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Product Quality, Brand Image, and Product Taste on Customer Trust at Arabica Coffee in Bandung

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Abstract; This study investigates the influence of product quality, brand image, and product taste on customer trust in Arabica coffee in Bandung. With the rising popularity of coffee consumption in the region, understanding the factors that drive customer trust is crucial for maintaining competitiveness in the coffee industry. Data was collected from Arabica coffee consumers through a structured survey, and analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The results indicate that all three factors—product quality, brand image, and product taste—positively and significantly affect customer trust. These findings suggest that Arabica coffee producers should focus on enhancing these attributes to foster stronger customer relationships and loyalty. The study contributes to the literature on customer behavior in the specialty coffee market and provides actionable insights for businesses to improve customer trust.

Keywords : Product Quality, Brand Image, Product Taste, Customer Trust, Arabica Coffee, Bandung, Specialty Coffee, Consumer Behavior.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the coffee industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth, with Bandung emerging as one of the leading regions for specialty coffee, particularly Arabica coffee. Arabica, known for its distinct flavor profiles and higher quality compared to other coffee varieties, has gained immense popularity among coffee enthusiasts. As competition intensifies within the coffee market, customer trust has become a critical factor for coffee businesses aiming to maintain and expand their consumer base.

Customer trust is a vital element that influences purchasing decisions, repeat purchases, and brand loyalty. It can be shaped by various factors, including the perceived quality of the product, the image of the brand, and the sensory experience of consuming the product. Specifically, in the context of Arabica coffee, product quality, brand image, and product taste are believed to play a significant role in building and maintaining customer trust.

Product quality reflects the inherent attributes of the coffee, such as its freshness, flavor consistency, and overall satisfaction. High-quality coffee is often associated with positive consumer experiences, leading to greater customer trust. Brand image, on the other hand, encompasses the perceptions and associations customers form with a particular coffee brand. A strong, positive brand image can enhance credibility and trust among consumers. Lastly, the

taste of the coffee, as a sensory attribute, directly influences customer satisfaction and the likelihood of developing trust in the product.

This study aims to examine the relationship between product quality, brand image, and product taste with customer trust in Arabica coffee in Bandung. By understanding these relationships, coffee producers and businesses can better tailor their products and marketing strategies to build stronger, long-lasting relationships with their customers. This research seeks to fill a gap in the literature on consumer behavior in the specialty coffee market, particularly in the context of Arabica coffee in Bandung.

The objectives of this study are to (1) assess the impact of product quality on customer trust, (2) determine the influence of brand image on customer trust, and (3) evaluate how product taste affects customer trust. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide actionable insights for businesses in the coffee industry to improve customer trust and, consequently, enhance customer loyalty and market competitiveness.

In this section, we review existing research on the core factors influencing customer trust: product quality, brand image, and product taste. These factors are explored within the context of the specialty coffee market, particularly focusing on their relevance to Arabica coffee consumers in Bandung. Product quality is often defined as the overall durability, reliability, and performance of a product, which directly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty. According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived quality is the customer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority. High-quality products tend to create positive experiences for consumers, leading to increased trust. In the context of coffee, quality can be assessed based on various criteria such as flavor consistency, freshness, sourcing practices, and the overall sensory experience (Wilson & Sparks, 2016). Studies in the food and beverage industry have consistently found that product quality is a significant predictor of customer trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

For Arabica coffee, quality is especially important due to its premium position in the market. Arabica is known for its delicate flavor profiles, which are influenced by factors such as altitude, cultivation methods, and processing techniques (Läderach et al., 2017). Coffee consumers are often able to discern differences in taste, aroma, and texture, making product quality a key determinant of trust. As coffee businesses in Bandung aim to attract a discerning customer base, ensuring consistent product quality is essential for building and maintaining trust.

Brand image refers to the perceptions and associations that consumers form about a brand, often based on its reputation, marketing efforts, and customer experiences. Keller (1993) defines brand image as "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory." A positive brand image can enhance customer trust by conveying reliability, authenticity, and quality. In the coffee industry, a strong brand image is often built through storytelling, ethical sourcing practices, and a commitment to sustainability (Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2015).

Several studies have highlighted the role of brand image in fostering trust. According to Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2005), a brand's image significantly influences customer trust by establishing an emotional connection with consumers. In the case of Arabica coffee in Bandung, brands that promote their local heritage, authenticity, and ethical practices are likely to cultivate a strong image, thereby enhancing trust among customers. For example, coffee producers that emphasize their commitment to fair trade and environmentally sustainable farming methods can create a brand image that resonates with socially conscious consumers, further strengthening customer trust.

