

Analysis of Customer Satisfaction in Mediating Customer Value and Cafe Atmosphere towards Brand Image

Mediating Effect of Satisfaction on Brand Image

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ABSTRACT

In the increasingly competitive café industry, creating strong customer experiences is essential for building a favorable brand image and sustaining customer interest. This study aims to examine, describe, and analyze the influence of customer value and café atmosphere on brand image mediated by customer satisfaction. This research employs a quantitative approach, with a sample of 130 café restaurant customers in Malang City selected as respondents. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS). The results indicate that both customer value and café atmosphere have a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction in café restaurants in Malang City. Furthermore, customer value, café atmosphere, and customer satisfaction each have a positive and significant effect on brand image. The findings also reveal that customer satisfaction mediates the influence of customer value and café atmosphere on brand image. This suggests that improving customer value and creating a favorable café atmosphere, supported by high customer satisfaction, will strengthen the brand image of café restaurants in Malang City and increase customer interest in visiting.

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INTRODUCTION

Positioning aids businesses in defining the features of their brand image, including the qualities, values, and advantages they communicate to customers. Customers' perceptions of a brand are shaped by its positioning and presentation. If the position in consumers' minds is well maintained, the resulting brand image will also be of high quality and contribute to increasing consumer trust in the brand. Given the dynamic market trends and intensifying rivalry, this is especially important in the context of Malang City's quickly expanding café and restaurant industry. Restaurants and cafes that recognize the value of business continuity work hard to uphold their reputation (Hira et al., 2025).

According to Keller (1993), brand image reflects consumers' overall perceptions, associations, and emotions toward a business, which play a crucial role in driving loyalty, enabling premium pricing, and supporting market expansion. In the café and restaurant context, a strong brand image depends on the ability to create customer satisfaction, as emphasized by Kotler and Keller (2016), who measure satisfaction through repurchase intention, word of mouth, and referrals. Empirical evidence from Martenson (2007) confirms that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on brand image. To achieve this, businesses must deliver superior customer value, including service quality, product quality, and competitive pricing, as proposed by Naumann (1995). When these elements are effectively managed, they generate positive customer evaluations and satisfaction, which ultimately strengthen brand image, as supported by previous studies such as Khan and Shaikh (2011) and Almohaimmed (2017).

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Customer value, particularly in terms of quality and price, has a significant effect on both customer satisfaction and brand image. A prior study by Koshki (2014) confirms that food quality, price, and restaurant environment positively influence customer satisfaction. Similarly, Atsnawiyah et al. (2022) and Haery and Badiezadeh (2014) found that product and food quality have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction. Further evidence from Asawawibul et al. (2025) and Hui et al. (2025) shows that service quality and environmental factors also contribute significantly to customer satisfaction. In addition, Ryu et al. (2012) highlight that environmental elements such as temperature, cleanliness, and aesthetic design play a crucial role in shaping satisfaction. This aligns with Kotler (1973), who defines atmosphere as a strategic tool to create emotional responses within the consumption environment. In the rapidly growing café and restaurant industry, enhancing customer value and atmosphere is essential for increasing satisfaction, strengthening brand image, and maintaining competitiveness, as supported by Atsnawiyah et al. (2022) and Rorong et al. (2023).

These findings emphasize how crucial it is to reconsider customer happiness as a mediating factor that connects consumer value, which includes price, product quality, and service quality, to brand image. According to Naumann (1995), these elements represent the core of customer value, which influences satisfaction and subsequently shapes brand image. Empirical findings by Saleem and Raja (2014) and Hernikasari (2022) support this relationship, showing that service quality has a positive and significant effect on both customer satisfaction and brand image, while customer satisfaction itself also positively influences brand image. This indicates that customer satisfaction plays a crucial mediating role in strengthening the impact of customer value on brand image. In the context of the rapidly growing café and restaurant industry, where dining has evolved into a social and experiential activity, atmosphere has become a strategic factor in shaping consumer perceptions. Elements such as interior design, lighting, layout, music, and aroma contribute to creating memorable experiences that influence satisfaction and brand image (Xu et al., 2025). As competition intensifies and products become more homogeneous, atmosphere and customer satisfaction emerge as key differentiating factors for sustaining a positive brand image and long-term business success.

