

THE INFLUENCE OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH AND BRAND IMAGE ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY TOWARD HOTTO PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and Brand Image on Customer Loyalty for Hotto products amidst the nutritional content claim discrepancy issue. The rapid growth of Indonesia's health food and beverage industry has been accompanied by challenges related to overclaiming of nutritional content, which may undermine consumer trust and loyalty. This study was conducted in Bekasi using a quantitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 100 Hotto consumers who were aware of the overclaim issue. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed using SPSS version 30. Partial test (t-test) results show that eWOM has a t-value of 4.328 > 1.660 with significance 0.000 < 0.05, so H1 is accepted — eWOM has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. Brand image obtained a t-value of 3.659 > 1.660 with significance 0.000 < 0.05, so H2 is accepted — brand image likewise has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.445$ indicates that both variables jointly explain 44.5% of the variation in customer loyalty. This study confirms that, despite the overclaim issue, positive eWOM and a strong brand image remain key determinants that sustain consumer loyalty for Hotto products.

Keywords: Brand Image, Customer Loyalty, Electronic Word of Mouth, Health Product, Overclaim.

INTRODUCTION

The healthy food and beverage industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth in recent years. According to data from the Ministry of Industry (2024), this sector contributed 39.10% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the non-oil and gas manufacturing industry, with export values reaching US\$41.70 billion. This rapid growth has been driven, in part, by increasing consumer awareness of the importance of consuming healthy and nutritionally balanced products. However, this remarkable expansion has also been accompanied by several challenges, one of which is the practice of overclaiming nutritional content, which has the potential to mislead consumers and negatively affect their loyalty.

The phenomenon of nutritional overclaims in healthy food and beverage products has attracted increasing public attention since late 2023, when a TikTok content creator named Dennis, through the account @naktekpang, uploaded laboratory test results for several products marketed as healthy beverages. The tests were conducted by PT Saraswanti Indo Genetech (SIG), an accredited laboratory certified by the National Accreditation Committee (KAN) under accreditation number LP-184-IDN and compliant with the SNI ISO/IEC 17025:2008 standard. Among the products tested, Hotto received