

The Influence of Brand Image and Service Quality on Indihome Customer Loyalty at PT Telekomunikasi Indonesia (Telkom) in Gunungsitoli City

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of communication technology and the increasing demand for internet access have intensified competition among internet service providers in Indonesia. IndiHome, as a leading product of PT. Telekomunikasi Indonesia (Telkom), faces challenges in sustaining customer loyalty, particularly in regions such as Gunungsitoli City where infrastructure limitations often lead to unstable connections and delayed technical responses. This study aims to analyze the influence of brand image and service quality on customer loyalty toward IndiHome in Gunungsitoli. A quantitative approach was employed, with data collected through questionnaires distributed to 73 customers. The research variables included brand image and service quality as independent variables, and customer loyalty as the dependent variable. Data analysis was conducted using validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, multiple linear regression, t-test, F-test, and the coefficient of determination. The findings reveal that brand image has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. Similarly, service quality also exerts a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty. Simultaneously, both brand image and service quality significantly affect loyalty. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.529 indicates that 52.9% of customer loyalty is explained by these two variables, while the rest is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's modern era, telecommunication has become an essential component of daily life. The ability to transmit information quickly and effectively across distances has reshaped how people interact and conduct activities. The rise of the internet has significantly transformed social and economic behavior, as individuals and organizations increasingly depend on digital platforms for communication, education, commerce, and entertainment (Garad et al., 2022). As the digital economy continues to expand, the demand for reliable internet services also increases, compelling providers to maintain service quality and strong brand positioning to remain competitive.

The Indonesian telecommunication industry reflects these dynamics, where companies compete intensely to capture market share and retain customers. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of services; instead, they actively evaluate and compare providers based on quality, reliability, and overall customer experience (Muhammad Asir et al., 2023). In this context, maintaining customer loyalty becomes a critical strategy, since acquiring new customers generally costs far more

than retaining existing ones. Hence, customer loyalty serves as a valuable intangible asset that can secure long-term sustainability and profitability for internet service providers.

IndiHome, a flagship brand of PT. Telekomunikasi Indonesia (Telkom), has been a prominent player in Indonesia's internet service market, offering integrated packages of internet, telephony, and television. Despite its nationwide presence, challenges persist in certain regions, including Gunungsitoli City in Nias, where geographical conditions and infrastructural limitations contribute to unstable service quality (Rohman et al., 2023). Customers in these areas often experience disruptions during adverse weather conditions, slow technical responses, and varying levels of satisfaction. These conditions directly affect customer perceptions of IndiHome's brand image and its ability to retain loyal customers.

The concept of brand image plays an integral role in shaping customer perceptions and behaviors. A strong brand image communicates reliability, quality, and trustworthiness, which in turn creates positive associations in the minds of customers. Previous studies emphasize that when customers perceive a brand positively, they are more likely to remain loyal and recommend it to others (Cave et al., 2022). Conversely, a weak or negative brand image may lead customers to switch providers, especially in competitive markets where alternatives are readily available.

Service quality is another crucial determinant of customer loyalty, particularly in the service sector. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's SERVQUAL model highlights five key dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. In the telecommunication industry, these elements translate into the ability of providers to deliver consistent connections, address complaints promptly, ensure technical competence, and provide customer-oriented services. High-quality service not only meets but also exceeds customer expectations, thereby fostering satisfaction and loyalty (Arsawan et al., 2022).

In the case of IndiHome in Gunungsitoli, customer experiences are varied. While some users express satisfaction with IndiHome's packages and reliability during normal conditions, others complain about recurring service disruptions and delayed maintenance responses. This inconsistency contributes to mixed brand perceptions, which could weaken overall customer loyalty (Mahazan, 2024). In addition, the presence of emerging competitors in the region intensifies pressure on IndiHome to strengthen its competitive advantage through improved service quality and effective brand management.

