



The mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between product quality, brand image, and brand loyalty: A study of Eiger outdoor gear

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how product quality and brand image influence consumer loyalty toward outdoor products, with consumer satisfaction serving as a mediating variable. The study is motivated by the rapid growth of the outdoor product market driven by healthy lifestyle trends, and it also responds to previous research findings that remain inconsistent within the context of the outdoor equipment industry. The research method employed a quantitative causal design using purposive sampling of 140 students who use Eiger products at Surabaya State University, Airlangga University, and the Institute of Technology 10 November, following prior validation and reliability testing of the instrument on 30 samples. The data was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SmartPLS 4. The results indicate that product quality and brand image have a positive and significant influence on loyalty, with consumer satisfaction acting as a partial mediator. These findings clarify the mechanism by which loyalty does not form automatically without user satisfaction. This finding confirms that companies cannot rely solely on quality and brand image but must also generate genuine satisfaction as the key to achieving loyalty. Therefore, Eiger needs to align its brand reputation with actual performance in the field to meet the specific expectations of its critical student consumers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The trend toward outdoor activities and a healthy lifestyle continues to grow globally. An OIA report 2024 notes that participation in the U.S. rose by 4.1% in 2023, covering 57.3% of the population aged 6 and older. A similar trend is emerging in Indonesia in 2025, with a surge in interest in hiking and camping. This interest is driving demand for technical gear (backpacks, hiking boots, waterproof jackets). Due to high safety risks, consumers must understand the functions of this equipment. This challenges industry players to continually innovate in order to meet the standards of quality, durability, and

functionality required to compete in a global market projected to reach USD 111.7 billion by 2035 (Insights, 2026).

In the domestic market, competition between local and international brands is extremely fierce. Minister of MSMEs, Maman Abdurrahman, noted that Indonesia's mountaineering gear market reached Rp1.26 trillion, with an average growth rate of 12.1% since 2021, and that local MSMEs dominate 75% of the market. Eiger, a pioneer among local brands since 1993, maintains its dominance through global expansion (Switzerland and Malaysia) and a commitment to sustainability via the "EIGER Green" initiative, which uses recycled materials. To maintain this dominance, building consumer loyalty is crucial.

Customer loyalty is a deep-seated commitment to making repeat purchases that involves cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions (Oliver, 1997). This loyalty is highly dependent on the level of consumer satisfaction, as explained in Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980); in this theory, consumers compare their initial expectations with the product's actual performance to achieve positive confirmation. However, this evaluation process is also influenced by the Perceived Risk Theory (Bauer, 1960), which relates to consumers' anticipation of potential losses from their purchasing decisions. In this context, product quality emerges as the primary determinant, as it consistently and reliably meets customer needs. A company's strategy to offer added value through superior quality not only meets consumer expectations but also effectively creates market differentiation (Kotler et al., 2022). This market dominance is further reinforced by brand image—the perceptions and mental representations customers form when recalling a specific brand (Indrasari, 2019). Maintaining quality and a strong brand image reduces perception risks and builds long-term customer loyalty.

This study was motivated by conflicting findings in previous research (Iqbal et al., 2024; Asrilisyak, 2024; Wan Nawang et al., 2024; Santosa et al., 2026; Sofiyuloh et al., 2025; Al Hasany et al., 2024), indicating that the factors influencing consumer loyalty behavior are not fixed but fluctuate depending on the research context, the type of product studied, the models or variables used, and the characteristics of the consumer groups involved. For example, studies (Abigail et al., 2024; Kosasih et al., 2024; Sandrina, 2026) successfully demonstrated that product quality significantly enhances loyalty through the mediation of customer satisfaction. Similarly, the findings of Tahir et al., (2024) and Win et al., (2025) confirm a similar role for the brand image variable. However, these findings contrast with those of Nurhayani et al., (2023) and Aulia et al., (2025), who reported that product quality has no significant impact. Furthermore, Hidayah & Nugroho, (2023) found that brand image does not have a significant influence on loyalty, even through customer satisfaction. The influence of these variables depends heavily on the environmental context, product type, and characteristics of the research subjects. This raises a clear research gap regarding the extent of the model's consistency when applied to Indonesia's outdoor product industry, which has technical characteristics and usage risks distinct from those in previous studies.

