

Product Quality and Social Media Marketing as Drivers of Competitive Advantage: Evidence from Indonesia's Urban F&B Market

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of brand image, product quality, and social media marketing on competitive advantage among Mixue Ice Cream & Tea customers in West Jakarta, Indonesia. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was administered to 120 customers through accidental sampling across several outlets in West Jakarta. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression after validity and reliability screening in SPSS v.25. Product quality and social media marketing each show significant positive effects on competitive advantage, while brand image is not significant. Jointly, the three predictors are statistically significant, but the corrected model fit indicates modest explanatory power. The weak brand-image effect is discussed cautiously in relation to price-sensitive consumption and legitimacy-related public discourse; however, halal legitimacy was not directly measured and is therefore treated as an interpretive contextual explanation rather than a tested causal mechanism. The study highlights product quality consistency and interactive social media engagement as the most actionable managerial levers. Cross-sectional design, accidental sampling, single-city coverage, limited archived diagnostic output, and incomplete documented consent records for minor respondents limit causal and ethical generalization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The global food and beverage (F&B) industry has undergone rapid structural transformation in the twenty-first century, marked by intensifying market competition, accelerating digital adoption, and the growing role of social media in shaping consumer decisions and brand visibility (Hanaysha, 2022; Drossos et al., 2024). In Indonesia, the F&B sector remains strategically important, yet firms also operate within institutionally sensitive market conditions in

which quality delivery, customer satisfaction, and trust cues shape competitive outcomes (Dharmayanti et al., 2024; Azizah et al., 2025). Under these conditions, international franchise entrants intensify competitive pressure and require firms to refine their sources of differentiation more carefully.

Against this backdrop, competitive advantage — defined as a firm's ability to achieve superior market performance through distinctive resources, capabilities, and continuous innovation — remains a

central construct in strategic marketing research (Porter, 1997; Djiu et al., 2024). For F&B operators functioning in price-sensitive, high-density urban markets such as Jakarta, sustaining competitive advantage requires simultaneous management of product quality, brand meaning, and digital customer engagement (Putra & Nuvriasari, 2024; Djiu et al., 2024).

Three theoretically grounded antecedents have been linked to competitive advantage. First, brand image — the aggregate of consumer beliefs, impressions, and associations attached to a brand — can reduce purchase uncertainty and elevate perceived value (Dam & Dam, 2021; Mahri et al., 2024). Second, product quality — encompassing reliability, design integrity, physical form, and service capability — constitutes a foundational mechanism for generating customer satisfaction and repeat purchase behavior (Dharmayanti et al., 2024; Hongdiyanto & Liemena, 2021). Third, social media marketing — operationalized through content relevance, interactivity, entertainment, and customization — enables two-way engagement that shapes awareness, loyalty, and purchase-related outcomes (Hanaysha, 2022; Drossos et al., 2024; Savitri et al., 2022).

Mixue Ice Cream & Tea represents a relevant context because its rapid expansion in Indonesia coincided with intense public attention to halal legitimacy and brand reputation in social media conversations, including discourse surrounding the period before and after the 2023 halal determination (Nury et al., 2024; Tandiawan & Wasesa, 2023). In a Muslim-majority market, communication about halal assurance may influence whether favorable brand associations are converted into behavioral preference and competitive advantage (Azizah et al., 2025; Bariroh & Faraby, 2024).

Despite a growing body of literature on competitive advantage in consumer markets, two gaps remain. First, recent evidence is fragmented across outcomes and sectors: product quality consistently strengthens competitive advantage or related customer outcomes (Putra & Nuvriasari, 2024; Wijaya & Defrizal, 2024), while social media marketing tends to improve brand loyalty and purchase-related outcomes (Hanaysha, 2022; Manyanga et al., 2024). However, the strength of brand-image effects appears more context-sensitive, especially in markets where legitimacy and trust cues are salient (Dam & Dam, 2021; Mahri et al., 2024). Second, the simultaneous comparative influence of brand image, product quality, and social media marketing on competitive advantage at the customer level remains under-examined in the Indonesian urban F&B setting. Accordingly, this study contributes by juxtaposing these three predictors in one model and by offering a cautious contextual interpretation of the non-significant brand-image result rather than claiming to test halal legitimacy directly.

