

Factors Affecting Brand Loyalty of Nunuh International Store

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between product quality, service quality, brand image, consumer satisfaction, and customer loyalty in a clothing store chain in Nunuh, Thailand. The study used a quantitative approach and collected primary data through a structured questionnaire with 390 respondents from four branches. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic information about respondents, and PLS-SEM using of ADANCO (advanced analysis of composite) version 2.3.2 was used to examine the reliability and validity of the construct and the model. The findings showed a positive impact of product quality and brand image on consumer satisfaction and its contribution to customer loyalty. However, service quality and consumer satisfaction were found to be insignificant. These findings highlighted the importance of product quality, brand image, and consumer satisfaction in influencing customer loyalty of the clothing retail industry, providing valuable insights for managers to enhance customer loyalty.

Keywords: *Service Quality, Product Quality, Brand Image, Consumer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty*

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Introduction

One of the standard practices for Muslims is to follow the five pillars of Islam. These are Shahadah's statements of faith in God and the Prophet, praying five times daily, fasting during Ramadan, giving charity, and performing hajj in Mecca, Saudi Arabia (Denny, 2011). Furthermore, Muslims also follow the teachings of the Quran and the prophet Muhammad (Hadiths). According to Quran Chapter 24: 30-31, Muslim women must wear a headscarf or hijab.

In Thailand, there are about 2.5 million Muslim population, which is accountable for 5.4 percent of Thailand's population, and 4,028 mosques in Thailand in 2021. Most Thai Muslims are concentrated in the southern provinces of Songkhla, Satun, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. For the past few years, many Muslim clothing brands have increased their number in Thailand, especially in the southern provinces.

Nunuh International is a Muslim clothing brand in Thailand that was established in 2008. The company positions itself as a high-to-premium brand that offers a wide range of products, such as headscarves, prayer garments, dresses, and accessories. The first branch was established at Narathiwat in 2008; its popularity increased within one year of operation. Since then, Nunuh has expanded to four different locations in Thailand. Which are Yala, Pattani, Central Hatyai, and The Mall Bangkapi Bangkok. The company also provides an online platform via Facebook, Line Official, Tikkok Shop, Shopee, and Lazada. Many competitors offer a variety of products in various price ranges and quality for customers to choose from. According to the Head of Customer Relations, Sunita interview (2021, December 23), there is a total of 7,031 customers registered for membership cards. However, in 2021, 34% of the members are inactive. It indicates that the number of loyal customers has declined. To retain new and existing customers, Nunuh should examine its problems and factors that could affect customer loyalty, which can affect the company's profit in the future.

Furthermore, this research is motivated by limited research on Muslim clothing in Thailand (Yunus, Wahyuningtyas, Willyarto, & Heriyati, 2021; Pollachom, Kongyok, Mueangkaew, Thasrabiab, & Boripis, 2022; Nurlaelawati & Noor, 2024). Also, it is crucial for Nunuh International, the broader Thai Muslim clothing market, and similar businesses in culturally diverse markets to understand their business and customers. This research

investigated the impacts of product quality, service quality, and brand image on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction based on social exchange theory. This study was expected to provide additional valuable knowledge on Muslim clothing studies and actionable guidelines for related businesses and marketers in developing and maintaining customer loyalty to the Muslim clothing business.

Objectives

To examine the impacts of product quality, service quality, and brand image on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction for the Nunuh international stores in southern Thailand based on social exchange theory.

Literature Review

Service Quality

Service quality is essential to company profitability, growth, customer satisfaction, and the company's image or reputation. It is usually used to measure how well the company can deliver a service that could match consumer expectations. Service quality can also be defined as customer perception of product and service toward the company's service excellence (Carvajal, Ruzzi, Nogales, & Moreno, 2011). Most believe service quality results from meeting customer expectations (Lepojević & Đukić, 2018).

