

THE EFFECT OF BRAND TRUST AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY WITH BRAND IMAGE AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE IN PELINDO LEMBAR STEVEDORING SERVICES



Agus Tariansyah¹
Universitas Mataram, Mataram, Indonesia
Agus13tariansyah@gmail.com

Handry Sudiarta Athar²
Universitas Mataram, Mataram, Indonesia
handrysudiarta@gmail.com

Didy Ika Supryadi³
Universitas Mataram, Mataram, Indonesia
didyikas@unram.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to determine and analyze the role of brand image as a mediating variable in the influence of brand trust and customer relationship management on customer loyalty in Pelindo lembar stevedoring services. This type of research is associative causal. The method used in this study is a census sample. The population in this study were all customers of Pelindo lembar stevedoring services. The analysis tool used is SmartPLS version 4. The result of this study establish several key relationships between brand trust, customer relationship management, brand image, and customer loyalty. The analysis indicates that both brand trust and effective customer relationship management are significant, positive determinants of customer loyalty. These two factors also exert a substantial positive influence on brand image. Furthermore, the investigation confirmed that a favorable brand image directly and significantly enhances customer loyalty. When examining indirect influences, the research identified brand image as a significant mediator for the effect of customer relationship management on customer loyalty. In contrast, while the connection from brand trust to customer loyalty through the lens of brand image was positive, this particular mediating pathway was not found to be statistically significant

Keywords: Brand Trust, Customer Relationship Management, Customer Loyalty, Brand Image

INTRODUCTION

Marketing is an important aspect of a company, along with other functions such as finance, production, and human resources. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), marketing is a social and managerial process through which individuals and groups obtain what they want and need by creating, offering, and exchanging valuable products with others. Furthermore, companies must produce and distribute products and communicate them back to their target consumers, so that they feel interested and ultimately purchase the product or service.

Marketing is not merely the act of selling products, but also the art of understanding and fulfilling customer needs. The primary goal of marketing is to create satisfaction, both for existing consumers and potential buyers. Therefore, marketing is not a static process, but rather a dynamic movement that continues to evolve in line with changes in customer desires and preferences. Businesses that can adapt to trends, innovations, and consumer needs will have a competitive edge and be able to build long-term customer loyalty.

In the context of the port services industry, marketing has become increasingly important with the liberalization of the port sector in Indonesia. Since the implementation of port sector liberalization policies through Law No. 17 of 2008 on Shipping, the stevedoring industry in Indonesia has undergone significant changes. This regulation opens up opportunities for private Badan Usaha Pelabuhan (BUP) to get involved in providing port services, including cargo loading and unloading services. Previously, PT Pelabuhan Indonesia (Pelindo Lembar), a BUMN had almost complete dominance in this industry. However, with the entry of private BUPs as competitors, the competitive landscape has changed drastically, giving customers more flexible, efficient, and competitive service options.

This phenomenon poses a major challenge for Pelindo Lembar, which previously enjoyed a de facto monopoly in stevedoring services at Indonesia's major ports. Now, with the emergence of private BUPs, customer loyalty toward Pelindo Lembar is being questioned. Major customers, such as shipping and logistics companies, are beginning to switch to private service providers offering lower rates and more efficient services. If this trend continues, Pelindo Lembar risks a significant decline in market share, which could directly impact the company's long-term revenue.

Table 1.
Cargo Loading Production Volume 2022-2024

Month	Cargo Loading Production (tons)		
	2022	2023	2024
January	136.843	104.13	73.051
February	91.782	79.571	59.175
March	96.471	112.559	70.761
April	115.253	63.299	60.255
May	77.122	70.307	75.372
June	97.779	50.838	87.921

July	93.480	111.802	99.589
August	86.428	78.710	87.847
September	113.275	67.096	79.475
October	104.805	109.034	78.170
November	77.754	92.164	89.579
December	118.270	101.378	105.626
Total	1.209.262	1.040.896	966.821

Table 1 shows the volume of cargo production from 2022 to 2024. One indicator that reflects logistics and economic activity is the volume of cargo production carried out through ports or other modes of transportation. Based on the data in the table above, there is a downward trend in the volume of cargo production from 2022 to 2024. In 2022, the total cargo production was recorded at 1,209,262 tons, then decreased to 1,040,896 tons in 2023, and further decreased to 966,821 tons in 2024.

This decline is quite significant, especially in the early months of the year such as January and February, where the freight volume in 2024 is much lower than in previous years. This decline not only reflects a decrease in logistics activity but may also imply a decline in customer confidence and satisfaction with freight services. In the logistics industry, smooth and timely delivery is a key factor in determining customer loyalty. If there are delays, distribution disruptions, or inconsistencies in the volume of goods shipped, customer satisfaction will decline, potentially causing customers to switch to other service providers that are considered more reliable. This could be one of the factors why the volume of cargo has declined from year to year.