This study pursues four research objectives: (RO1) to examine the effect of brand image on competitive advantage; (RO2) to examine the effect of product quality on competitive advantage; (RO3) to examine the effect of social media marketing on competitive advantage; and (RO4) to examine the simultaneous effect of all three antecedents on competitive advantage among Mixue Ice Cream customers in West Jakarta, Indonesia.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

This study is anchored in Porter's (1997) competitive advantage theory, which posits that sustainable market superiority arises when a firm's distinguishing competencies — assets, skills, and capabilities — are coherently aligned with the critical success factors of its industry. Porter (1997) identifies two fundamental pathways to competitive advantage: cost leadership and product differentiation, through which consumers perceive unique value. For F&B operators in high-density urban markets, differentiation is often the more feasible pathway.

Tampi (2016) extends this logic by identifying three structural prerequisites for sustainable competitive advantage: a solid resource-and-capability base (basis of competition), alignment with an appropriate target market (where you compete), and a clear understanding of rival positioning (who you compete against). More recent evidence also shows that competitive advantage continues to function as a meaningful mechanism linking organizational capabilities and performance in contemporary Indonesian business contexts (Djiu et al., 2024).

Consumer behavior theory provides a complementary micro-level lens. Kotler (2013) defines consumer behavior as a dynamic interaction between affective and cognitive processes, behavioral responses, and environmental stimuli through which individuals pursue need satisfaction. Laetitia et al. (2021) reinforce this by characterizing consumer behavior as a sequential process — search, purchase, use, evaluation, and post-consumption response — at each stage of which brand image, product quality, and social media engagement exert theoretically distinct influences on competitive outcomes.

2.2 Brand Image and Competitive Advantage

Brand image is defined as the set of perceptions, beliefs, and associations held by consumers toward a brand. In service and consumer markets, a favorable brand image can improve confidence, satisfaction formation, and loyalty-related outcomes (Dam & Dam, 2021). In halal-sensitive categories, brand image also interacts with legitimacy cues and product knowledge, which can strengthen or weaken

purchasing responses (Mahri et al., 2024). Operationally, brand image is assessed through three dimensions: brand advantage, brand strength, and brand uniqueness.

The mechanism through which brand image generates competitive advantage is perceptual differentiation. A strong image can reduce uncertainty, elevate perceived value, and create preference asymmetry relative to competitors. However, recent evidence suggests that the magnitude of brand effects depends on context, especially where institutional or religious legitimacy becomes part of consumer evaluation (Dam & Dam, 2021; Mahri et al., 2024; Azizah et al., 2025).

H₁: Brand image has a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage.

2.3 Product Quality and Competitive Advantage

Product quality is conceptualized as the totality of attributes embedded in a product that enable it to fulfill consumer needs and exceed expectations. In F&B settings, product quality and service-related delivery quality remain central drivers of customer satisfaction, repeat purchase, and loyalty formation (Dharmayanti et al., 2024; Hongdiyanto & Liemena, 2021). The competitive mechanism operates through a satisfaction-loyalty chain: when consumers perceive reliability, design, form, and service capability positively, the focal brand gains a more defensible market position. Recent Indonesian evidence also shows that product quality positively and significantly affects competitive advantage in SME and culinary contexts (Putra & Nuvriasari, 2024; Wijaya & Defrizal, 2024).

H₂: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage.

2.4 Social Media Marketing and Competitive Advantage

Social media marketing (SMM) is defined as a set of direct and indirect brand communication activities conducted through social platforms to stimulate awareness, engagement, trust, and action. Recent literature emphasizes that effective content strategy, interactivity, relevance, and informativeness are key mechanisms by which social media shapes consumer responses (Hanaysha, 2022; Drossos et al., 2024). In turn, social-media-based engagement can strengthen brand image and purchase intention, especially in digitally intensive categories (Savitri et al., 2022). Recent empirical studies also show that social media marketing improves brand loyalty and relational outcomes, including in hospitality and service-intensive industries (Manyanga et al., 2024).