Nevertheless, evaluating the service quality is challenging because the services are intangible. However, the SERVQUAL model has been applied to measure service quality. In previous studies in the setting of fashion, apparel, and retail, many used SERVQUAL to measure their service quality, such as the fashion retail studies of Islam, Khadem, and Sayem (2012); Chan and Goh (2019); and Saricam (2022). SERVQUAL was developed in 1988 to measure service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1998). Initially, the SERVQUAL model was developed into ten dimensions and later merged into five dimensions. According to Soteriou and Zenios (1999) and Syafarudin (2021), these five perceived dimensions are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy.

Reliability is the ability to perform the service that is promised to a customer. Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and provide service. Assurance is the

knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence to the customer. Tangibles are the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials. The last dimension is empathy, which is caring and individual attention provided to the customer.

Service quality contributes to consumer satisfaction. When customers consistently experience prompt, customized assistance, their needs are met. (Singh et al., 2023). Some previous studies reveal that service quality has a positive effect on consumer satisfaction, as in the case of Islam et al. (2012); Rahmah, Muslim, Kharnolis, and Khasanah (2019); Tjahjaningshi, Ningsih, and Utomo (2020); Syafarudin (2021); Saricam (2022); Lubis, Marllyah, and Harahap (2023); Mulyadi and Tiorida (2024).

Product Quality

Product quality and consumer satisfaction are two crucial constructs that play a significant role in understanding consumer behavior and loyalty. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2009), product quality is the ability to provide products that meet the customer's needs.

To measure product quality, Garvin (1987) introduces the eight characteristics to define product quality. The following are durability, serviceability, performance, reliability, aesthetics, conformance, perceived quality, and features, which have been adopted by previous research by Pramudita, Gunawan, Ningsih, and Adilah (2022).

Product quality and consumer satisfaction are two crucial constructs that play a significant role in understanding consumer behavior (Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2020). Numerous studies have emphasized the positive impact of product quality on consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty. For instance, Halim, Swasto, Hamid, and Firdaus (2014); Fasha and Madiawati (2019); Wantara and Tambrin (2019); Rua, Saldanha, and Amaral (2020); Samir, Sampurno, and Derriawan (2021); Hasibuan, Lubis, and Syahputra (2022); Arif and Yulianti (2023); and Susilawati, Awliya, and Adella (2024).

Brand Image

In customers' eyes, a good and strong brand can help strengthen the company's competitiveness (Asiyah, 2024) Furthermore, the business can differentiate itself from competitors (Sahi, Devi, Gupta, & Cheng, 2022) and be on top of potential. Brand image can be defined as the impression made on a customer's mind about the company (Barich & Kotler,

1991) The company can improve its brand image through communication with the customer, such as advertisement, packaging, store visual merchandise, CSR, and word of mouth. The positive relationship between quality and brand image could help increase consumer satisfaction (Ghobehei, Sadeghvaziri, Ebrahimi, & Afshar, 2019)

Brand image and consumer satisfaction are two important factors influencing consumer behavior and significantly shaping consumer loyalty (Ratasuk, 2022). Research has consistently shown that brand image directly and positively influences consumer satisfaction. For example, Abbas, Islam, Hussain, Baqir, and Muhammad (2021) mention connections between brand image and consumer customer loyalty, with consumer satisfaction as a mediating role. Suggested that consumer satisfaction and brand awareness influence the brand image and consumer loyalty.

Similarly, other studies, such as those by Fasha and Madiawati (2019); Tri Cuong (2021); Muis, Sumardiono, Manurung, and Melia (2023); Firdaus, Rosnani, Listiana, Setiawan, and Fitriana (2024); and Hidayatullah, Jannah, and Wahyuningsih (2024) confirmed the positive relationship between brand image and consumer satisfaction. Praja and Haryono (2022) further stated, in their studies of Uniqlo in Solo, that brand image significantly affects customer satisfaction.

Consumer Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction can be defined as individual satisfaction or disappointment based on a comparison of the perceived and expected quality of service or product (Oliver 1981) Satisfaction can occur when consumer expectations are met (Singh et al., 2023) On the contrary, if customer expectation or need is not fulfilled, then the customer is discontent, which leads to a negative brand reputation and reduces the chance of repurchasing in the future.