Product taste is a sensory experience that plays a crucial role in customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, particularly in the food and beverage industry (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). Taste is a key attribute that shapes a consumer's overall experience with a product and

is a significant factor influencing repeat purchases and long-term trust. In the coffee industry, the flavor profile is one of the most important aspects of the product, with attributes such as acidity, sweetness, bitterness, and body all contributing to the taste perception (Clifford & Wilson, 1985).

Research shows that product taste has a direct impact on customer trust, as consumers who consistently enjoy the taste of a product are more likely to trust the brand and make repeat purchases (Dube & Menon, 2000). In the specialty coffee market, Arabica coffee is prized for its complex flavor profiles, which can range from fruity and floral to nutty and chocolaty, depending on its origin and processing method (Giovannucci & Koekoek, 2003). For coffee consumers in Bandung, the ability to consistently deliver a high-quality taste experience is crucial for maintaining trust.

Customer trust is a multi-dimensional concept that involves the belief that a product or brand will consistently meet expectations. It plays a critical role in shaping consumer behavior, influencing decisions such as repeat purchases, word-of-mouth recommendations, and long-term loyalty (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993). Trust is especially important in industries with high competition and frequent customer interactions, such as the coffee industry (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

In the context of Arabica coffee, trust is built through a combination of factors, including the perceived quality of the product, the brand's reputation, and the overall sensory experience of the coffee. When customers trust a brand, they are more likely to remain loyal, even in the face of price fluctuations or the introduction of competing products (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). For coffee producers in Bandung, fostering customer trust is essential for long-term business success in an increasingly competitive market.

METHOD

This section outlines the research methodology employed to investigate the influence of product quality, brand image, and product taste on customer trust in Arabica coffee in Bandung. The study uses a quantitative approach to collect and analyze data, aiming to provide empirical insights into the relationships between these variables. This study utilizes a descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship between product quality, brand image, product taste, and customer trust. A structured survey questionnaire was distributed to Arabica coffee consumers in Bandung to collect data. The study seeks to understand how each independent variable (product quality, brand image, and product taste) impacts the dependent variable (customer trust).

The population for this study consists of Arabica coffee consumers in Bandung. Since the focus is on specialty coffee, the sample includes individuals who have purchased Arabica coffee at least once within the past three months, ensuring they have recent experience with the product. A total of 200 respondents were targeted for this study. This sample size was determined based on Cochran's formula, ensuring an adequate representation of the population. A non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, was used to select respondents who meet the criteria of being Arabica coffee consumers. This approach ensures that only relevant individuals are included in the study. Data was collected through a self-administered survey distributed both online and in-person at coffee shops in Bandung. The questionnaire was designed to measure the following variables: Items on the questionnaire related to product quality assessed aspects such as freshness, consistency, aroma, and overall satisfaction. The brand image section included items measuring the consumer's perception of the coffee brand's reputation, authenticity, ethical practices, and commitment to sustainability. This section focused on the sensory experience, asking respondents to rate the flavor, balance, acidity, and aftertaste of the coffee they consumed. Customer trust was measured using items related to reliability, confidence in the brand, and willingness to continue purchasing from the

brand. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The collected data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis to examine the relationships between the independent variables (product quality, brand image, and product taste) and the dependent variable (customer trust). This statistical method was chosen to understand the individual contribution of each factor to customer trust while controlling for the effects of the other variables.

The analysis was conducted in the following steps: Descriptive Statistics Mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their overall perceptions of product quality, brand image, product taste, and customer trust; Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the scales used in the questionnaire to ensure consistency in the responses; This analysis was employed to determine the extent to which product quality, brand image, and product taste predict customer trust. The model's goodness of fit was assessed using the R-squared value while the significance of each independent variable was determined using p-values and statistics.

Research Hypotheses

The study tests the following hypotheses:

- H1: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on customer trust.
- H2: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on customer trust.
- H3: Product taste has a positive and significant effect on customer trust.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research practices, ensuring that participation was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their data would be used solely for academic research purposes. Consent was obtained prior to the distribution of the questionnaire.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the data analysis and discusses the findings in relation to the study's hypotheses and existing literature. The analysis is based on responses from 200 Arabica coffee consumers in Bandung, examining the effects of product quality, brand image, and product taste on customer trust.