H₃: Social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage.

2.5 Joint Effect

While each antecedent individually contributes to competitive positioning, Porter's (1997) differentiation framework implies that superiority

accrues most robustly when firms simultaneously manage multiple value-creation levers. Brand image shapes cognitive differentiation, product quality drives experiential differentiation, and SMM sustains digital differentiation. Jointly, they constitute the strategic differentiation portfolio through which F&B operators convert internal capabilities into market-level competitive advantage.

H₄: Brand image, product quality, and social media marketing jointly have a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage.

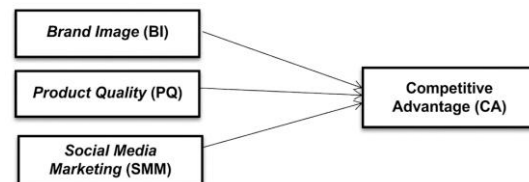


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Table 1. Summary of Prior Studies

Author	Title	Key Findings
Hanaysha (2022)	Impact of social media marketing features on consumer's purchase decision in the fast-food industry: Brand trust as a mediator	Informativeness, perceived relevance, and interactivity positively affect purchase decisions in the fast-food industry; entertainment is not significant.
Putra & Nuvriasari (2024)	The effect of market and entrepreneurial orientation, product quality on the competitive advantage of batik MSMEs in Yogyakarta	Product quality has a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage, whereas market orientation and entrepreneurial orientation are not significant.
Wijaya & Defrizal (2024)	The influence of product innovation and product quality on competitive advantage in IGI Bandar Lampung eating houses	Product innovation and product quality both show positive effects on competitive advantage in a restaurant context.
Manyanga et al. (2024)	The effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty in the hospitality industry in Zimbabwe: The moderating role of age	Social media marketing positively affects brand loyalty, and age moderates the relationship.
Mahri et al. (2024)	Integrating country of origin, brand image and halal product knowledge: The case of the South Korean skincare in Indonesia	Brand image significantly affects purchasing decisions, while halal product knowledge shapes interpretation within a Muslim-majority market.

Source: Compiled from validated sources

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a positivist paradigm with a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. The positivist stance is appropriate given the study's objective to confirm hypothesized causal relationships between brand image, product quality, social media marketing, and competitive advantage through the hypothetico-deductive method (Khilmiyah, 2016). A structured questionnaire instrument was employed as the primary data

collection mechanism, consistent with the study's aim to generate generalizable micro-level evidence at the customer sampling unit (Sugiyono, 2018).

3.2 Population, Sampling, and Data Collection

The target population comprises all active customers of Mixue Ice Cream & Tea outlets located within the West Jakarta administrative district. Because the total population could not be enumerated reliably, accidental sampling was employed (Sekaran & Bougie, 2017). The researcher systematically visited several Mixue outlets in West Jakarta during the 2023-2024 data-collection period and approached customers present at the time of visit, yielding a final usable sample of N = 120 respondents (Arikunto, 2013). This outlet-based field procedure was intended to avoid dependence on a single branch, although the exact outlet-by-outlet distribution was not preserved in the archived materials. With three predictors in the regression model, the final sample size was considered adequate for an exploratory multiple-regression design, while still limiting probabilistic generalization.

Data were collected via two modalities: paper-based questionnaires administered on-site and a digitally equivalent version distributed through Google Forms via WhatsApp. All items used a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), producing ordinal-scaled responses that were treated as composite-scale data for regression analysis (Sugiyono, 2018). The sample was predominantly female (75.8%; n = 91), with the largest age cohort being respondents above 25 years (65.8%; n = 79). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents were informed of the study purpose, the non-compulsory nature of participation, and response confidentiality. Because the archived source files do not preserve formal parental or guardian consent documentation for the 10-15 age group, this aspect is acknowledged explicitly as an ethical limitation and the related findings should be interpreted with caution.