Consumer satisfaction plays a crucial role in understanding consumer behavior and its impact on various outcomes in the business context. As a mediator, consumer satisfaction helps to explain the relationship between antecedents and consumer-related outcomes, such as loyalty, purchase intentions, and positive word-of-mouth.

Consumer satisfaction acts as a link between the factors that influence consumer experiences and their subsequent behavioral responses. Several theoretical frameworks, including the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1981) and the Customer Satisfaction

Index (Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996) support the mediating role of consumer satisfaction.

Numerous studies have investigated the mediating role of consumer satisfaction in fashion and retail industries, for example, Tjahjaningshi et al. (2020); Hasibuan et al. (2022); Praja & Haryono (2022); and Firdaus et al. (2024) found that consumer satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand image, product quality, and service quality.

Customer Loyalty

Rane, Achari, and Choudhary (2023) stated that customer loyalty is a critical characteristic that leads to a company's success. Consumer loyalty is the tendency of consumers to consistently choose a particular brand, product, or service over others available in the market. Consumer loyalty can be obtained in various forms, such as repeat purchases, positive word of mouth, willingness to pay premium prices, and resistance to switching to competitors. It's a critical aspect of business success, as customers who are satisfied with the products and services they receive are more likely to make repeat purchases in the future (Mansyuri, Iskandar, Mutmainnah, & Hayat, 2024) and typically contribute significantly to a company's revenue.

Much research has consistently supported the notion that consumer satisfaction positively influences consumer loyalty. For example, the study of clothing brands in Indonesia, (Wantara & Tambrin, 2019; Septiano & Sari, 2020; Arif & Yulianti, 2023). Furthermore, in Pakistan, studies by Jamal and Sultan (2021) suggest that consumer satisfaction strongly influences brand loyalty.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET), introduced by George Homans in 1958, explains social behavior as a balance of rewards and costs, with people seeking to maximize benefits and minimize losses (Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2023). Peter Blau expanded on this by emphasizing social rewards like approval and power, and Richard Emerson focused on power dynamics in relationships. SET is used to understand workplace interactions, personal relationships, and social networks, showing that fair exchanges lead to satisfaction and commitment (Ratasuk, 2023). While useful, SET is sometimes criticized for assuming people always act rationally and not fully considering cultural and emotional factors. Despite these critiques, it remains a vital tool for understanding social interactions. SET has often been used in business research to

explain the relationships between businesses and their customers (Ratasuk & Buranasompob, 2021)

Hypothesis Development

As suggested by the social exchange theory that a relationship is developed and maintained as a result of two parties' cost and benefit analysis, customers evaluate their experience with products and services provided by a business they have experienced, as well as their attitudes towards brands to include in their cost and benefit analysis, and as long as benefits perceived exceed costs, they tend to be satisfied with the business as a whole and remain in the relationship with the business for a long time creating loyalty to the business (Ratasuk, 2022). Hence, the following hypotheses were proposed.

- H1: Service quality positively impacts customer satisfaction.
- H2: Product quality positively influences customer satisfaction.
- H3: Brand image positively affects customer satisfaction.
- H4: Customer satisfaction promotes customer loyalty.