This decline may also indicate that customer loyalty to existing logistics services is beginning to weaken, especially if it is not accompanied by improvements in service quality, communication, and delivery speed. In this context, maintaining customer loyalty becomes a challenge that requires a strategic approach, such as improving operational efficiency, utilizing technology, and providing customer-oriented services.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Customer loyalty is closely linked to a company's long-term orientation. Customer loyalty is a crucial concept in the business world, referring to an individual's commitment to making repeat purchases of a product, even amid changing marketing conditions (Kotler & Keller, 2018).

Loyal customers are not merely loyal users of a brand but can also become brand ambassadors who voluntarily recommend products or services they trust. Strong customer loyalty makes them more resistant to competitors' marketing strategies, enabling companies to maintain their market share more stably. In fact, satisfied customers often engage in zero-budget marketing by sharing their positive experiences with others without realizing it. Kotler & Keller (2018) explain that brand trust is a brand's ability to consistently meet customer needs. According to Widyananda & Seminari (2022), brand trust arises from

consumers' expectations of the positive outcomes promised by the brand, including feelings of safety and reliability during interactions with the service provider. This is particularly relevant in the cargo handling industry, where cargo handling and logistics require a high level of trust due to the potential risks involved.

Akoglu & Özbek (2021) found that brands with high levels of trust tend to create greater loyalty among consumers. This means that the higher the trust customers have in a brand, the more likely they are to continue choosing and relying on its products or services. Brand trust, as a key element in the relationship between consumers and brands, can significantly influence customer loyalty. Previous research has investigated how brand trust influences customer loyalty but has yielded inconsistent results. Some studies have shown a significant influence (Al Satria & Firmansyah, 2024; Izzah et al., 2022; Madeline & O. Sihombing, 2019), while others have shown no significant influence on customer loyalty (Cantona, 2021). According to (Tjiptono, 2007, p. 354), the core of every loyalty promotion program lies in the effort to build long-term relationships with customers. A similar view is expressed by Hidayah & Nugroho (2023, p. 41), who states that relationship marketing is a marketing strategy focused on customers to enhance long-term company growth and maximize customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers can be a valuable asset for a company, and if handled and served well, they will generate revenue and support the company's long-term growth. One strategy to achieve customer loyalty is to build good relationships with customers, known as relationship marketing.

The implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is crucial for improving customer satisfaction and operational efficiency (Syahrianda, 2025). In the context of stevedoring services, where competition is fierce and services are often considered homogeneous, the use of CRM can help companies build better relationships with customers, enhance the customer experience, and ultimately strengthen their loyalty (Yolanda & Keni, 2022). By employing effective CRM strategies, companies can better understand customer needs and preferences, enabling them to tailor their offerings and enhance customer satisfaction (Mujiburrahman, 2021). However, similar to brand trust, the influence of customer relationship management on customer loyalty also shows inconsistent results. Some studies indicate a significant influence (Salamena & Emanuel, 2024; D. N. P. Siregar et al., 2020). Others show no significant influence (Choirulloh et al., 2018).

In the midst of increasingly intense industry competition, the similarity of service characteristics among competitors poses a unique challenge. Companies without a strong brand image are more vulnerable to being imitated by competitors, which can ultimately erode customer loyalty. The cultivation and preservation of a favorable brand image is a fundamental component of a company's long-term viability, extending its significance far beyond a conventional marketing initiative. A brand's image can be understood as the aggregate of consumer perceptions and beliefs associated with it (Kotler & Keller, 2018). According to research by Hermawati (2024), a well-regarded brand image can substantially influence consumer preference, prompting them to select a company's offerings over those of its rivals. This highlights the pivotal function of brand image in establishing credibility and a solid reputation. Furthermore, brand image serves as a critical intermediary that connects brand trust and customer relationship management (CRM) with the ultimate objective of customer loyalty. This dynamic is especially pronounced within service-oriented industries, such as the cargo handling operations provided by Pelindo Lembar. When

customers trust a brand, they tend to engage deeply with it, thereby fostering a positive brand image. This relationship is important in the context of Pelindo Lembar, where service quality and reliability are paramount. Customers tend to show loyalty toward brands they trust, and part of this loyalty is directly correlated with how positively they perceive the brand image (Lee-Kelley et al., 2003; Sayani, 2015). Similarly, research by Rudzewicz & Strychalska-Rudzewicz, (2021) shows that there is a significant positive relationship between brand trust and customer loyalty, where brand image also contributes to building that trust.