Based on the literature review above, most previous studies have examined the roles of product quality and brand image in building consumer loyalty. However, studies that integrate consumer satisfaction as a mediating variable remain limited, particularly in the outdoor equipment industry. Addressing this gap, this study focuses on the Eiger brand, which is currently undergoing rapid global expansion, by involving students from the three largest universities in Surabaya as a representative sample of an active and critical consumer group. By focusing on the dynamics of this industry, the study aims to provide a comprehensive analytical synthesis of the mechanisms underlying long-term loyalty. Through testing with the student group, this research seeks to develop a more valid theoretical framework for measuring the extent to which product quality and brand image can sustain loyalty through the mediation of satisfaction amid increasingly competitive market conditions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative methodology, which focuses on the objective measurement of a phenomenon (Dirna et al., 2025). It examines the causal relationship between product quality, brand image, and consumer loyalty toward Eiger outdoor products, with consumer satisfaction serving as the mediating variable. This study was conducted among active undergraduate students at three state universities in Surabaya (UNESA, UNAIR, and ITS), based on the presence of nature-loving communities (Mapala) and the fact that these institutions rank among the top three universities in Surabaya. Since the population of Eiger product users is unknown, the sample size was calculated using the formula by Hair et al. (2021), resulting in 140 respondents. This sample size is considered adequate as it meets the upper limit of the ideal ratio of 10 respondents per indicator (14 indicators \times 10). The research indicators were developed based on the following theories: consumer loyalty (Griffin, 2005; 4 items), consumer satisfaction (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; 3 items), product quality (Garvin, 1987; 4 items), and brand image (Kotler & Keller, 2016; 3 items), which were independently adapted to the context of Eiger products. The validity and reliability of the entire research instrument were tested using SPSS version 27 on 30 respondents. The test results indicated that statement item X2.3 was invalid because $r_{hitung} \leq r_{tabel(0,361)}$, and was therefore removed from the questionnaire, while the other statement items were deemed valid and reliable for use in further analysis.

These respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on clear eligibility criteria: Mapala members who actively participate in outdoor activities and have purchased and used Eiger products at least twice in the past year. Data were collected via an online questionnaire using a 1–4 Likert scale to measure respondents' feelings or attitudes in depth, without a neutral option, to ensure clearer and more definitive results. The data were then analyzed in two stages: descriptive analysis to summarize respondent characteristics and inferential analysis using SmartPLS 4 through outer-model measurements (convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability), followed by inner-model testing (R^2 , f^2 , and Q^2), as well as hypothesis testing for effect sizes and path coefficients

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Description of Respondent

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-19	29	20.7%
	20-22	91	65%
	>23	20	14.3%
Gender	Female	93	67.1%
	Male	46	32.9%
College	UNESA	51	36.4%
	ITS	36	27.2%
	UNAIR	53	37.9%
Income/ Pocket Money	<Rp. 1.000.000	40	28.6%
	Rp. 1.000.000 - Rp. 2.500.000	81	57.9%
	>Rp. 2.500.000	19	13.6%

Figure 1. Respondent Characteristics

The demographic profile indicates individuals with moderate purchasing power or financial capacity, which may influence their economic behavior patterns related to purchasing Eiger products among college students.

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency	Percentage
Users of the Eiger Product Outdoor	-	140	100%
Frekuensi Pembelian	2x/year	82	60.7%
	>3x/semester	59	42.3%
Outdoor Activities Participated In	Camping	96	68.6%
	Hiking	138	98.6%
Eiger Outdoor Products Purchased	Carrier/ Daypack	103	73.6%
	Outdoor Clothing	85	60.7%
Eiger Outdoor Products Purchased	Hiking Shoes/Sandals	83	59.3%
	Outdoor Accessories	72	51.4%

Figure 2. Respondent Criteria

This data confirms that Eiger effectively meets the basic needs of outdoor enthusiasts, particularly for hiking and camping.

3.2 Results of the Outer Model Data Analysis

A measurement model (outer model) is a statistical framework that ensures the research instrument, in this case, the questionnaire, measures constructs or variables in a valid and consistent manner before testing relationships among variables. The resulting measurement model is as follows:

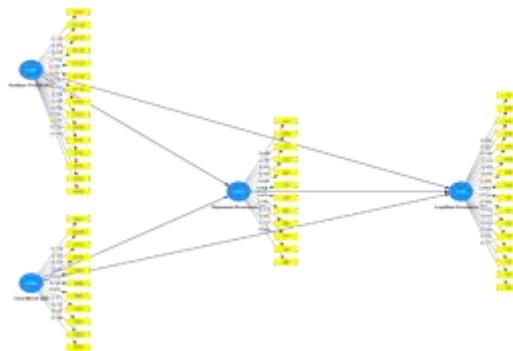


Figure 3. Outer Model

Source: Printout Smart-PLS 4, (2026)

Convergent validity confirms that the indicators are measuring the same construct. are related to a single latent variable, with acceptance criteria of an outer loading > 0.7 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.5 (Hair et al., 2021). All items were deemed valid because their outer loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold.