3.3 Measurement Instruments

All constructs were operationalized using multi-item reflective scales drawn from established sources in the competitive advantage, brand management, product quality, and social media marketing literature. The full measurement structure is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Measurement Instruments

Variable	Conceptual Definition	Dimensions	Indicators	Source
Competitive Advantage (KB)	Firm capacity to leverage superior skills and resources to evaluate internal strengths/weaknesses and sustain performance	Flexibility in consumer response Pricing competitiveness	Responsiveness; Complaint handling Price-quality congruence; Price-location congruence	Tampi (2016); Djuu et al. (2024)

		advantages over rivals	Quality output	Customer satisfaction	
			Differentiation	Product innovation; Brand development	
Brand Image (BI)	Public perception of a company or product reflecting beliefs, impressions, and associations held by consumers	Brand advantage	Brand strength	Store location; Product hygiene	Dam & Dam (2021); Mahri et al. (2024)
			Brand uniqueness	Activity visibility; Market popularity	
Product Quality (KP)	Totality of product attributes directed at satisfying and exceeding consumer needs and expectations	Reliability	Design	Service standards; Durability	Dharmayanti et al. (2024); Hongdiyanto & Liemena (2021)
			Form	Aesthetics; External appearance	
			Service capability	Size; Physical structure	
				Communication; Frequency; Product improvement	
Social Media Marketing (SM)	All direct and indirect brand communications via social web tools to build brand awareness, recognition, recall, and consumer action	Entertainment	Interaction	Social media usage; Content engagement	Hanaysha (2022); Drossos et al. (2024)
			Trendiness	Information sharing; Opinion expression	
			Customization	Current information; Real-time relevance	
				Personalized information; Tailored service	

Source: Compiled from various sources

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Construct validity was assessed using Pearson Product Moment correlation (Item-Total Correlation), comparing each item's r-computed against the critical r-table value at df = N - k (Sekaran & Bougie, 2017; Yusup, 2018). All 32 retained items across the four constructs satisfied the criterion at the p < 0.01 level. Internal consistency reliability was assessed via Cronbach's alpha (α), applying Gujarati's (2019) threshold: α = 0.601-0.800 as strong reliability and α = 0.801-1.000 as very strong reliability.

3.5 Model Specification

Hypotheses H1-H4 are tested simultaneously via ordinary least squares multiple linear regression (Ghozali, 2013). The model specification is:

$$KB = \alpha + \beta_1 BI + \beta_2 KP + \beta_3 SM + \epsilon$$

Where KB = Competitive Advantage; α = Constant; β₁, β₂, β₃ = Regression coefficients; BI =

Brand Image; KP = Product Quality; SM = Social Media Marketing; ε = Error term. Partial effects (H1-H3) are evaluated via the t-test at $\alpha = 0.050$ (Ghozali, 2013). The simultaneous joint effect (H4) is evaluated via F-test/ANOVA (Hammad et al., 2013). Explanatory power is quantified via Adjusted R². All estimation procedures were executed using SPSS v.25.

3.6 Regression Diagnostic Reporting

To align the manuscript with standard regression-reporting practice, diagnostic checks should cover residual normality, multicollinearity, and heteroskedasticity. In practical terms, residual normality can be examined through residual plots and/or normality statistics; multicollinearity through tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF); and heteroskedasticity through residual scatterplots or auxiliary significance-based tests. However, the archived thesis-derived files accompanying the present revision do not preserve the original SPSS diagnostic tables or plots. Accordingly, this revised manuscript reports the diagnostic procedure transparently but does not claim detailed diagnostic values that cannot be independently verified from the retained file set.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Sample Profile and Descriptive Statistics

The final analytical sample consists of 120 respondents drawn from Mixue Ice Cream & Tea outlets across West Jakarta. Gender composition is skewed toward female respondents (75.8%; $n = 91$) relative to male (24.2%; $n = 29$). Age distribution is concentrated in the above-25 cohort (65.8%; $n = 79$), followed by the 21-25 cohort (15.8%; $n = 19$), the 16-20 cohort (11.7%; $n = 14$), and the 10-15 cohort (6.7%; $n = 8$). Because the archived materials do not retain separate consent records for the minor subgroup, these descriptive results should be interpreted with ethical caution. Descriptive statistics for all study variables are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Brand Image (BI)	120	18.34	17.50	4.307	11	30
Product Quality (KP)	120	29.75	29.00	6.488	13	45
Social Media Marketing (SM)	120	25.97	25.00	5.505	17	40
Competitive Advantage (KB)	120	28.29	27.00	6.754	15	45