The brand image serves as a representation of how consumers perceive a brand based on their experiences, interactions, and communication with the brand. When companies effectively manage their customer relationships through CRM, this engagement has the potential to positively influence brand image, as satisfied customers tend to associate positive attributes with the brand itself. CRM initiatives focused on understanding and anticipating customer needs are crucial for fostering this beneficial brand image (Haryandika & Santra, 2021).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach, which is research that measures and analyzes data by applying statistical calculations. According to (Hair, 2009), quantitative research is designed to investigate specific populations and samples with the aim of testing predetermined hypotheses. The type of quantitative research applied in this study is causal research, which aims to analyze the cause-and-effect relationship and the correlation between independent and dependent variables. In addition, this research also includes moderating variables that play a role in influencing the relationship between the two variables (Malhotra, 2009). This study aims to explain the causal relationship between the influence of brand trust and customer relationship management as influencing variables (exogenous variables) on customer loyalty (endogenous variable), with the brand image as a mediating variable. This study utilized a quantitative approach, employing a component-based Structural Equation Model with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to analyze the data. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software, a tool specifically designed for this variance-based statistical method. Regarding the sample selection, the research involved a population of fewer than one hundred individuals. In such cases, established research principles suggest that surveying the entire population is preferable to sampling. Consequently, a census method was adopted, incorporating all 31 members of the population as respondents in this study. This approach eliminates sampling error and provides a complete representation of the population's characteristics. In other words, the sampling method used is a census. According to Sugiyono (2018, p. 86) census sampling is a technique for determining a sample where all members of the population are used as the sample.

Research Hypothesis

This study aims to analyze the influence of Brand Trust and Customer Relationship Management on Customer Loyalty, both directly and indirectly through Brand Image as a mediating variable. Based on the review of the literature and previous research, the hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows:

- **H1:** Brand Trust has a positive and significant effect on Customer Loyalty.

- **H2:** Customer Relationship Management has a positive and significant effect on Customer Loyalty.
- **H3:** Brand Trust has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image.
- **H4:** Customer Relationship Management has a positive and significant effect on Brand Image.
- **H5:** Brand Image has a positive and significant effect on Customer Loyalty.
- **H6:** Brand Image mediates the effect of Brand Trust on Customer Loyalty.
- **H7:** Brand Image mediates the effect of Customer Relationship Management on Customer Loyalty.

Research Model

This research model describes the relationship between the exogenous variables (Brand Trust and Customer Relationship Management), the mediating variable (Brand Image), and the endogenous variable (Customer Loyalty). The proposed model can be illustrated as follows:

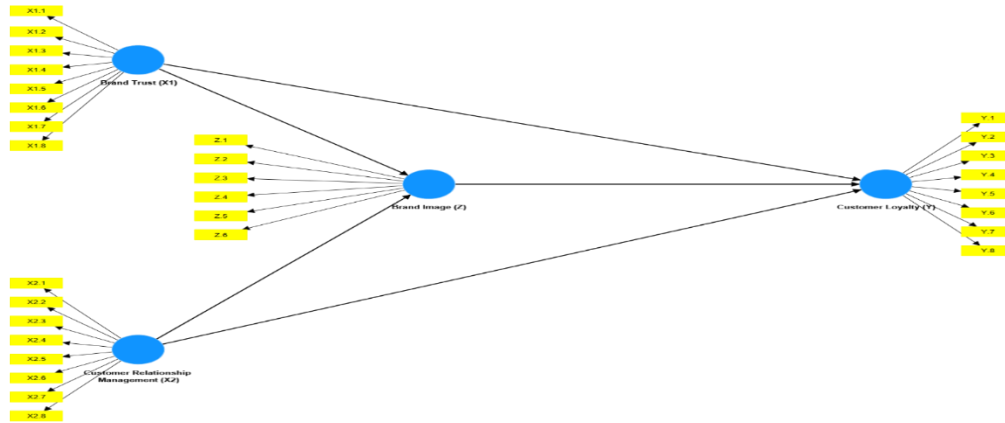


Figure 1.
Research Model

The model illustrates that Brand Trust (X1) and Customer Relationship Management (X2) are hypothesized to have a direct influence on Customer Loyalty (Y), as well as an indirect influence that is channeled through Brand Image (Z) as a mediator. This model will be tested using the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach to analyze the direct, indirect, and mediating effects between the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

Brand Trust

Brand trust is consumers' belief that a brand will deliver positive results and meet their expectations (Delgado, 2005). This means that the higher the trust customers have in a brand, the more likely they are to continue choosing and relying on that brand's products or services. Brand trust in this study is measured using four indicators: trust, reliance on the brand, brand honesty, and brand security. Table 2 shows that the brand trust variable consists of 8 statements which indicate a very trusting category overall with an average of 6.28. Among the four indicators, the brand honesty indicator has the highest average value. Specifically, statement X1.5, which reads, "I feel that Pelindo Lembar has always been

transparent in providing information about stevedoring services,” received the highest score of 6.45. This indicates that respondents perceive Pelindo Lembar’s stevedoring services as having integrity, as transparency is a tangible manifestation of honesty and business ethics

Table 2.