Table 1. Convergent Validity Outer Loadings

Item Pernyataan	Kualitas Produk	Item Pernyataan	Citra Merek	Item Pernyataan	Kepuasan Konsumen	Item Pernyataan	Loyalitas Konsumen
X1.1	0.716	X2.1	0.776	Z1	0.805	Y1	0.740
X1.10	0.700	X2.10	0.704	Z10	0.792	Y10	0.767
X1.11	0.775	X2.11	0.758	Z11	0.757	Y11	0.728
X1.12	0.740	X2.12	0.809	Z12	0.703	Y12	0.772
X1.13	0.725	X2.2	0.752	Z2	0.767	Y13	0.704
X1.14	0.761	X2.4	0.739	Z3	0.798	Y14	0.755
X1.15	0.735	X2.5	0.763	Z4	0.812	Y15	0.705
X1.2	0.752	X2.6	0.761	Z5	0.785	Y16	0.730
X1.3	0.749	X2.7	0.716	Z6	0.736	Y2	0.722
X1.4	0.708	X2.8	0.781	Z7	0.752	Y3	0.796
X1.5	0.760	X2.9	0.706	Z8	0.737	Y4	0.763
X1.6	0.767			Z9	0.842	Y5	0.701
X1.7	0.832					Y6	0.762
X1.8	0.732					Y7	0.743
X1.9	0.719					Y8	0.732
						Y9	0.741

Source: Printout SmartPLS 4, (2026)

Each indicator shows a strong correlation and accurately measures its respective construct. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values surpass the minimum threshold of 0.5, indicating that, on average, the information contained in the indicators for each variable is well represented by its respective construct. Next, Discriminant validity confirms that different constructs are truly distinct from one another, preventing overlap. According to Hair et al., (2021), the primary criteria are an

HTMT value below 0.90 and adherence to the Fornell-Larcker and cross-loadings standards.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Brand Image	Customer Satisfaction	Product Quality	Customer Loyalty
Brand Image				
Customer Satisfaction	0.604			
Product Quality	0.113	0.551		
Customer Loyalty	0.650	0.895	0.487	

Source: Printout SmartPLS 4, (2026)

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion indicates that all correlation coefficients between variables are below 0.90. This suggests that each construct is clearly distinct and that there is no measurement overlap between constructs, thereby confirming the model's discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Fornell-Lacker

	Citra Merek	Kepuasan Konsumen	Kualitas Produk	Loyalitas Konsumen
Citra Merek	0.752			
Kepuasan Konsumen	0.565	0.775		
Kualitas Produk	0.012	0.533	0.745	
Loyalitas Konsumen	0.611	0.847	0.478	0.742

Source: Printout SmartPLS 4, (2026)

The results of the Fornell-Larcker criteria indicate that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable is greater than the correlation coefficient of that variable with the other variables in the model. Although the AVE value for Consumer Satisfaction (0.775) is lower than that of Consumer Loyalty (0.847), this is not considered a problem because the HTMT criteria serve as the primary reference. Furthermore, the cross-loadings results of this study indicate a stronger correlation with the target construct compared to correlations with other variables. The cross-loadings criteria have been met, with a primary focus on the HTMT criteria. The consistency of this pattern across all statement items indicates that the instrument is capable of uniquely distinguishing each variable.

Following the next validity test, Reliability testing was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the indicators used to measure each construct. According to Hair et al., (2021) variable is considered reliable if the Composite Reliability value exceeds 0.70, showing that the indicators consistently capture the construct's variance, and if Cronbach's Alpha is at least 0.60, which serves as the threshold for accepting the measurement consistency of that latent variable. The reliability test results show that all constructs have Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above the 0.70 threshold, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.935 to 0.951 and composite reliability from 0.924 to 0.947. This confirms that each construct demonstrates good internal consistency and measurement stability, thereby supporting the reliability of the research instrument for testing the structural model.