Note: $N = 120$. Source: data processed by the author (2024)

4.2 Validity and Reliability Assessment

Construct validity was tested using Pearson Product Moment Item-Total Correlation. Results confirm that all 32 retained items achieve r-computed values exceeding the relevant r-table threshold, with two-tailed significance values of 0.000 ($p < 0.01$) across all constructs. No item was excluded from the final analytical instrument, indicating acceptable convergent validity across the four measurement blocks. Internal consistency reliability results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability Assessment Summary

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Category
Brand Image (BI)	0.671	6	Strong
Product Quality (KP)	0.708	9	Strong
Social Media Marketing (SM)	0.693	8	Strong
Competitive Advantage (KB)	0.716	9	Strong

Note: Strong reliability = Cronbach's alpha 0.601-0.800 (Gujarati, 2019). Source: data processed by the author (2024)

4.3 Multiple Linear Regression Estimation

Hypotheses H1-H4 were tested via ordinary least squares multiple linear regression with Competitive Advantage (KB) as the dependent variable. The estimated regression equation is:

$$KB = 11.049 + 0.165BI + 0.238KP + 0.275SM + \varepsilon$$

The constant term ($\alpha = 11.049$; $t = 2.777$; $p = 0.006$) is statistically significant. The unstandardized coefficients reveal that each unit increment in SM produces the largest absolute competitive advantage gain ($B = 0.275$), followed by KP ($B = 0.238$) and BI ($B = 0.165$). Standardized beta coefficients confirm this ordering: KP ($\beta = 0.228$) and SM ($\beta = 0.224$) exert comparable relative magnitudes, while BI contributes the weakest standardized effect ($\beta = 0.105$). Full regression output is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Variable	Coeff	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	11.049	3.980	—	2.777	0.006
Brand Image (BI)	0.165	0.139	0.105	1.186	0.238
Product Quality (KP)	0.238	0.091	0.228	2.617	0.010
Social Media Marketing (SM)	0.275	0.109	0.224	2.531	0.013

Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage (KB). Source: data processed by the author (2024)

4.4 Partial Hypothesis Testing (t-Test)

Partial effects are evaluated against the t-table critical value of 1.981 ($df = 116$; $\alpha = 0.050$, two-tailed). H1 — Brand Image: t -computed = 1.186 < t -

table = 1.981; $p = 0.238 > 0.050$. H0 is retained; H1 is rejected. Brand Image does not exert a statistically significant partial effect on Competitive Advantage. H2 — Product Quality: $t\text{-computed} = 2.617 > t\text{-table} = 1.981$; $p = 0.010 < 0.050$. H0 is rejected; H2 is accepted. Product Quality exerts a statistically significant positive effect. H3 — Social Media Marketing: $t\text{-computed} = 2.531 > t\text{-table} = 1.981$; $p = 0.013 < 0.050$. H0 is rejected; H3 is accepted. Social Media Marketing exerts a statistically significant positive effect.

4.5 Simultaneous Hypothesis Testing (F-Test)

The joint significance of all three predictors is evaluated via ANOVA. The F-computed value is 6.566 (df-regression = 3; df-residual = 116), which substantially exceeds the F-table critical value of 2.68 at $\alpha = 0.050$. The associated significance is $p = 0.000 < 0.050$. H0 is rejected; H4 is accepted. Brand Image, Product Quality, and Social Media Marketing jointly exert a statistically significant simultaneous effect on Competitive Advantage. Results are reported in Table 6.