Conceptual Framework

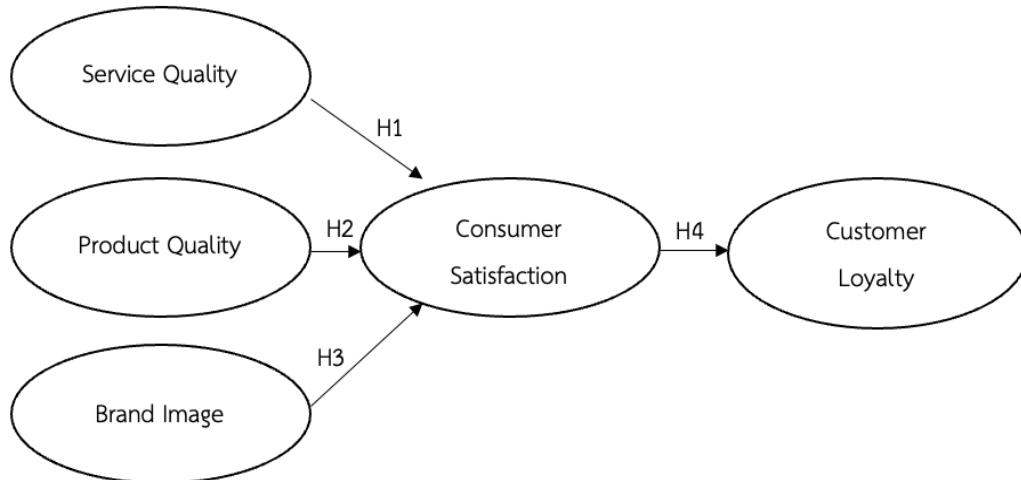


Figure 1 Conceptual framework adopted from Fasha and Madiawati (2019);

Rahman et al. (2019)

Methodology

According to Creswell (2003) a qualitative approach is suitable when the researcher wants to understand the relationship between variables. Therefore, this research aims to examine the relationship between customer loyalty; a quantitative approach was the most appropriate choice.

Population and Samples

The target population of this research is customers of Nunuh's four branches: Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani, and Hatyai. According to the Head of Customer Relations, Sunita interview (2021, December 23), there were a total number of 11,883 consumers who purchased products from July to September 2021. The research sample is Nunuh customers who have purchased Nunuh products from all four branches within the third quarter of 2021. The researcher used Yamane (1973) to find the sample group size from Nunuh customers. Therefore, to ensure a good representation of the sample, quota random sampling was used to target customers with a total of 390 customers. The data collection was conducted in Pattani, 30% (117 questionnaires), Narathiwat, 30% (117 questionnaires), Yala, 30% (117 questionnaires), and Hatyai, 10% (39 questionnaires). Hatyai has been operating with the smallest number of customers for under five years, so the quota is lower than other branches. The researcher went to all stores and asked their customers according to the quota assigned. The data collection took about a month, from October to December 2021.

Research Instruments

There are two parts to the questionnaire. The first part contains questions on the respondents' general information and demographics, such as gender, age, occupation, income, education, shop visit frequency, and length of customer loyalty. The second part contains question sets measuring service quality, product quality, brand image, loyalty, and consumer satisfaction, using the Likert scale to rate the most related statements for respondents. Ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire is translated into Thai so that respondents can understand it fully.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, the researcher used scales adapted from previous studies that show satisfactory levels of validity and reliability. The research also confirmed the quality of the scales by conducting Item-objective congruence

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IOC with experts and professors. After receiving feedback and adjusting the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a pilot test with 30 respondents and checked validity by calculating Cronbach alpha between 0.705 and 0.951, using 24 items, as shown in Table 1. Cronbach alpha can be accepted if it is above 0.7, which proves the questionnaire is reliable.

Table 1 Questionnaires and reliability test

Questionnaire	Item No.	Cronbach Alpha	Adapted from
Service quality	5	0.877	Parasuraman et al. (1998); Amchang, Yekit, and Suraraska (2021); Shrestha (2021)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nunuh always meets their promise within the given time. - You always get your queries or responses from Nunuh employees. - Nunuh staff makes you feel secure when making purchase transactions. - You are impressed with the Nunuh store's visuals and decoration. - You feel that Nunuh pays attention to customers. 			
Product quality	5	0.897	Ling and Mansori (2018); Fasha and Madiawati (2019)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You are satisfied with the quality of the Nunuh product. - Nunuh products are durable and long-lasting. - Nunuh products are more serviceable than those of our competitors. - Nunuh products' designs are easy to wear and use. - Nunuh products have high-quality sewing techniques. 			
Brand image	5	0.705	Aaker (1996); Keller (2003); Robert (2005); Meena (2010)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You are confident when wearing Nunuh products. - When you see this logo, you know it is the Nunuh logo. - When you see this, you know it is Nunuh products. - Nunuh is worth your money. - Nunuh has a good reputation. 			