Descriptive statistics Variable Brand Trust			
Code	Statement	Mean	Criteria
Trust			
X1.1	I believe that Pelindo Lembar’s stevedoring services always provide services that meet customer expectations.	6,26	Highly Trust
X1.2	I believe that Pelindo Lembar is highly committed to providing quality services	6,29	Highly Trust
Relying on Brands			
X1.3	I always rely on Pelindo Lembar for stevedoring services because of its reliable service.	6,19	Highly Trust
X1.4	I am confident that Pelindo Lembar can handle every stevedoring process professionally.	6,29	Highly Trust
Honest Brands			
X1.5	I feel that Pelindo Lembar has always been transparent in providing information about stevedoring services.	6,45	Highly Trust
X1.6	I feel that Pelindo Lembar has high integrity in every service they provide.	6,26	Highly Trust
Brand Safety			
X1.7	I feel safe when using Pelindo Lembar’s stevedoring services.	6,26	Highly Trust
X1.8	I am confident that Pelindo Lembar always prioritizes safety in all of its stevedoring services.	6,23	Highly Trust
Mean		6,28	Highly Trust

Source: Primary data processed, 2025 (Appendix)

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) centers on the deliberate cultivation and oversight of interactions with clientele. Customer Relationship Management in this study was measured using four indicators, namely technology, people, processes, and knowledge and understanding. Based on Table 3, it shows that the customer relationship management variable, consisting of 8 statement items, shows a very high category overall with an average of 6.30. Among the four indicators, the knowledge and understanding indicator has the highest average value. Specifically, statement X2.8, which reads, “I believe that Pelindo Lembar continues to improve its services based on customer experience and feedback,” received the highest score of 6.61.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics of Customer Relationship Management Variables

Code	Statement	Mean	Criteria
Technology			
X2.1	Pelindo Lembar uses technology that makes it easier for customers to access stevedoring services.	6,26	Very High
X2.2	The technology used by Pelindo Lembar enables fast and effective communication with customers.	6,32	Very High
People			
X2.3	Pelindo Lembar staff are highly skilled in handling customer needs	6,19	Very High
X2.4	I feel that the Pelindo Lembar customer service team is always friendly and responsive to customer complaints.	6,26	Very High
Process			
X2.5	Pelindo Lembar has clear procedures for handling customer complaints or requests.	6,23	Very High
X2.6	I feel that Pelindo Lembar provides a comfortable and efficient interaction experience in stevedoring services.	6,23	Very High
Knowledge and Understanding			
X2.7	Pelindo Lembar understands my needs as a customer and always offers suitable solutions.	6,26	Very High
X2.8	I believe that Pelindo Lembar continues to improve its services based on customer feedback and experiences.	6,61	Very High
Mean		6,30	Very High

Source: Primary data processed, 2025 (Appendix)

Brand Image

A brand's image is fundamentally the embodiment of consumer perceptions and beliefs about it. Within the framework of this research, brand image is evaluated using three specific metrics: its relative strength, its distinctiveness, and its perceived superiority. Based on Table 4, it shows that the brand image variable consists of six statements which indicate an overall excellent category with an average of 6.19. Among the three indicators, the superiority indicator has the highest average value. Specifically, statement Z.4, which reads, "I feel that the Pelindo Lembar customer service team is always friendly and responsive to customer complaints," received the highest score of 6.61.

Table 4.
Descriptive Statistics of Brand Image Variable

Code	Statement	Mean	Criteria
Strength			
Z.1	Pelindo Lembar uses technology that makes it easier for customers to access stevedoring services.	6,13	Good
Z.2	The technology used by Pelindo Lembar enables fast and effective communication with customers.	6,19	Very Good
Uniqueness			
Z.3	Pelindo Lembar staff are highly skilled in handling customer needs	6,10	Good
Z.4	I feel that the Pelindo Lembar customer service team is always friendly and responsive to customer complaints.	6,29	Very Good
Superiority			
Z.5	Pelindo Lembar has clear procedures for handling customer complaints or requests	6,19	Very Good
Z.6	I feel that Pelindo Lembar provides a comfortable and efficient interaction experience in stevedoring services	6,26	Very Good
Mean		6,19	Very Good

Source: Primary data processed, 2025 (Appendix)

Customer Rotalty

Customer loyalty is the tendency to make repeated purchases intentionally. Customer loyalty in this study is measured using four indicators: making repeated purchases, purchasing across product lines and services, referring others, and demonstrating resistance to competitors' attractions. Based on Table 5, it shows that the customer loyalty variable consists of 8 statements, indicating a very loyal category overall with an average of 6.32. Among the four indicators, the indicator of repeatedly making repeat purchases has the highest average value. Specifically, statement Y.3, which reads, "I often use more than one type of service provided by Pelindo Lembar," received the highest score of 6.42