Loyalty does not arise automatically; it requires deliberate strategies to build and sustain. Customers typically undergo several decision-making processes before forming loyalty, including evaluating services based on word-of-mouth recommendations, advertisements, and past experiences (Stark et al., 2022). Once satisfied, customers tend to repeat purchases and even act as brand advocates, recommending the service to others. Hence, loyalty encompasses not only repeat purchases but also emotional attachment and advocacy, which are invaluable for business growth in competitive markets.

The importance of customer loyalty is further emphasized by its strategic benefits. Loyal customers reduce marketing costs, increase revenue stability, and enhance customer lifetime value. They are less sensitive to price changes and more resistant to competitors' promotional offers. For IndiHome, achieving high customer loyalty in Gunungsitoli means not only sustaining its customer base but also creating opportunities for expanding digital services among households and small businesses in the region (Sulaiman et al., 2023).

Past research on the relationship between brand image, service quality, and customer loyalty has shown consistent results, with most studies confirming their positive influence. However, few studies have specifically focused on Gunungsitoli, a city with unique geographical and infrastructural conditions compared to larger metropolitan areas (Pant et al., 2024). This gap underscores the need for localized research to understand how these variables interact in a regional setting. Such insights are valuable for both academic contributions and practical implications for service providers operating in remote or semi-urban regions.

Furthermore, research in other cities such as Jakarta, Medan, and Semarang has often included additional mediating variables such as customer satisfaction. While such models offer a comprehensive understanding, this study narrows its focus directly to the impact of brand image and service quality on customer loyalty. By excluding mediating variables, the research seeks to highlight

the direct relationships and quantify the extent to which these independent variables explain variations in customer loyalty (Permata et al., 2025).

The competitive landscape of internet services in Indonesia is increasingly dynamic, driven by technological innovation and changing customer preferences. Providers are compelled to continually enhance their offerings, upgrade infrastructure, and adapt to shifting consumer demands. In this environment, the ability to maintain a strong brand image and deliver superior service quality becomes indispensable. IndiHome, as a leading provider, must address these challenges effectively to secure its position and sustain customer loyalty (Waruwu, 2024).

Additionally, customer expectations are continuously evolving in line with digital transformation. Customers today expect uninterrupted connectivity, rapid problem resolution, and personalized interactions. They compare local providers with international benchmarks, raising the standard of service delivery. Failure to meet these expectations risks damaging the brand image and eroding loyalty, especially among younger, tech-savvy consumers who are highly responsive to service performance (Ndruru et al., 2025).

This study is motivated by both theoretical and practical considerations. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of literature on brand image, service quality, and loyalty in the telecommunication sector. Practically, it provides actionable insights for IndiHome and other service providers in similar regions to refine their marketing and service strategies (Halawa, Anggraini, et al., 2023). By identifying the extent to which brand image and service quality drive loyalty, the study offers evidence-based recommendations for improving customer retention and satisfaction.

Ultimately, the research seeks to address three main questions: (1) Does brand image significantly influence customer loyalty toward IndiHome in Gunungsitoli? (2) Does service quality significantly influence customer loyalty? and (3) Do brand image and service quality simultaneously affect customer loyalty? By answering these questions, the study aims to fill the identified research gap and provide a framework for improving service delivery and customer relationship management in the telecommunication industry.

In conclusion, this introduction establishes the context of the research by highlighting the challenges faced by IndiHome in Gunungsitoli, the theoretical relevance of brand image and service quality, the competitive landscape of the telecommunication industry, and the importance of customer loyalty as a strategic objective. The subsequent sections of this paper elaborate on the research methodology, findings, and implications, with the expectation that the study will contribute to both academic discourse and managerial practice in enhancing customer loyalty.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach, consistent with positivist principles, to examine the relationship between brand image, service quality, and customer loyalty. The quantitative method was chosen because it allows measurable and statistical testing of hypotheses, providing objective and reliable results (Halawa, Sridadi, et al., 2023). The research design involved a survey-based strategy, enabling the collection of primary data directly from customers who actively use IndiHome services in Gunungsitoli City.