Several previous studies have shown that service atmosphere significantly influences consumer behavior, such as revisit intention, length of stay, and likelihood of recommending to others. However, most of these studies still position the cafe restaurant atmosphere and brand image in a direct relationship, without thoroughly explaining the psychological mechanisms that bridge the two. The current study fills this gap by using customer happiness as an intervening variable to help explain the association between brand image and café atmosphere. Using customer satisfaction as a mediating element, this study attempts to investigate the effects of customer value and café atmosphere on brand image. Therefore, this study aims to examine, describe, and analyze the influence of customer value and cafe atmosphere on brand image mediated by customer satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Customer Value, Café Atmosphere, and Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction refers to the extent to which customers feel pleased or disappointed after comparing their expectations with the actual performance of a product or service (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Similarly, Kotler and Armstrong (2016) explain that satisfaction arises from the evaluation of expected versus perceived outcomes. Customers are often satisfied when the experience meets or exceeds their expectations. Discontent arises when the experience falls short of expectations. Therefore, understanding customer expectations becomes essential for companies in delivering appropriate value and achieving high levels of satisfaction. In this context, customer value plays a fundamental role, as it reflects the relative preference of customers toward specific product or service attributes evaluated subjectively (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009). The quality of products

and services also contributes significantly to the creation of customer value, which in turn enhances the perceived benefits received by customers (Hasfar et al., 2020).

Furthermore, customer value is considered a key antecedent of customer satisfaction (Candra & Juliani, 2018). Empirical evidence supports this relationship, as Rusmahafi and Wulandari (2020) found that customer value has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. In addition to value, environmental factors such as café atmosphere also influence satisfaction levels. Wirtz and Lovelock (2021) highlight that the physical setting of a café or restaurant can shape customer experiences and foster satisfaction and loyalty. Supporting this view, Nurhajjah et al. (2022) emphasize that elements such as comfortable temperature, organized layout, and proper arrangement of facilities contribute to a pleasant environment, which ultimately leads to higher customer satisfaction. All of these results point to the importance of perceived value and the service environment in determining customer happiness.

H1: Customer value has a significant effect on customer satisfaction.

H2: Café atmosphere has a significant effect on customer satisfaction.

Customer Value, Café Atmosphere, Customer Satisfaction, and Brand Image

According to Keller (2016), brand image is defined as the consumer perception of a brand. A positive brand image can provide benefits such as increasing consumer loyalty, enabling higher prices, and facilitating expansion into a wider market. By understanding and managing brand image well, it can build consumer trust, increase loyalty, and create added value for the company. Keller's (1993) study discusses the concept of brand image and how to build a strong brand image. Aaker (2012) introduced a brand identity planning model that outlines three primary dimensions of brand image, namely attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Similarly, Armstrong (2010) proposed a persuasion knowledge model that highlights three core indicators of brand image, which include attributes, benefits, and attitudes.

Customer value, café atmosphere, and customer satisfaction are key factors influencing brand-related outcomes. Customer value is considered "the fundamental basis for all marketing activity, as it reflects the benefits perceived by customers relative to the costs incurred (Rahi, 2016). In this regard, Cretu and Brodie (2007) explain that brand image has a more specific effect on customers' perceptions of product and service quality, while a company's overall reputation exerts a broader influence on perceived customer value and loyalty. In addition, environmental factors such as café atmosphere also play an important role. Store atmosphere refers to the physical characteristics of a place that create a certain impression and attract customers (Umar, 2025). A comfortable and well-designed environment can generate positive feelings, encourage customers to stay longer, and enhance their overall experience. Empirical findings by Benamen et al. (2024) confirm that café atmosphere has a significant impact on brand image. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is essential in shaping positive behavioral outcomes. While achieving satisfaction is important, maintaining customer happiness is crucial for sustaining long-term loyalty (Tahir et al., 2024). Satisfied customers tend to develop favorable attitudes and are more likely to engage in positive word of mouth, thereby strengthening the brand image (Malik et al., 2012; Khoironi et al., 2018).

H3: Customer value has a significant effect on brand image.

H4: Café atmosphere has a significant effect on brand image.

H5: Customer satisfaction has a significant effect on brand image.