3.3 Results of the Inner Model Data Analysis

The next step is to test the structural model (inner model). The resulting structural model is as follows:



Figure 4. Inner Model
Source: *Printout SmartPLS 4, (2026)*

Regarding the results of the multicollinearity test, all items in variables X1, X2, Y, and Z have a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) below 5.0. Specifically, the lowest value was found in item Z12 at (1.880), while the highest value was found in item Y12 at (3.527). It can therefore be concluded that there are no serious multicollinearity issues in this study. Furthermore, the analysis of the coefficient of determination indicates that this model has good predictive power, with an R-squared value of 0.596 for customer satisfaction (classified as moderate since the value is > 0.50) and 0.755 for customer loyalty (classified as strong since the value is > 0.75).

This model also meets the criteria for predictive relevance (Q-squared) with good predictive values for customer satisfaction (0.565) and customer loyalty (0.568). Based on an evaluation of effect sizes (F-squared) using the framework by Hair et al., (2021), brand image (0.771) and product quality (0.684) have significant effects on customer satisfaction, although their effects on customer loyalty are relatively small (0.148 and 0.046, respectively). Conversely, consumer satisfaction makes a significant contribution (0.655) to shaping consumer loyalty, affirming its role as the primary mediator linking brand image and product quality to loyalty.

a. Results of the Hypothesis Test Analysis

Direct effect analysis measures the immediate impact of an independent variable on a dependent variable, with a positive or negative path coefficient indicating the direction of the relationship. A hypothesis is regarded as significant if the P-value < 0.05 and the T-value > 1.96 (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4. Path Coefficient (Direct Effect) Test

	Original sample (O)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P-values
Brand Image -> Customer Satisfaction	0.558	10.531	0.000
Brand Image -> Customer Loyalty	0.253	3.903	0.000
Customer Satisfaction -> Customer Loyalty	0.630	9.975	0.000
Product Quality -> Customer Satisfaction	0.526	7.496	0.000
Product Quality -> Customer Loyalty	0.139	2.563	0.010

Source: *Printout SmartPLS 4, (2026)*

The path coefficients in Table 4 indicate that Product Quality has a positive and significant effect on Consumer Satisfaction and Consumer Loyalty. Brand Image also has a positive and significant effect on Consumer Satisfaction and Consumer Loyalty. Finally, Consumer Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on Consumer Loyalty. Next,

Indirect effect analysis is used to evaluate how the independent variable influences the dependent variable through a mediator. According to Carrion et al. (2018), partial mediation occurs when the independent variable affects the dependent variable directly or indirectly through a mediator.

Table 5. Specific Indirect Effect Test

	Original sample (O)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P-values
Brand Image -> Customer Satisfaction -> Customer Loyalty	0.352	7.577	0.000
Product Quality -> Customer Satisfaction -> Customer Loyalty	0.332	5.928	0.000

Source: *Printout SmartPLS 4, (2026)*

The mediation results indicate that Consumer Satisfaction significantly mediates the relationships between Product Quality and Consumer Loyalty, and between Brand Image and Consumer Loyalty. This model is classified as partial mediation, indicating that Consumer Satisfaction strengthens loyalty but is not the sole pathway influencing the dependent variable.

3.4 Discussion

a. Product Quality (X1) on Consumer Satisfaction (Z)

Product quality has a significant impact on customer satisfaction, confirming that product quality—particularly the durability of materials—is a key factor in determining Eiger customers' satisfaction levels. For consumers engaged in extreme activities such as mountain climbing and camping, the sturdiness of backpacks or everyday bags in withstanding heavy loads and friction from natural terrain provides a sense of security that directly meets their functional needs. This satisfaction is not merely a perception; it is the tangible result of product performance that endures without failure in the field, such as tears or broken seams. It is this long-term physical reliability that has been proven to foster high levels of satisfaction. This finding aligns with research by Taufik et al., (2022), which demonstrates that good product quality ultimately leads to consumer satisfaction.

b. Brand Image (X2) on Consumer Satisfaction (Z)

The findings of this study indicate that Eiger's brand image as a must-have product significantly drives consumer satisfaction, particularly among college students. For this productive age group, Eiger's strong reputation is not just a visual perception; it is a symbol of identity and pride, validated by its actual performance in the field when supporting their outdoor activities. Students are satisfied because their expectations about the brand's reputation align with the product's reliable functionality for both organizational activities and outdoor hobbies. These findings reinforce the research by Tahir et al. (2024), which found that brand image positively impacts consumer satisfaction when marketers successfully meet customer expectations.

