actual consumption experiences further strengthens that preference. This condition encourages consumers to stick with their choice and not easily switch to other brands, even when exposed to advertisements for new products. This finding provides a theoretical implication that consumer loyalty in the context of functional products is determined not only by image and value alone but by the brand's ability to build consistent preference through informative and trustworthy social media communication.

3) The Influence of Value Perception on Consumer Loyalty Mediated by Consumer Preference

Table 17. Hypothesis Test of Value Perception on Consumer Loyalty Mediated by Consumer Preference

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Value Perception (X3) -> Consumer Preference (Z) -> Consumer Loyalty (Y)	0.284	0.286	0.072	3.941	0.000

Source: SmartPLS Data Processing, 2024

The test of the tenth hypothesis shows that perceived value positively influences consumer loyalty through consumer preference as a mediating variable. This finding confirms that perceived value does not automatically drive loyalty; rather, it first shapes preference before ultimately being reflected in loyal behavior. This result aligns with Fernando & Mayliza (2019), who state that perceived value influences consumer preference, and this preference serves as the primary psychological mechanism in forming loyalty. Thus, this research expands upon previous findings by positioning consumer preference as the mediating pathway that explains the relationship between perceived value and loyalty.

Theoretically, this finding can be explained through a consumer behavior perspective, which posits that loyalty is the result of a repeated evaluative process, not merely a direct response to perceived value or brand image. Perceived value, particularly regarding price and benefits, functions more as an initial cognitive stimulus influencing consumer judgment and choice. Consumer preference then acts as an evaluative affective construct that bridges this perception into repeated commitment to a brand or product. This explains why perceived value does not show a direct influence

on loyalty, as loyalty requires a more stable and consistent attachment than mere rational assessment of value (Angeline & Kusumo, 2024).

In the context of healthy instant noodles, consumers perceive that a competitive price commensurate with health benefits and material quality forms a strong preference for the product. This preference makes consumers more selective and reduces their attention to alternative brands, thereby encouraging repeat purchases and loyalty. In other words, consumer loyalty is not built solely by perceived value, but by preference formed consistently through repeated experiences and evaluations. This finding carries the theoretical implication that marketing strategies should not only emphasize value creation but should also be directed towards strengthening consumer preference as the main prerequisite for building long-term loyalty.

CONCLUSION

The results of the hypothesis tests, both direct (path coefficient) and indirect (specific indirect effect), reveal several key findings regarding consumer preference and loyalty towards healthy instant noodle products. Brand image, social media, and perceived value have been proven to have a positive and significant influence on consumer preference, meaning these three factors play a role in encouraging consumers to choose healthy instant noodles. However, brand image and perceived value do not show a significant direct influence on consumer loyalty, while social media is proven to have a positive and significant direct effect on loyalty. Consumer preference itself has a positive and significant direct influence on loyalty. Further, the indirect effects show that brand image, social media, and perceived value contribute positively and significantly to consumer loyalty through the mediation of consumer preference. This finding implies that consumer preference is the key pathway in shaping loyalty towards healthy instant noodle products.

Theoretically, this research contributes by strengthening and expanding consumer behavior models, particularly in the context of healthy food products, by positioning consumer preference as a crucial mediating variable between marketing factors (brand image, social media, perceived value) and loyalty. This study shed light that consumer loyalty is not always formed directly from perceptions of brand and value but requires a psychological process involving the formation of preference first. Thus, this research enriches the literature on consumer behavior and brand loyalty with empirical evidence that consumer preference serves as the primary connecting mechanism in the healthy product market.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that producers of healthy instant noodles, such as Lemonilo, Ayumie, and Mie Sedap Baked, continuously strengthen their brand image by emphasizing health benefits, ingredient quality, and consumption safety to shape consumer preference aligned with a healthy lifestyle. Additionally, consistent and interactive social media management through educational content, user testimonials, promotions, and engagement programs like giveaways or digital campaigns is highly recommended to enhance consumer emotional closeness and encourage repeat purchases. Marketing strategies should also focus on creating sustained positive experiences so that the formed preference can evolve into long-term loyalty. Developing loyalty programs, such as membership, repeat-purchase incentives, or special promotions for loyal customers, is a strategic step to retain consumers amidst the increasingly competitive instant noodle market.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, its scope is limited to healthy instant noodle products and respondents with specific characteristics, meaning the results may not be generalizable to other food product categories. Second, the study employs a quantitative approach with cross-sectional data, thus it cannot capture changes in consumer preference and loyalty over the long term. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the study to other healthy products, utilize longitudinal methods, and incorporate additional variables such as brand trust, health awareness, or cultural factors to gain a more comprehensive understanding of consumer loyalty formation.

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