Customer Satisfaction as Mediating Variable

Customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in linking antecedent variables to brand-related outcomes. It has been widely recognized that customer satisfaction exerts a positive and significant influence on brand image, as satisfied customers tend to develop favorable perceptions, trust, and emotional attachment toward a brand. In line with

Kotler and Keller (2016), satisfaction emerges from the comparison between expectations and actual experiences, making it a key mechanism through which customer perceptions are formed. Furthermore, indicators such as repurchase intention, positive word of mouth, and recommendations, proposed by Reichheld and Sasser (1990), Anderson and Sullivan (1993), Anderson et al. (1994), and Oliver (1999), reinforce that satisfied customers not only maintain relationships with a brand but also actively promote it. These behavioral outcomes contribute significantly to strengthening brand image in the long term.

Beyond its direct effect, customer satisfaction also functions as a mediating variable that explains how customer value and café atmosphere influence brand image. Previous studies have demonstrated that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and brand image (Saleem & Raja, 2014; Hernikasari, 2022), indicating that improvements in service attributes do not directly translate into a stronger brand image without first enhancing customer satisfaction. Similarly, customer value, reflecting the perceived benefits of product quality, service quality, and price, influences brand image indirectly through customer satisfaction (Rahi, 2016). In addition, café atmosphere, as part of the service environment, shapes customer experiences and emotional responses, which subsequently determine satisfaction levels and influence brand perceptions (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2021; Benamen et al., 2024). Therefore, customer satisfaction acts as a key intermediary that transforms perceived value and environmental stimuli into a positive and strengthened brand image.

H6: Customer satisfaction mediates the effect of customer value on brand image.

H7: Customer satisfaction mediates the effect of café atmosphere on brand image.

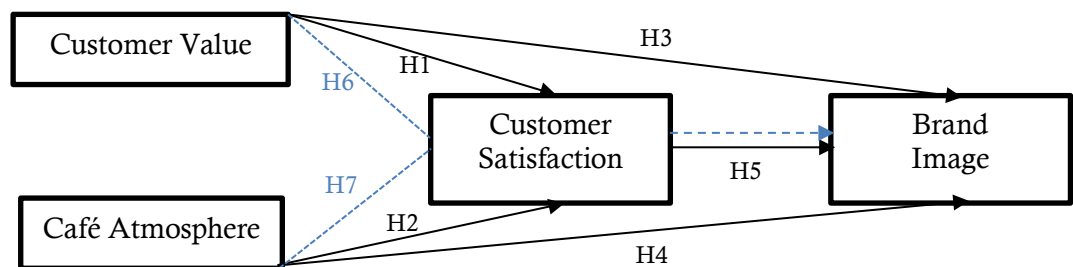


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates that customer value and café atmosphere act as key antecedents influencing both customer satisfaction and brand image. Positive perceptions of value and a favorable café atmosphere enhance customer satisfaction, which in turn strengthens brand image. In addition to these indirect effects, customer value and café atmosphere also directly contribute to brand image. Customer satisfaction serves as a mediating variable, indicating that improved value and atmosphere not only shape brand image directly but also indirectly through enhanced customer satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to investigate the connections between customer value, café atmosphere, customer satisfaction, and brand image, this study uses a quantitative research design using a survey technique. 130 patrons of cafes and restaurants in Malang City were given structured questionnaires to complete in order to gather data. Purposive sampling was the sample strategy used, in which participants were chosen according to particular standards pertinent to the study's goals. Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) was used to analyze the data, allowing for the assessment of both direct and indirect correlations between variables, including the mediating function of customer satisfaction.

The measurement of variables is based on established theoretical indicators. Brand image is measured using three main components proposed by Keller (1993), namely attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Attributes refer to observable characteristics such as

product quality, price, design, and other physical or functional features. Benefits relate to the value or advantages perceived by consumers, including comfort, efficiency, and satisfaction. Attitudes reflect consumers' overall evaluations of a brand, including trust, loyalty, and positive or negative perceptions. Customer satisfaction is measured based on Kotler and Armstrong (2016), including repurchase intention, word of mouth, and referral. Repurchase indicates the frequency of repeated use of a product or service, while word of mouth and referral capture customers' willingness to recommend the product or service to others.