Table 1 (cont.)

Questionnaire	Item No.	Cronbach Alpha	Adapted from
Loyalty - You are satisfied with the design of Nunuh products. - Nunuh provides excellent service. - You are satisfied with the channel of distribution of Nunuh - You often use Nunuh every day. - You consider Nunuh as your first choice when buying a hijab.	5	0.951	Develop from pretest based on Dehghan and Shahin (2011); Rahman (2014)
Customer satisfaction - You consider yourself a Nunuh fan. - You would continue to buy from Nunuh even if the price increase. - You will continue buying from Nunuh in the future. - You would recommend Nunuh to your friends and family.	4	0.804	Develop from pretest based on Oliver (1981); Rahman (2014)

Data Analysis

There are six parts to the questionnaire. The first part is the respondents' general information, and demographics will be analyzed using descriptive statistics with frequency and percentage. The second and sixth parts will use PLS-SEM using Adanco Advance analysis of composites version 2.3.2 to examine the reliability and validity of the construct and the model.

Results

There are 390 respondents, and the questionnaire result shows that 91.5% of respondents are female, which accounts for 357, while 33 male respondents account for 8.5%. Most respondents fall in the age range of 18 - 25 years old, with 173 respondents, and the least aged group is 56 and above, with 2.8% with 11 respondents. A significant number of the respondents are high school or university students, 41.5% with 162 respondents. Furthermore, many respondents have a monthly income below 10,000 THB (42.3%) while the highest income group of 40,000 and above is only 4.1% with 16 respondents. Also, most respondents

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are regular customers who have visited the shop more than 3 - 4 times a month, with 42.3% and 70.3% of respondents having been Nunuh customers for over two years.

Based on the results in Table 2, The study shows that Hypothesis 1 examines the relationship between service quality and consumer satisfaction, showing a path coefficient of 0.075 with a standard error of 0.032. The beta value of 0.008 suggests a weak positive relationship. However, the associated t-value of 0.941 indicates that this relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is not supported. It is possible that service quality may not be the primary driver of consumer satisfaction for Nunuh customers. Other factors, such as product quality or brand image, may significantly influence consumer satisfaction in the clothing store.

Hypothesis 2 proposes the link between product quality and consumer satisfaction with a path coefficient of 2.484. The standard error is 0.091, and the beta value is 0.226, indicating statistical significance. The corresponding t-value of 2.484 exceeds the critical value, and the p-value of 0.013 is below the significance level. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported, indicating a significant positive relationship between product quality and consumer satisfaction. This finding suggests that higher product quality in the Nunuh International Store increases consumer satisfaction. When customers perceive the products the store offers as high quality, it positively influences their overall satisfaction with their purchases. Furthermore, implementing new product improvements and ensuring consistently high product quality may increase customer satisfaction for Nunuh International Store.

Hypothesis 3 investigates the impact of brand image on consumer satisfaction. The path coefficient is 7.568, with a standard error of 0.080. The beta value 0.606 is marked with three asterisks, indicating a highly significant relationship. The t-value of 7.568 exceeds the critical value, and the p-value is 0.000, providing strong evidence to support Hypothesis 3. This finding highlights the importance of brand image in shaping consumer satisfaction in the Nunuh International Store. A strong and positive brand image, encompassing factors such as reputation, trustworthiness, and perceived value, contributes significantly to higher levels of consumer satisfaction. It suggests that Nunuh International Store should invest in building and maintaining a favorable brand image to enhance customer satisfaction.