Table 5.
Descriptive Statistics of Customer Loyalty Variable

Code	Statement	Mean	Criteria
Repeated repurchases			
Y.1	I always use Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services whenever I need loading and unloading services.	6,39	Very Loyal
Y.2	I plan to continue using Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services for a long time.	6,35	Very Loyal
Purchases across product and service lines			
Y.3	I often use more than one type of service provided by Pelindo Lembar.	6,42	Very Loyal

Y.4	I not only use Pelindo Lembar's main services but am also interested in the additional services offered.	6,29	Very Loyal
Referrals to others			
Y.5	I often share my positive experiences with Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services with others	6,26	Very Loyal
Y.6	I would recommend Pelindo Lembar to friends or colleagues who need loading and unloading services.	6,23	Very Loyal
Resistance to pull from competitors			
Y.7	I feel that the services provided by Pelindo Lembar already meet my needs, so there is no need to look for alternatives.	6,32	Very Loyal
Y.8	I am not tempted to switch to another stevedoring service provider because I am satisfied with Pelindo Lembar.	6,29	Very Loyal
Mean		6,32	Very Loyal

Source: Primary data processed, 2025 (Appendix)

Structural Model Analysis (SEM-PLS)

The approach used in analyzing this study was the Structural Equation Model Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) using SMART PLS software. The evaluation of the measurement model and structural model is presented below.

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The Convergent Validity: This was confirmed as all indicators had outer loadings values above the recommended threshold of 0.5. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for every construct was higher than 0.50, specifically: Brand Trust (0.644), Customer Relationship Management (0.566), Brand Image (0.597), and Customer Loyalty (0.578).

Discriminant Validity: The analysis of cross-loadings showed that the correlation of each indicator with its own variable was higher than its correlation with other variables. This confirms that each latent construct is distinct and measures a unique concept.

Internal Consistency Reliability: All constructs demonstrated strong reliability, with Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the common benchmark of 0.7.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

Based on Table 9, the R-Square for brand image is 0.764, which signifies that brand image accounts for 76.4% of the variance explained by Brand Trust and Customer Relationship Management. The R-Square for Customer Loyalty is 0.915, which indicates that brand trust and customer relationship management constructs can explain 91.5% of the customer loyalty construct.

Table 6.
Outer Value Results R-Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Image (Z)	0.764	0.747

Customer Loyalty (Y) 0.915 0.906

Hypothesis Testing

The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in the table below. A hypothesis is supported if the T-Statistic is greater than 1.96 and the P-Value is less than 0.05

Hypotesis	Variables	Original Sample Value	T-Statistics	P-Value	Result
H1	Brand Trust → Customer Loyalty	0.254	2.665	0.008	Accepted
H2	CRM → Customer Loyalty	0.482	3.970	0.000	Accepted
H3	Brand Trust → Brand Image	0.354	2.628	0.009	Accepted
H4	CRM → Brand Image	0.625	4.866	0.000	Accepted
H5	Brand Image → Customer Loyalty	0.326	2.236	0.025	Accepted
H6	Brand Trust → Brand Image → Customer Loyalty	0.115	1.336	0.181	Rejected
H7	CRM → Brand Image → Customer Loyalty	0.204	2.325	0.020	Accepted

The Influence of Brand Trust on Customer Loyalty

The results of the study indicate that brand trust has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, meaning that the higher the brand trust, the stronger the customer loyalty of Pelindo Lembar stevedoring services customers. Akoglu & Özbek (2021) also found that the level of brand trust has a significant influence on creating loyalty among consumers. Febriani et al., (2022) emphasize that brand trust significantly contributes to customer loyalty, where consumers who trust a brand will feel more satisfied and continue using the product or service. Additionally, research by Nilashi et al., (2023) supports this finding by showing that brand trust plays a crucial role in building customer loyalty, both in the context of local and international products. Overall, these studies reinforce the position of brand trust as a key factor in enhancing customer commitment and loyalty toward a brand.

Based on the results of descriptive statistical analysis of the brand trust variable, it shows that the indicator with the highest value is “honest brand,” which has the highest average value compared to other indicators. This indicates that consumers’ perceptions of Pelindo Lembar’s brand honesty are the main foundation in forming their trust in the stevedoring services provided. Additionally, customer loyalty is also reflected in the frequency of service use by respondents, with the majority of respondents having used Pelindo Lembar’s services more than eight times. The high intensity of use further supports the evidence that high brand trust drives customer loyalty in the context of Pelindo Lembar’s stevedoring services.

Therefore, brand trust in stevedoring services not only influences repeat purchase decisions but also builds an emotional connection between customers and service providers. This can enhance customer lifetime value, strengthen positive word-of-mouth, and differentiate Pelindo Lembar from competitors in the port services industry.

Thus, the results of this study empirically prove that brand trust is not only important in forming positive consumer perceptions but also effectively increases customer loyalty in the use of Pelindo Lembar services. Trust is the primary capital that drives sustainable loyalty and competitive advantage in the stevedoring services sector.