Customer value is defined according to Butz and Goodstein (1996) as the result of a two-way interaction between customers and the company, which is influenced by product quality, service quality, and price. Meanwhile, café atmosphere is measured based on Kotler (2013), which includes four elements: interior, exterior, layout, and decoration. These elements collectively shape the overall environment and experience perceived by customers. The measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model) are both evaluated as part of the data analysis method. To verify validity and reliability, the outer model is evaluated using factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). To assess the strength and significance of relationships between variables, the inner model is assessed using R-squared, total influence, and hypothesis testing.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the data analysis based on the proposed research model. The evaluation begins with the assessment of the measurement model to ensure that all constructs are valid and reliable, followed by the examination of the structural model to analyze the relationships among variables. The results provide a comprehensive understanding of how customer value and café atmosphere influence customer satisfaction and brand image, including both direct and indirect relationships, with customer satisfaction acting as a mediating variable.

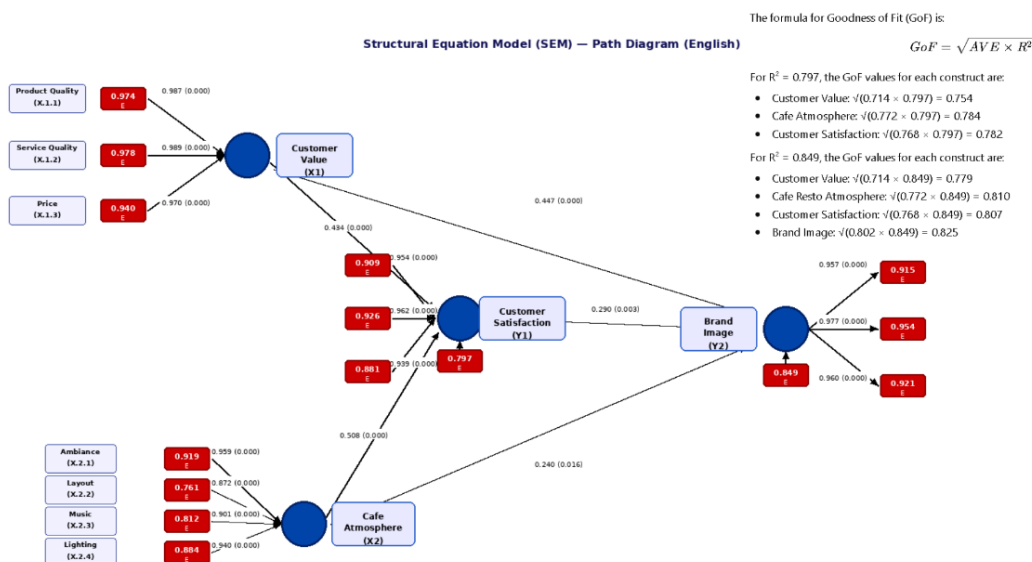


Figure 2. Structural Model

Table 1. Factor Loading Values

Variable	Item	Factor Loading
Customer Value	X.1.1	0.967
	X.1.2	0.989
	X.1.3	0.870
Café Atmosphere	X.2.1	0.959
	X.2.2	0.872
	X.2.3	0.901
	X.2.4	0.940
Customer Satisfaction	Y.1.1	0.954
	Y.1.2	0.962
	Y.1.3	0.939
Brand Image	Y.2.1	0.957
	Y.2.2	0.972
	Y.2.3	0.960

The factor loading values for each indicator used to gauge the variables customer value, café atmosphere, customer satisfaction, and brand image are shown in Figure 1 and Table 1. Every indicator has loading values more than 0.70, which means that every item satisfies the requirements for convergent validity and has a significant correlation with its corresponding concept. The loading values for customer value range from 0.870 to 0.989, indicating that every indication is quite indicative of the construct. Similarly, loading values for café atmosphere range from 0.872 to 0.959, indicating that the indicators accurately convey the idea of café atmosphere. Strong loadings for customer satisfaction, which range from 0.939 to 0.962, show that the items accurately gauge consumer pleasure. Additionally, loading values for brand image range from 0.957 to 0.972, indicating a very significant correlation between the construct and the indicators. The continuously high factor loading values show that all measuring items are valid and able to effectively represent their respective variables.