The population of this study consisted of all IndiHome customers in Gunungsitoli, from which a sample of 73 respondents was selected using purposive sampling. Respondents were chosen based on their active usage and experience with IndiHome services, ensuring that their responses reflected accurate and relevant perceptions. The research variables included brand image (X1) and service quality (X2) as independent variables, and customer loyalty (Y) as the dependent variable. The indicators of brand image were adapted from Aaker (1991), while service quality was measured using the SERVQUAL dimensions by (Apreyani, 2025) in Parasuraman et al. (1988). Customer loyalty indicators followed the framework proposed by Kotler (2016).

Data collection was conducted through structured questionnaires distributed to respondents, utilizing a Likert scale to capture their perceptions. The data were analyzed using SPSS software with multiple stages, including validity and reliability testing, classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity), multiple linear regression, and hypothesis testing through t-tests and F-tests. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was also calculated to assess the explanatory power of the independent variables on customer loyalty (Pamungkas & Praditya, 2024). This

systematic methodology ensured the robustness of the findings and provided a solid foundation for drawing conclusions and recommendations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study are presented based on descriptive statistics, instrument testing, classical assumption testing, and hypothesis testing. The demographic analysis of respondents showed that IndiHome customers in Gunungsitoli comprised a diverse group in terms of age, gender, education, and occupation. Most respondents were within the productive age range of 21–40 years, indicating that internet usage is strongly linked to educational and business activities. Male and female respondents were almost evenly distributed, reflecting that IndiHome services are used by households across different segments. Educational backgrounds varied from high school graduates to university degree holders, while occupations included civil servants, private employees, entrepreneurs, and students, highlighting the diverse needs of internet users in the region (Stark et al., 2022).

Descriptive analysis of the brand image variable revealed that the majority of respondents agreed that IndiHome has established itself as a professional and modern brand. Customers generally perceived IndiHome as a service provider that attempts to meet market demands and cater to a wide segment of users. However, responses also indicated some dissatisfaction with the consistency of IndiHome's performance in maintaining its brand promise. This suggests that while the overall image of IndiHome remains positive, there are gaps between customer expectations and actual service delivery (Sciences, 2022).

For the service quality variable, descriptive findings showed mixed results. Respondents acknowledged that IndiHome offers adequate tangibles in terms of physical facilities and service tools, and many appreciated the friendliness of customer service staff. Reliability was rated positively in terms of service availability under normal conditions, yet customers expressed dissatisfaction with network reliability during adverse weather (Muhammad Asir et al., 2023). Responsiveness received lower scores, as many customers felt that complaint handling and technician response were slow, particularly in remote areas. These findings underline the uneven quality of service delivery in Gunungsitoli.

Regarding customer loyalty, descriptive statistics suggested that many customers demonstrated repeat purchase behavior, maintaining their subscriptions despite service challenges. Word-of-mouth advocacy was also observed, as satisfied customers tended to recommend IndiHome to peers. Nonetheless, loyalty levels were not uniform, as some customers considered switching providers when alternative services became available (Prabhu & Srivastava, 2023). This illustrates that loyalty is conditional and dependent on IndiHome's ability to consistently improve service delivery.

Instrument testing confirmed the reliability and validity of the data collected. All items measuring brand image, service quality, and customer loyalty achieved validity scores above the required threshold, and Cronbach's Alpha values indicated high reliability. This ensured that the measurement tools used were appropriate and consistent for analyzing the variables. Classical assumption tests supported the regression analysis (Garad et al., 2022). The normality test showed that the data were normally distributed, while the multicollinearity test revealed that tolerance and VIF values met acceptable standards, indicating no multicollinearity issues between independent variables. The heteroscedasticity test also showed no significant problems, confirming that the regression model was suitable for further analysis (Al-Samhan, 2023).