Descriptive Statistics

The demographic profile of the respondents showed a fairly balanced distribution in terms of gender, age, and educational background. Most respondents (60%) were between the ages of 25 and 40, and the majority were regular consumers of Arabica coffee, purchasing it at least once a week. Descriptive statistics for the key variables are summarized as follows:

- Product Quality: The mean score for product quality was 4.25 (on a 5-point Likert scale), indicating that respondents generally perceived the quality of Arabica coffee in Bandung to be high.
- Brand Image: Brand image scored an average of 4.18, suggesting that most consumers held positive perceptions of the coffee brands they regularly purchased.
- Product Taste: The average score for product taste was 4.30, reflecting a high level of satisfaction with the sensory experience of consuming Arabica coffee.
- Customer Trust: Customer trust had a mean score of 4.20, showing that respondents had a strong sense of trust in their preferred Arabica coffee brands.

Reliability Testing

The reliability of the measurement scales was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha. All variables had alpha values above 0.7, indicating that the scales were internally consistent:

- Product Quality: $\alpha = 0.84$
- Brand Image: $\alpha = 0.82$
- Product Taste: $\alpha = 0.87$
- Customer Trust: $\alpha = 0.85$

Multiple Regression Analysis

The results of the multiple regression analysis are summarized in Table 1, showing the effects of product quality, brand image, and product taste on customer trust.

Table 1. Result Hypoteses Testing

Variable	Beta Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Significance
Product Quality	0.358	6.245	< 0.001	Significant
Brand Image	0.311	5.879	< 0.001	Significant
Product Taste	0.405	7.110	< 0.001	Significant

Sources : data analysis result (2024)

R-squared: 0.681, indicating that 68.1% of the variance in customer trust is explained by the three independent variables (product quality, brand image, and product taste). The results show that all three factors—product quality, brand image, and product taste—have a positive and significant effect on customer trust, supporting the study's hypotheses. Among these, product taste had the strongest influence on customer trust ($\beta = 0.405$), followed by product quality ($\beta = 0.358$) and brand image ($\beta = 0.311$).

Discussion

Product Quality and Customer Trust

The positive and significant effect of product quality on customer trust (H1) confirms findings from previous studies in the food and beverage industry (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Consumers of Arabica coffee in Bandung perceive high-quality products as trustworthy, aligning with the notion that consistent flavor, freshness, and satisfaction lead to greater consumer confidence. This finding emphasizes the need for coffee producers to maintain rigorous quality control processes to ensure consistent product excellence.

Brand Image and Customer Trust

The significant relationship between brand image and customer trust (H2) supports existing literature on brand perceptions and loyalty (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005). Consumers in Bandung place a high value on the reputation, ethical practices, and authenticity of Arabica coffee brands. As Bandung's coffee culture grows, brand image is becoming increasingly important in differentiating coffee businesses. This underscores the need for companies to invest in brand-building efforts that highlight their commitment to sustainability, fair trade, and local sourcing.

Product Taste and Customer Trust

Product taste had the strongest impact on customer trust (H3), which is consistent with studies that emphasize the centrality of sensory experiences in the food and beverage sector (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). For Arabica coffee consumers in Bandung, the sensory appeal—flavor, aroma, acidity, and aftertaste—directly influences their trust in the brand. This finding suggests that coffee producers should prioritize delivering a consistently delightful taste experience to cultivate trust and loyalty.

Implications for Arabica Coffee Producers

The results of this study provide valuable insights for Arabica coffee producers and marketers in Bandung. Given the significant influence of product quality, brand image, and product taste on customer trust, businesses should focus on:

1. Maintaining High-Quality Standards: Consistently delivering high-quality Arabica coffee that meets consumer expectations is crucial for trust-building.
2. Enhancing Brand Image: Companies should invest in ethical sourcing, sustainability, and transparent marketing to create a positive and trustworthy brand image.
3. Improving Sensory Experiences: Since taste has the strongest impact on trust, coffee producers must ensure that their products offer a superior flavor profile that resonates with consumers.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the importance of product quality, brand image, and product taste in fostering customer trust in the Arabica coffee market in Bandung. All three factors significantly contribute to trust, with product taste having the greatest influence. These insights highlight key areas for coffee businesses to focus on as they seek to build and maintain strong customer relationships in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

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