c. Product Quality (X1) on Consumer Loyalty (Y)

Although product quality can foster customer loyalty toward Eiger, its contribution is relatively small because the materials' exceptional durability actually extends the product replacement cycle. Consumers, particularly the student segment, rarely switch to other brands, not because they buy frequently, but because the bags they own are durable, can withstand heavy loads, and are resistant to damage even in extreme conditions. This long-term physical reliability creates a sense of security that locks their choice onto Eiger when the time comes for periodic repurchases. This pattern

of loyalty, built on the consistency of product quality, aligns with the study by Ernest Grace et al. (2021), which states that a product's quality can instill trust in consumers because today's consumers strongly desire high-quality products; furthermore, if consumers are satisfied, it fosters a positive impression and consumer loyalty, as satisfied consumers will certainly return to make future purchases.

d. Brand Image (X2) on Consumer Loyalty (Y)

Although brand image can foster consumer loyalty, its contribution is relatively small because a strong reputation as a must-have brand serves primarily to build initial trust among nature-loving students. Eiger's positive image has become ingrained as a social standard that builds self-confidence among its peers. When this reputation is validated by real-world experiences in which the product performs optimally in the field, an emotional bond forms, leading them to consistently repurchase and rarely consider other brands. This psychological connection aligns with the findings of Lolemo & Pandya (2025), who explain that brand image plays a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions and behavior.

e. Consumer Satisfaction (Z) on Consumer Loyalty (Y)

These findings demonstrate that customer satisfaction plays a major role in fostering loyalty, with the fulfillment of technical needs being the key to long-term engagement. For students who are actively involved in high-intensity activities such as hiking and camping, the functional satisfaction Eiger products provide, which support their hobbies, creates a sense of security and positive reliance. The successful experience of navigating difficult terrain without equipment issues makes consumers reluctant to try other brands and leads them to consistently repurchase the product up to twice a year. This close relationship between a satisfying user experience and sustained commitment is supported by the findings of Abigail et al. (2024), which show that consumer loyalty stems from customer satisfaction, which serves as the primary foundation

f. Product Quality (X1) affects Consumer Loyalty (Y) is Mediated Through Consumer Satisfaction (Z)

These findings demonstrate that product quality and customer satisfaction reinforce each other in securing customer loyalty. For students engaged in extreme activities such as hiking and camping, the durability of carrier bags or daypacks that withstand damage from friction with the terrain and heavy loads provides tangible proof of functionality in the field. The successful experience of navigating hiking trails without technical issues fosters a sense of security and deep satisfaction, ultimately minimizing the desire to switch to other brands and encouraging regular repurchases. The crucial role of satisfaction stemming from product reliability in building long-term loyalty aligns with research by Abigail et al. (2024), which found that improved product quality increases customer satisfaction, in turn driving consumer loyalty.

g. Brand Image (X2) on Consumer Loyalty (Y) is Mediated Through Consumer Satisfaction (Z)

These findings demonstrate that a strong brand image and customer satisfaction are intertwined in securing customer loyalty. Among college students, Eiger's reputation as a top-tier brand offers an initial boost, building self-confidence within their social circles. When this brand's prestige is validated by real-world experiences—where the products prove reliable in supporting extreme activities like hiking and camping—deep functional satisfaction emerges. It is this combination of brand prestige and proven physical performance that effectively minimizes their desire to switch to competing brands and maintains consistent repurchase behavior. These findings are supported by

research by Win et al. (2025), which shows that brand image has an indirect effect on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that although product quality and brand image do not have a significant direct impact, both significantly enhance consumer satisfaction, the primary determinant of consumer loyalty. Theoretically, this study contributes to clarifying the literature by demonstrating that brand image and product quality do not directly foster loyalty but must operate through consumer satisfaction as a mediating factor. From a managerial perspective, Eiger should prioritize consistent material quality and align its brand reputation with actual field performance to ensure the satisfaction of discerning students who follow trends and compare with competing brands. However, this study is limited because it tested only one mediating variable, used a purely quantitative method, and focused solely on a student segment characterized by low purchasing power and low purchase frequency. These limitations suggest that future research would be strengthened by including multi-brand comparisons, expanding the sample to include working-age groups, and incorporating qualitative approaches and variables such as Brand Trust or Customer Engagement.

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