The Influence of Customer Relationship Management on Customer Loyalty

The study's findings reveal a significant, positive correlation between the management of customer relationships and the loyalty of clients utilizing Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services. The research demonstrates that enhanced efforts in customer relationship management are a key determinant in fostering stronger allegiance from the company's clientele (Alsabri et al., 2022). According to Munandar et al., (2022, p. 184), CRM is viewed as a relationship-based strategy, where companies actively manage interactions and long-term relationships with customers. In practice, CRM is not merely a tool for recording transactions but has evolved into an integral strategy for creating positive and memorable customer experiences.

Furthermore, Hayati et al., (2020) state that the implementation of CRM enables companies to build a customer-oriented culture, improve both internal and external communication channels and strengthen interactions. Kehinde et al., (2024) add that CRM encourages personalized communication, ensuring that each customer receives relevant, accurate, and timely information, thereby strengthening customer trust and engagement with the company. Previous studies have consistently found that CRM has a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty across various sectors (Mazic et al., 2024; Prestasyawati et al., 2021; Salamena & Emanuel, 2024). In other words, success in managing customer relationships can directly strengthen loyalty, reduce customer churn, and enhance long-term business growth.

Based on the results of descriptive statistical analysis of the customer relationship management variables, it was found that the "knowledge and understanding" indicator had the highest average value among the other indicators. This indicates that the aspect of deeply understanding customer needs and characteristics is a dominant factor in building strong relationships. With a better understanding of customers, Pelindo Lembar is able to provide more personalized, responsive, and customer-centric services, thereby further strengthening customer loyalty toward the stevedoring services they offer.

By adopting CRM principles, Pelindo Lembar strives to create a customer-centric corporate culture, improving communication channels both internally (between operational departments) and externally (with service users). Using the CRM system, Pelindo Lembar can effectively manage customer data, provide faster, more personalized, and more accurate services, and proactively address issues or complaints.

The Influence of Brand Trust on Brand Image

The results of the study indicate that brand trust has a positive and significant effect on brand image, meaning that the higher the brand trust, the stronger the brand image of Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services. According to (Kotler & Keller, 2018), brand trust is a brand's ability to consistently meet the needs and expectations of its customers. A number of previous studies have revealed that brand image and brand trust are closely related. A brand that can build trust among its consumers tends to develop a positive and strong brand image (Lee-Kelley et al., 2003; Sayani, 2015). In the case of Pelindo Lembar, customer trust is reflected in their experiences with the timeliness of loading and unloading, cargo safety,

and service responsiveness. The relationship between brand trust and brand image is also crucial because, in the port industry, reputation is the primary asset. Customers such as exporters, importers, or logistics companies choose stevedoring partners not only based on price but more on trust in service quality and the company's image within the industry.

Thus, the results of this study not only emphasize the importance of brand trust in building brand image but also show that in the stevedoring services sector, operational success such as efficiency, safety, and excellent customer service, directly strengthens the company's brand image. Pelindo Lembar, through this approach, has been able to increase customer loyalty while expanding its brand influence in the port industry.

The Influence of Customer Relationship Management on Brand Image

The results of the study indicate that customer relationship management has a positive and significant effect on brand image, meaning that the higher the customer relationship management, the stronger the brand image of Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a business approach that focuses primarily on managing long-term relationships with customers (Alsabri et al., 2022). In the modern business world, including in the port services industry such as stevedoring, CRM has become a strategy that is not only important but also strategic in strengthening customer loyalty and building a positive brand image. In the context of Pelindo Lembar as a stevedoring service provider, effective CRM practices go beyond basic service delivery. This includes the ability to understand the specific needs of each customer, from cargo type, and loading and unloading priorities, to additional service requests.

For stevedoring services like those managed by Pelindo Lembar, CRM serves as a key tool for building a brand image as a reliable, responsive, and customer-centric company. The more frequently customers experience fast, safe, and tailored service, the greater the trust that grows toward the Pelindo Lembar brand. This trust then evolves into loyalty, where customers not only return to use Pelindo Lembar's services but also recommend them to other business partners.

The Influence of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty

The results of the study indicate that brand image has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, meaning that the higher the brand image, the stronger the customer loyalty to Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services. According to (Keller, 2013), brand image is a collection of associations formed in the minds of customers about a brand. In the context of Pelindo Lembar, brand image is not only built on the company's reputation but also on customers' actual experiences when using their stevedoring services, such as the accuracy of loading and unloading, cargo safety, customer service, and professionalism of the workforce. Various studies have proven that brand image plays a crucial role in building customer loyalty. A study by (Cantona, 2021) shows that a strong brand image in the fuel sector can increase customer loyalty. Similarly, (Jastine, 2021) found that a positive brand image strengthens customer loyalty toward local coffee brands. Both studies emphasize one important point: a positive brand image encourages consumers to continue choosing and trusting the brand in the long term.