The regression analysis demonstrated a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Brand image (X1) was found to have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty (Y), with a regression coefficient indicating that improvements in brand image directly enhance loyalty levels. Similarly, service quality (X2) had a positive and significant effect on loyalty, suggesting that better service delivery results in higher customer commitment to IndiHome. The simultaneous test (F-test) confirmed that brand image and service quality together had a significant effect on customer loyalty. The calculated F-value exceeded the critical value, and the significance level was below 0.05, validating the overall model. This finding emphasizes that both variables collectively contribute to explaining variations in loyalty among IndiHome customers.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.529, meaning that 52.9% of the variance in customer loyalty could be explained by brand image and service quality, while the remaining 47.1% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. Such factors may include pricing, promotional activities, competitor offerings, and technological innovations, which merit exploration in future research. Overall, the results confirm that brand image and service quality are critical drivers of customer loyalty in the telecommunication sector. IndiHome in Gunungsitoli, despite facing infrastructural challenges, benefits from a generally positive brand image and acceptable levels of customer satisfaction. However, improvements in service responsiveness and reliability are necessary to strengthen long-term loyalty and secure a stronger competitive position in the region.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reinforce the theoretical understanding that brand image is a vital determinant of customer loyalty. When customers perceive a brand as reliable, professional, and modern, they are more likely to maintain long-term relationships with it. This aligns with Aaker's (1991) assertion that brand associations play a central role in shaping perceptions and guiding customer behavior. For IndiHome, the perception of being a leading national internet provider creates a sense of trust among customers, which translates into loyalty even when service delivery is not flawless (Easton & Steyn, 2023).

The positive effect of service quality on customer loyalty further validates the SERVQUAL framework proposed by (Muhammad Asir et al., 2023). The study demonstrated that aspects such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles significantly influence how customers assess their service experience. In the case of IndiHome, while some dimensions such as tangibles and assurance were rated favorably, responsiveness emerged as a weakness. This confirms that inconsistent complaint handling can undermine loyalty despite otherwise positive perceptions of the brand.

The simultaneous effect of brand image and service quality on loyalty highlights the importance of integrating both marketing and operational strategies. A strong brand alone is insufficient if the quality of service delivery falls short, just as excellent service cannot compensate for a weak brand identity. The findings show that customers evaluate both cognitive and experiential aspects when deciding whether to remain loyal. For IndiHome, this means that branding campaigns must be supported by tangible improvements in service reliability and customer care (Astuti et al., 2023).

The coefficient of determination value of 0.529 suggests that nearly half of customer loyalty is influenced by other factors. These may include pricing strategies, promotional offers, technological innovation, and competitive alternatives. For instance, if competitors enter the Gunungsitoli market with lower prices or better infrastructure, customers may reconsider their loyalty to IndiHome regardless of its current brand image or service quality. This underscores the importance of adopting a holistic strategy that incorporates competitive pricing and innovation in addition to branding and service improvements (Pillai & Arumugan, 2023).

Customer loyalty is not merely about repeat purchases but also about emotional attachment and advocacy. The study found that many customers continued using IndiHome despite service disruptions, indicating a level of commitment. However, loyalty was not absolute, as some customers expressed willingness to switch providers when possible (Maulidiah et al., 2023). This conditional loyalty suggests that IndiHome's advantage in Gunungsitoli is partly due to limited alternatives. As competition grows, the company must strengthen the quality of service to ensure sustainable loyalty.

The demographic characteristics of respondents provide further insight into loyalty dynamics. Younger customers, particularly students and entrepreneurs, are more sensitive to service disruptions because of their high reliance on the internet for academic and business activities. Their loyalty is therefore more fragile compared to older users. This finding suggests that IndiHome must prioritize service reliability and speed in order to meet the expectations of this critical segment (Stark et al., 2022).

The results also have managerial implications for Telkom in Gunungsitoli. First, strengthening technician response times should be a priority, as responsiveness emerged as the weakest service dimension. Investing in additional staff or adopting digital solutions for faster problem

resolution could enhance customer satisfaction. Second, maintaining a consistent brand image requires aligning marketing messages with actual service delivery. Failure to do so may create dissonance that undermines trust and loyalty (Sciences, 2022).