Table 2. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Customer Value	0.987	0.987
Café Atmosphere	0.957	0.959
Customer Satisfaction	0.939	0.941
Brand Image	0.950	0.954

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values can be used to assess the research instrument's dependability for reflective indicators. If an instrument's composite reliability is higher than 0.80 and its Cronbach's alpha is higher than 0.60, it is deemed reliable. Based on Table 2, the Cronbach's alpha value for customer value is 0.987 (> 0.60) with a composite reliability of 0.987 (> 0.80). For café atmosphere, the Cronbach's alpha is 0.957 (> 0.60), and the composite reliability is 0.959 (> 0.80). Customer satisfaction shows a Cronbach's alpha of 0.939 (> 0.60) and a composite reliability of 0.941 (> 0.80). Meanwhile, brand image has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.950 (> 0.60) and a composite reliability of 0.954 (> 0.80). These results indicate that all instruments used to measure customer value, café atmosphere, customer satisfaction, and brand image are reliable.

Table 3. AVE Result

Variable	AVE
Customer Value	0.714
Café Atmosphere	0.772
Customer Satisfaction	0.768
Brand Image	0.802

Based on Table 3, the AVE values for each variable are as follows: customer value = 0.714 (> 0.50), café restaurant atmosphere = 0.772 (> 0.50), customer satisfaction = 0.768 (> 0.50), and brand image = 0.802 (> 0.50). These results indicate that the research

instruments used to measure customer value, café atmosphere, customer satisfaction, and brand image are valid.

Table 4. R-Square Test

Variable	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square
Customer Satisfaction	0.797	0.794
Brand Image	0.849	0.845

Customer satisfaction has an R-Square of 0.797 and an Adjusted R-Square of 0.794, according to Table 4. This suggests that the independent variables in the model account for around 79.7% of the variance in customer satisfaction, with other factors not covered in this study influencing the remaining 20.3%. In the meantime, brand image has an R-Square of 0.849 and an Adjusted R-Square of 0.845. This indicates that the variables in the model account for 84.9% of the variation in brand image, whereas variables beyond the purview of this study account for just 15.1%. Given that both R-Square values fall into a high category and that the independent variables significantly contribute to the explanation of customer happiness and brand image, these results show that the model has great explanatory power.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

Relationship	Original Sample	t-statistic	p-value
Customer Value-> Customer Satisfaction	0.434	3.907	0.000
Café Atmosphere-> Customer Satisfaction	0.508	4.558	0.000
Customer Value-> Brand Image	0.447	4.931	0.000
Café Atmosphere-> Brand Image	0.240	2.419	0.016
Customer Satisfaction-> Brand Image	0.290	2.969	0.003
Customer Value-> Customer Satisfaction-> Brand Image	0.126	2.266	0.023
Café Atmosphere-> Customer Satisfaction-> Brand Image	0.147	2.465	0.014

Table 5 summarizes the hypothesis testing results, covering both direct and indirect relationships among the variables in the model. The analysis shows that customer value positively and significantly affects customer satisfaction, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.434, a t-statistic of 3.907, and a p-value of 0.000. Likewise, café atmosphere exerts a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.508, a t-statistic of 4.558, and a p-value of 0.000. In terms of brand image, customer value also demonstrates a positive and statistically significant effect, reflected by a coefficient of 0.447, a t-statistic of 4.931, and a p-value of 0.000. Café atmosphere contributes positively to brand image as well, although the effect is weaker, with a coefficient of 0.240, a t-statistic of 2.419, and a p-value of 0.016. Additionally, customer satisfaction has a positive and significant impact on brand image, supported by a coefficient of 0.290, a t-statistic of 2.969, and a p-value of 0.003.

With respect to the indirect relationships, customer value impacts brand image through customer satisfaction, as shown by a coefficient of 0.126, a t-statistic of 2.266, and a p-value of 0.023, confirming a significant mediating effect. Similarly, café atmosphere indirectly influences brand image via customer satisfaction, with a coefficient of 0.147, a t-statistic of 2.465, and a p-value of 0.014. These results indicate that both customer value and café atmosphere exert significant effects on brand image, not only directly but also indirectly through customer satisfaction, which serves as an important mediator in strengthening these relationships.

Table 6. Total Influence

Relationship	Original Sample	t-statistic	p-value
Customer Value-> Customer Satisfaction-> Brand Image	0.573	6.415	0.000
Café Atmosphere-> Customer Satisfaction-> Brand Image	0.387	4.353	0.000

Table 6 shows the total influence, representing the combined direct and indirect effects through customer satisfaction. The results indicate that customer value has a total effect of 0.573 on brand image, while café atmosphere has a total effect of 0.387. Both effects are positive and statistically significant, meaning that each variable contributes to improving brand image when considering the mediating role of customer satisfaction. However, customer value has a stronger overall influence compared to café atmosphere, indicating that it is the more dominant factor in shaping brand image through customer satisfaction.