In the context of Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services, a strong brand image as a provider of fast, safe, and reliable loading and unloading services will strengthen customer loyalty. Customers such as export-import companies, shipping lines, or logistics supply chains will feel more confident in continuing to use Pelindo Lembar's services because they

trust the reputation and quality of the services offered. Furthermore, the findings of (Ghofur & Supriyono, 2021) which state that consumers prefer brands with a positive image, are relevant to the reality of the stevedoring industry. Customers tend to stay with service providers that they consider to have a good service track record.

The Influence of Brand Trust on Customer Loyalty with Brand Image as a Mediating Variable

The analysis of the indirect relationship reveals that brand image does not function as a significant intermediary between brand trust and customer loyalty. The findings indicate that while brand trust does exert a positive indirect influence on customer loyalty through brand image, this effect is not statistically robust. In essence, the research demonstrates that within this specific context, a customer's perception of the brand is an ineffectual conduit for translating their trust into genuine loyalty.

This could occur for several reasons. First, customers who already trust the Pelindo brand may feel loyal without giving much consideration to the brand image in their minds. Stevedoring services are typically business-to-business (B2B) relationships, not direct-to-consumer. In a B2B model, rational considerations such as price, service speed, efficiency, and reliability are more dominant than emotional factors like brand image perception. As a result, even though brand trust exists, brand image is not a key factor in loyalty decisions. Third, it could also be due to the current level of Pelindo Lembar's brand image, which still needs to be strengthened to effectively serve as a bridge in reinforcing the influence of brand trust on loyalty. In other words, while brand trust does encourage customers to be loyal, brand image in this case has not yet been sufficiently successful in strengthening that relationship.

The Influence of Customer Relationship Management on Customer Loyalty with Brand Image as a Mediating Variable

The analysis of the indirect relationship reveals that customer relationship management positively and significantly influences customer loyalty when mediated by brand image. This indicates that the impact of customer relationship management on customer loyalty is not solely direct; it is also channeled through an initial enhancement of the company's brand image. Consequently, these findings corroborate the second hypothesis, underscoring the pivotal role of customer relationship management in cultivating loyalty towards the stevedoring services offered by Pelindo Lembar.

Previous research has shown that customers who are involved in strong relationships with brands tend to exhibit higher loyalty (Hayati et al., 2020; D. N. P. Siregar et al., 2020). Effective CRM does not only involve occasional transactions or communication but focuses on creating positive, consistent, and personalized customer experiences. With this approach, customers feel valued, heard, and served according to their specific needs, which ultimately increases satisfaction and deepens emotional attachment to the brand. In line with the findings of (Salamena & Emanuel, 2024), the implementation of effective CRM will improve the quality of interactions and services, contributing to the formation of stronger customer loyalty.

Furthermore, brand image plays an important mediating role in this relationship. As stated by (Wardani, 2022), a positive brand image is formed from a series of satisfying customer experiences, which not only increase trust levels but also strengthen the emotional connection between customers and the brand. In the context of Pelindo Lembar, the success of CRM in creating a professional, reliable, and customer-centric brand image can strengthen

customer loyalty to the stevedoring services offered. Customers who have a positive perception of Pelindo Lembar's brand image are more likely to demonstrate long-term commitment, make repeat purchases, and recommend Pelindo Lembar's services to others. Thus, the integration of effective CRM strategies and efforts to build a strong brand image is a strategic key to maintaining and enhancing customer loyalty in the competitive port services industry.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the influence of brand trust and customer relationship management on client loyalty for Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services. It further investigates the mediating effect of brand image within this relationship. The statistical results detailed in the preceding chapter support the following conclusions: (a) Brand trust has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, meaning that the more positive and higher the brand trust, the stronger the customer loyalty to Pelindo Lembar stevedoring services. (b) Customer relationship management has a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty, meaning that the more positive and higher the customer relationship management, the stronger the customer loyalty to Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services. (c) Brand trust has a positive and significant influence on brand image, meaning that the more positive and higher the brand trust, the stronger the brand image of Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services. (d) Customer relationship management has been proven to have a positive and significant influence on brand image, meaning that the more positive and higher the customer relationship management, the stronger the brand image of Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services. (e) Brand image has been proven to have a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty, meaning that the more positive and higher the brand image, the stronger the customer loyalty to Pelindo Lembar's stevedoring services. (f) Brand image has a non-significant mediating effect on the relationship between brand trust and customer loyalty. The brand image acts as a mediating variable that has a positive but non-significant influence on the relationship between brand trust and customer loyalty. (g) Brand image has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between customer relationship management and customer loyalty. The brand image acts as a mediating variable that has a strong indirect influence on the relationship between customer relationship management and customer loyalty.