In comparison with previous studies, the results are consistent with findings from other Indonesian cities such as Jakarta and Medan, where brand image and service quality were also found to significantly affect loyalty. However, the specific challenges in Gunungsitoli, such as geographical constraints and limited infrastructure, differentiate this study. This suggests that while general theories hold true, local contexts must be considered in developing customer retention strategies (Carro-Suárez et al., 2017).

The study also confirms Kotler's (2016) in (Budaya et al., 2024) definition of loyalty as a strong commitment to repurchase despite external influences. Many customers in Gunungsitoli exhibited this behavior, continuing their subscriptions even amid service disruptions. This illustrates that IndiHome's brand equity plays a protective role, shielding it from immediate customer defection. However, such protection may erode over time if service quality does not improve, highlighting the need for continuous service enhancement.

An important implication of this study is the need to monitor and adapt to changing customer expectations. As digital transformation accelerates, customers demand not only basic connectivity but also value-added services such as streaming, smart home solutions, and cloud storage. IndiHome must adapt its offerings to remain relevant and attractive. Ignoring evolving preferences risks weakening brand associations and diminishing loyalty (Hermawanto et al., 2022).

Another discussion point relates to customer advocacy. Satisfied customers who recommend IndiHome to others act as informal brand ambassadors, significantly reducing marketing costs. Encouraging and rewarding advocacy through referral programs or loyalty schemes could further strengthen IndiHome's market position in Gunungsitoli. Conversely, negative word-of-mouth from dissatisfied customers could severely damage the brand's reputation in a small community. Thus, proactive management of customer relationships is crucial (Curado et al., 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to understanding loyalty in the context of semi-urban or island regions, where service infrastructure may be less developed than in major cities. The findings demonstrate that while brand image and service quality remain critical, their impact on loyalty is mediated by local conditions (Sobari & Tussoleha Rony, 2025). This adds nuance to existing theories and emphasizes the importance of contextualizing research in different geographic settings.

The study also highlights the importance of customer-centric strategies in competitive industries. By focusing on customer needs, addressing complaints promptly, and ensuring transparency in communication, service providers can build stronger emotional connections with their clients. For IndiHome, developing a more responsive customer care system could transform conditional loyalty into sustainable loyalty (Loughhead et al., 2023).

In practice, IndiHome should adopt a continuous improvement model that involves monitoring customer satisfaction, addressing service gaps, and adapting to technological developments. This iterative approach ensures that improvements in service quality are sustained and aligned with customer expectations. A failure to implement continuous improvements risks losing customers to competitors that may offer more reliable or innovative services (Halawa, Sridadi, et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the discussion underscores that customer loyalty is shaped by an interplay of brand image, service quality, and contextual factors. While IndiHome has established a relatively strong brand and acceptable service levels in Gunungsitoli, its long-term success depends on addressing weaknesses in responsiveness and ensuring consistency between brand promises and service experiences. By doing so, IndiHome can transform conditional loyalty into deep, sustainable loyalty that provides a competitive edge in the evolving telecommunication market.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that both brand image and service quality have a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty toward IndiHome in Gunungsitoli, either partially or simultaneously, with a determination coefficient of 52.9% indicating that nearly half of customer loyalty can be

explained by these two variables while the rest is affected by other factors outside the scope of this research; these findings emphasize the importance of maintaining a strong and consistent brand image supported by reliable, responsive, and customer-oriented service quality in order to foster sustainable loyalty, and therefore it is recommended that IndiHome and PT. Telkom Indonesia strengthen service reliability by investing in infrastructure upgrades, improve responsiveness by increasing the number of technicians and adopting digital complaint-handling systems, align marketing communication with actual service performance to avoid gaps between customer expectations and experiences, and develop loyalty programs or referral incentives to encourage customer advocacy, while future studies are advised to incorporate additional variables such as pricing, customer satisfaction, or technological innovation to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of customer loyalty in the telecommunication industry.

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