Lastly, Hypothesis 4 examines the relationship between consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty. The path coefficient is 25.845, with a standard error of 0.032 and a beta

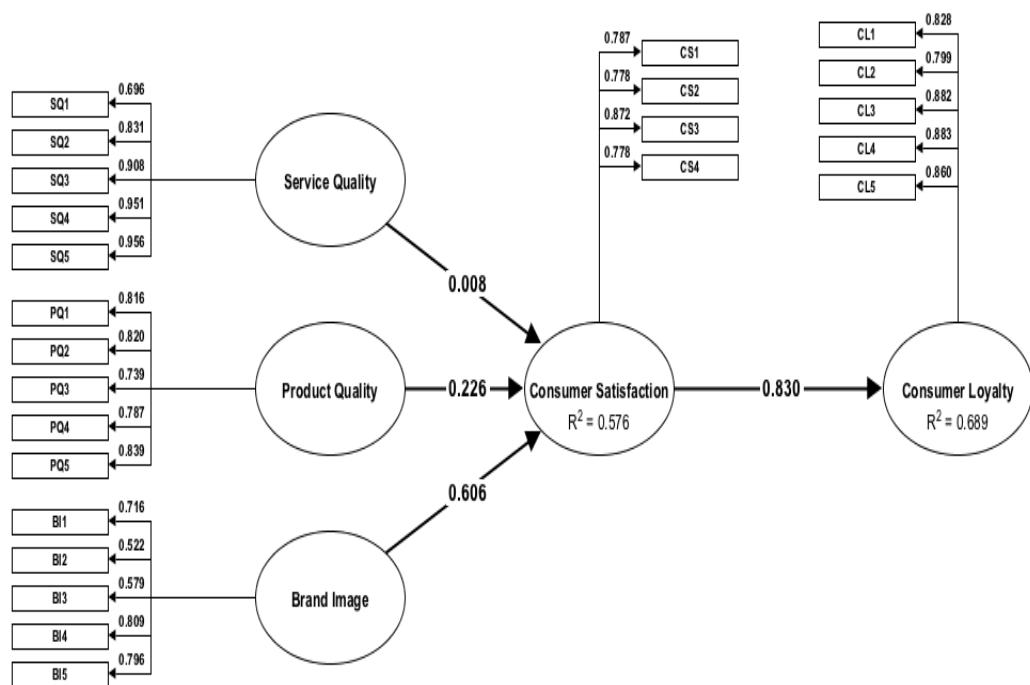
value of 0.830. It indicates a highly significant relationship. The t-value of 25.845 greatly exceeds the critical value, and the p-value is 0.000, providing strong evidence to support Hypothesis 4 as in line with the research of Syafarudin (2021). This indicates that consumer satisfaction plays a significant role in driving consumer loyalty. This finding underlines consumer satisfaction's importance in driving loyalty for the Nunuh International Store. Satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal by engaging in repeat purchases, good word of mouth, and maintaining long-term relationships with the store.

Overall, the results indicate that hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 are supported, suggesting significant positive relationships between product quality, brand image, consumer satisfaction, and consumer loyalty. However, Hypothesis 1, which proposes a relationship between service quality and consumer satisfaction, is not supported based on the lack of statistical significance.

Based on the results presented in Figure 2, there were five constructs and four hypotheses testing service quality, brand image, consumer satisfaction, and consumer loyalty. Figure 2 shows that the R^2 value for consumer satisfaction = 0.576 and consumer loyalty = R^2 0.689. The R^2 value of consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty suggests that approximately 57.6% and 68.9% of the variation can be explained by the independent variables included in the model, such as service quality, product quality, brand image, and consumer satisfaction. Chin (1998) stated that R^2 values are 0.67 (substantial), 0.33 (moderate), and 0.19 (weak). Hence, the results of the study are moderate to substantial.

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**Figure 2** Result for the structural model**Discussion**

The study aimed to understand the relationship between service quality, product quality, brand image, consumer satisfaction, and consumer loyalty in the Nunuh international store. The researcher collected data through a structured questionnaire containing closed questions. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive analysis and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the model's validity and the hypothesized relationships. The sample group consisted of 390 customers who had visited these stores in Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani, and Songkhla. Simple random sampling is used to collect data from respondents, and questionnaires are translated into Thai for better understanding.