Table 6. ANOVA Results (F-Test)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	788.042	3	262.681	6.566	0.000
Residual	4640.749	116	40.006	—	—
Total	5428.792	119	—	—	—

Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Marketing, Product Quality, Brand Image; Dependent Variable: KB. Source: data processed by the author (2024)

4.6 Coefficient of Determination

The coefficient of determination was recalculated from the ANOVA results to resolve the internal inconsistency identified in the previous draft. Using $SSR = 788.042$ and $SST = 5428.792$, the corrected R^2 is 0.145, indicating that the predictor set explains 14.5% of the variance in Competitive Advantage. The corresponding multiple correlation coefficient is $R = 0.381$, and the corrected Adjusted R^2 is 0.123. Accordingly, the model is statistically significant but has modest explanatory power, implying that a substantial proportion of variance is attributable to variables not included in the present specification. The estimated standard error of the model is 6.325. The consolidated hypothesis adjudication is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Summary

Path	Coeff	β	t / F	Sig.	Decision
BI → KB	0.165	0.105	1.186	0.238	H1 Rejected
KP → KB	0.238	0.228	2.617	0.010	H2 Accepted
SM → KB	0.275	0.224	2.531	0.013	H3 Accepted
BI+KP+SM → KB	—	—	6.566	0.000	H4 Accepted
Adj. R^2	0.123				

Note: t-table = 1.981; F-table = 2.68; $\alpha = 0.050$; $N = 120$; Source: data processed by the author (2024)

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview of Findings

The empirical results yield a theoretically nuanced pattern: two of the three hypothesized antecedents — Product Quality and Social Media Marketing — are confirmed as significant positive drivers of competitive advantage among Mixue Ice Cream customers in West Jakarta, while Brand Image fails to achieve statistical significance as a standalone predictor. The simultaneous model, however, is strongly supported, confirming that the three antecedents function as a coherent strategic configuration.

5.2 Brand Image and Competitive Advantage

The rejection of H1 is the study's most theoretically provocative finding. The result diverges from recent studies showing positive brand-image effects on purchase decisions and relational outcomes, particularly when brands possess stronger legitimacy and trust signals (Dam & Dam, 2021; Mahri et al., 2024).

The divergence is most productively interpreted through the lens of consumer behavior theory. Kotler (2013) defines consumer behavior as a dynamic interaction between affective-cognitive processes and environmental stimuli, emphasizing that need satisfaction — not brand cognition per se — is the proximate driver of purchase decisions. In West Jakarta's mass-market urban F&B context, where Mixue competes primarily on price accessibility and product variety, consumers appear to prioritize tangible product experience over brand-associative cognition when forming competitive preference judgments.

A market-specific legitimacy condition may also help explain the weak brand-image effect. Public discussion about Mixue's halal status became salient in Indonesia, and sentiment analysis reported shifts in brand reputation after the halal announcement (Nury et al., 2024; Tandiawan & Wasesa, 2023). More broadly, recent evidence shows that halal certification is linked to stronger performance and purchasing responses among Indonesian MSMEs and consumers (Azizah et al., 2025; Bariroh & Faraby, 2024). However, because halal legitimacy was not directly operationalized in the questionnaire, this explanation should be treated as a contextual interpretation rather than as a tested causal mechanism.

5.3 Product Quality and Competitive Advantage

The confirmation of H2 is consistent with the dominant empirical consensus in the competitive advantage literature. Recent F&B evidence shows that quality-related attributes remain central to customer satisfaction and post-purchase evaluation (Dharmayanti et al., 2024). Likewise, Hongdiyanto

and Liemena (2021) demonstrate that product quality is a primary determinant of satisfaction and loyalty in a restaurant setting, reinforcing the quality-satisfaction-advocacy chain.

The present finding also aligns with recent Indonesian studies showing that product quality positively affects competitive advantage in both SME and culinary contexts (Putra & Nuvriasari, 2024; Wijaya & Defrizal, 2024). Mechanistically, quality in the Mixue context operates through multiple interlocking pathways: taste consistency and product variety generate initial satisfaction; standardized service delivery builds reliability expectations; and aesthetic product presentation reinforces perceived value.

5.4 Social Media Marketing and Competitive Advantage

The confirmation of H3 aligns with the emerging evidence base on SMM's competitive role in F&B and service markets. Hanaysha (2022) demonstrated that informativeness, interactivity, and perceived relevance positively affect purchase decision in the fast-food industry, while Manyanga et al. (2024) show that social media marketing positively affects brand loyalty in hospitality settings. Savitri et al. (2022) further confirm that social media marketing contributes to purchase intention through brand-related pathways.