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DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that customer value exerts a positive and significant influence on both customer satisfaction and brand image. This suggests that when customers perceive greater value, arising from service quality, product quality, and price, they are more likely to experience higher satisfaction and form positive brand perceptions. This finding is in line with Naumann (1995), who identified customer value, particularly in terms of quality and price, as a fundamental determinant of customer satisfaction. Consistent evidence is also found in Han and Ryu (2009), who highlighted that food quality, pricing, and environmental aspects significantly affect satisfaction levels. Additional empirical support from Septian and Harsoyo (2023), as well as Octavia and Riza (2023), further confirms the significant role of customer value in shaping customer satisfaction. Moreover, the significant positive effect of customer value on brand image indicates that firms that consistently deliver superior value are more likely to enhance their brand perception and foster customer loyalty. This is supported by Rahi (2016), who emphasized that customer value directly contributes to strengthening brand image, making it a critical factor in improving both customer satisfaction and overall brand positioning.

The results of this study demonstrate that the café restaurant atmosphere has a significant role in influencing customer satisfaction, which subsequently impacts brand image. This finding supports the experiential marketing perspective, where consumption in the café and restaurant sector extends beyond functional aspects to include emotional and sensory experiences. A well-crafted atmosphere acts as a stimulus that shapes customers' perceptions, feelings, and overall evaluation of their experience. The positive and significant effect of atmosphere on customer satisfaction is consistent with Kotler's (2013) concept of atmospherics, which highlights the strategic design of physical environments to generate desired emotional responses and enhance satisfaction. Factors such as interior design, lighting, seating layout, and spatial comfort contribute positively to customers' comfort and enjoyment. These results are in line with prior studies by Mudjiyanti and Sholihah (2022) and Atsnawiyah et al. (2022), which emphasize that a well-maintained and appealing environment enhances dining experiences and increases customer satisfaction.

The findings further indicate that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant impact on brand image. This result is consistent with Keller's (1993) view that brand image is formed through the accumulation of consumer experiences, evaluations, and emotional associations. When customers are satisfied, they are more likely to perceive the café as offering quality, reliability, and value, which gradually strengthens its brand image. This evidence aligns with prior studies by Martenson (2007), Saleem and Raja (2014), and Hernikasari (2022), which identify customer satisfaction as a key antecedent in developing favorable brand perceptions.

Moreover, customer satisfaction plays a crucial role in establishing and sustaining long-term relationships between customers and café restaurants. Consistent satisfaction encourages repeat visits and increases the likelihood of customers recommending the café to others. When a café successfully delivers satisfying experiences, these positive outcomes translate into a stronger brand image in customers' minds due to the perceived benefits received. This relationship is supported by previous research, including Setyadi et al. (2017), Amani (2020), and Hernikasari et al. (2022), all of which confirm that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on brand image.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the interrelationships between customer value, café atmosphere, customer satisfaction, and brand image using the SEM-PLS approach. The results reveal that both customer value and café atmosphere have positive and significant impacts on customer satisfaction and brand image. In addition, customer satisfaction significantly affects brand image, highlighting its pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions. The analysis also shows that customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between customer value, café atmosphere, and brand image, indicating that these variables influence brand image both directly and indirectly through satisfaction. From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that café and restaurant managers should focus on improving product quality, service quality, pricing strategies, and the physical environment to enhance customer satisfaction, which in turn strengthens brand image and customer loyalty. From a theoretical perspective, this study confirms the importance of customer satisfaction as a mediating variable in linking customer value and café atmosphere to brand image.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study is based on a sample of 130 respondents from Malang City, which may limit the generalizability of the results. The use of purposive sampling also presents the possibility of selection bias. Furthermore, the research considers only a limited number of variables, while other factors such as customer experience, service innovation, and brand trust may also play a role in shaping brand image. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to include larger and more diverse samples across different regions, incorporate additional relevant variables, and apply mixed-method or longitudinal designs to provide a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of brand image development.

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