The result shows that most of the respondents were female and were in the age range of 18 - 25 years old. A significant number of the respondents are high school or university students with monthly incomes below 10,000 THB. Also, most respondents are regular customers who have visited the shop more than 3 - 4 times a month and have been Nunuh customers for over two years.

In this research, five constructs and four Hypotheses tested service quality, brand image, consumer satisfaction, and consumer loyalty. Out of four hypotheses, there are three significant ones.

Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 suggest significant positive relationships between product quality, brand image, consumer satisfaction, and consumer loyalty. The result is further supported by the findings of Fasha and Madiawati (2019), which is the study of Zara in Indonesia, where product quality and brand image influence consumer satisfaction, and consumer satisfaction can influence consumer loyalty. Moreover, the recent study by Praja and Haryono (2022) on the study of Uniqlo in Solo also supports the finding that brand image and product quality show positive significance to consumer satisfaction.

However, Hypothesis 1, which proposes a relationship between service quality and consumer satisfaction, is not supported by a p-value of more than 0.05. This suggests that while service quality is essential, it may not be the primary driver of consumer satisfaction in Nunuh International Store. Other factors, such as product quality and brand image, may have a stronger influence on consumer satisfaction, which aligns with the research of Mahsyar and Surapati (2020).

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the importance of product quality and brand image in driving consumer satisfaction and loyalty in the Nunuh International Store. While service quality may not directly impact consumer satisfaction, it should not be neglected as it contributes to the overall customer experience. The study emphasizes the need for Nunuh International Store to prioritize product quality and brand image to enhance customer satisfaction, foster loyalty, and maintain a competitive edge in the market.

Recommendation

Recommendations for Applying the Result

The findings of this research paper have significant implications for managers in the clothing retail industry, particularly at Nunuh International Store. These implications can guide managerial decision-making and help shape effective strategies to enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and overall business performance.

There is a need for Nunuh International Store to focus on product quality. The study reveals that product quality has a strong positive influence on consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, managers should prioritize investments in maintaining high product quality standards, such as fabric quality and manufacturing techniques.

Another implication is the importance of building a strong brand image. The research demonstrates that brand image significantly impacts consumer satisfaction. Managers should actively work on creating a positive and distinctive brand identity for Nunuh International Store. This can be achieved through effective communication strategies across all channels, including social media and stores, consistently promoted branding, and delivering on brand promises.

To gain customer loyalty, Managers should focus on building emotional connections with customers by creating memorable experiences, engaging in personalized marketing initiatives, and demonstrating appreciation for their loyalty. Managers can cultivate strong loyalty and encourage positive word-of-mouth recommendations by fostering a sense of belonging and making customers feel valued.

In conclusion, the research offers valuable managerial implications for Nunuh International Store and other clothing retail chains. Managers can improve overall business performance and establish a competitive advantage in the market by focusing on product quality, building a solid brand image, enhancing customer satisfaction, and fostering loyalty. These strategies can help create a positive customer experience, cultivate loyalty, and ultimately drive long-term success for the store.

Recommendation for Further Research

According to this research, several recommendations exist to better understand consumer satisfaction and loyalty. One recommendation is to examine the impact of the variable on consumer satisfaction and loyalty: in addition to service quality, product quality, and brand image, other factors may also influence customer satisfaction and loyalty in the fashion industry. For example, the influence of online reviews or customer demographics on consumer satisfaction and loyalty could be an exciting area for future research.

Furthermore, it examined the relationship between service quality, product quality, brand image, and consumer satisfaction in different cultural contexts. Understanding how these factors influence consumer behavior and loyalty on the grounds of the social exchange

theory in other regions and cultures is essential, as consumer expectations and preferences may differ across countries and regions. Future research could explore these relationships in different cultural contexts to better understand the factors that drive customer satisfaction and loyalty in the fashion and clothing industry.

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