The theoretical mechanism is consistent with contemporary content-strategy research, which frames social media as a participatory and relational communication infrastructure rather than a one-way promotional channel (Drossos et al., 2024). In Mixue's case, this communication function is strategically significant because it helps shape ongoing consumer interpretation of value, relevance, and legitimacy.

5.5 Joint Effect and Model Interpretation

The acceptance of H4 confirms that Brand Image, Product Quality, and Social Media Marketing function as a strategically coherent antecedent portfolio for competitive advantage, even though Brand Image fails to contribute significant independent variance at the partial level. This pattern is consistent with Porter's (1997) differentiation logic, under which competitive advantage is shaped by multiple interdependent levers rather than a single dominant attribute. At the same time, the corrected model fit statistics ($R^2 = 0.145$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.123$) indicate only modest explanatory power. Therefore, the joint model should be interpreted as statistically meaningful but substantively incomplete, with additional drivers such as price perception, brand trust, religiosity, service experience, and outlet-level variation likely remaining outside the model.

Practically, Mixue's management should not interpret the non-significant brand image result as grounds for disinvesting in brand development. Rather, the evidence suggests that brand image alone is insufficient in this context and should be supported

by more tangible competitive signals, particularly product quality consistency, social media interaction quality, and trustworthy communication. Because the model fit is modest, managers should also recognize that competitive advantage is likely influenced by additional factors outside the present study.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion

This study examined the effects of Brand Image, Product Quality, and Social Media Marketing on the competitive advantage of Mixue Ice Cream & Tea among customers in West Jakarta, Indonesia. Product Quality and Social Media Marketing each exert statistically significant positive effects on competitive advantage, confirming H2 and H3 respectively. Brand Image does not achieve independent significance as a partial predictor, leading to the rejection of H1. At the model level, the three antecedents jointly exert a significant simultaneous effect on competitive advantage, confirming H4. However, after correcting the internal inconsistency in the previous draft, the model explains a modest share of variance only ($R^2 = 0.145$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.123$).

The non-significance of brand image is interpreted cautiously in relation to two contextual forces: the price-sensitive and high-trial character of the West Jakarta mass-market F&B segment (Kotler, 2013; Laetitia et al., 2021), and the salience of legitimacy-related public discourse in a Muslim-majority market (Azizah et al., 2025; Nury et al., 2024). Because halal legitimacy was not directly measured, this explanation remains interpretive rather than causal.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study provides evidence that Porter's (1997) differentiation framework can operate asymmetrically at the construct level: some antecedents may be significant while others are not, yet the overall model can remain jointly significant. At the same time, the corrected explanatory power is modest, suggesting that future research should extend the model rather than overstate its predictive reach. The study also indicates that legitimacy-related discourse may shape how brand image is interpreted in the market, although that pathway was not directly measured here.

6.3 Practical Implications

For Mixue Ice Cream management in West Jakarta, three evidence-based actions follow directly from the findings. First, product quality standardization across outlets should remain the operational foundation. Second, social media marketing deserves sustained attention as a practical engagement tool, especially through interactivity and customization that help clarify value propositions and strengthen community attachment. Third, legitimacy-related communication, including halal assurance

where relevant, should be conveyed carefully and consistently. These recommendations should be applied prudently because the present model explains only a limited proportion of the observed variance.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research

Five limitations qualify the study's conclusions. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference. Second, the sample is geographically confined to West Jakarta and was obtained through accidental sampling, limiting generalizability. Third, the corrected model fit indicates that important explanatory variables remain omitted. Fourth, the archived thesis-derived materials do not preserve the detailed SPSS diagnostic tables for normality, multicollinearity, and heteroskedasticity, so those diagnostics cannot be independently reproduced in this revision. Fifth, because the respondent profile includes the 10-15 age group while formal parental or guardian consent records were not preserved in the archive, the ethical reporting of the minor subgroup remains a limitation that future studies should address explicitly.

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