REFERENCES

- Akoglu, H. E., & Özbek, O. (2021). The effect of brand experiences on brand loyalty through perceived quality and brand trust: A study on sports consumers. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 34(10), 2130–2148. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-07-2020-0530>
- Al Satria, M. I., & Firmansyah, F. (2024). Pengaruh Brand Image Dan Brand Trust Terhadap Loyalitas Anggota. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen, Ekonomi, & Akuntansi (MEA)*, 8(1), 401–414. <https://doi.org/10.31955/mea.v8i1.3690>
- Alsabri, Y. U., Zakir, A., & Irwan, D. (2022). Penerapan Customer Relationship Management Pada Sistem Informasi Klinik Kecantikan Berbasis Website (Studi Kasus: Ms Glow Aesthetic Clinic). *J. Media Inform. [Jumin]*, 4(1), 81–89.

- Cantona, E. (2021). Pengaruh Dari Brand Image Dan Product Quality Melalui Customer Satisfaction Sebagai Variabel Mediator Terhadap Customer Loyalty. *Jurnal Manajemen Bisnis Dan Kewirausahaan*, 5(5), 488–493.
- Choirulloh, A., Waruwu, A. M., Prastowo, B., Telaumbanua, P., & Yulianto, Y. (2018). Pengaruh Customer Relationship Management (Crm) Terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan Xl Axiata Sampang. *Makro: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Kewirausahaan*, 3(2), 225–238. <https://doi.org/10.36467/makro.2018.03.02.07>
- Delgado, M. (2005). *Kepercayaan Merek dan Ekuitas Merek*. Indeks.
- Febriani, E., Rahmizal, M., & Aswan, K. (2022). Pengaruh Brand Image dan Brand Trust terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan dengan Kepuasan Pelanggan Sebagai Variabel Mediasi. *Ranah Research: Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 4(4), 333–343.
- Ghofur, A., & Supriyono. (2021). Pengaruh Citra Merek dan Kepercayaan Merek Terhadap Loyalitas Merek Sejo Njamoer (Studi pada Gerai Sejo Njamoer Foodcourt Royal Plaza Surabaya). *Jurnal E-Bis (Ekonomi-Bisnis)*, 5(2), 380–394. <https://doi.org/10.37339/e-bis.v5i2.700>
- Hair, J. F. (2009). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Pearson Education.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis* (7th ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Hair, J. F., Sarstedt, M., Hopkins, L., & Kuppelwieser, V. G. (2014). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM): An emerging tool in business research. *European Business Review*, 26(2), 106–121. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-10-2013-0128>
- Haryandika, & Santra, I. K. (2021). The Effect of Customer Relationship Management on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty. *Indonesian Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 7(2), 139–149. <https://doi.org/10.17358/ijbe.7.2.139>
- Hasan, A. (2013). *Marketing dan Kasus-kasus pilihan*. CAPS (Center For Academic Publishing Service).
- Hayati, S., Suroso, A., Suliyanto, S., & Kaukab, M. (2020). Customer satisfaction as a mediation between micro banking image, customer relationship, and customer loyalty. *Management Science Letters*, 10(11), 2561–2570.
- Hermawati, M. A. (2024). Pengaruh Citra Merek, Electronic-Word of Mouth dan Brand Ambassador Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Skincare Somethinc Di Marketplace Shopee (Studi Kasus Pada Masyarakat Semarang). *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 4(2), 4919–4930.
- Hidayah, S. N., & Nugroho, R. H. (2023). Pengaruh Citra Merek, Harga, Kualitas Produk Terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan Dengan Kepuasan Konsumen Sebagai Variabel Intervening. *Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Bisnis Dan Inovasi*, 7(1), 79–98. <https://doi.org/10.25139/jiabi.v7i1.5811>
- Izzah, N. N., Budiarmo, A., & Listyorini, S. (2022). Pengaruh E-Service Quality, Perceived Ease Of Use, dan Brand Trust terhadap Loyalitas Konsumen (Studi Kasus pada Konsumen Pizza Hut Delivery Pekalongan). *Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi Bisnis*, 11(1), 50–58. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jiab.2022.33375>
- Isbahi, M. B., Zuana, M. M. M. ., & Mariana, E. R. . (2022). The Technology Strategy in Website Communication Media in Improving Business Activities. *Majapahit Journal*

- of Islamic Finance and Management*, 1(2), 126–138.
<https://doi.org/10.31538/mjifm.v1i2.17>
- Isbahi, M. B., Zuana, M. M. M., & Toha, M. (2024). The Multi-Social Relation of the Cattle Industry in the Plaosan Subdistrict Animal Market of Magetan Regency. *Malacca: Journal of Management and Business Development*, 1(1), 31–46.
<https://doi.org/10.69965/malacca.v1i1.51>
- Jastine, V. (2021). Pengaruh dari Brand Trust, Brand Image, dan Reputation terhadap Brand Loyalty Kopi Lokal di Jakarta. *Jurnal Manajemen Bisnis Dan Kewirausahaan*, 5(5), 459–463.
- Kehinde, S., Kehinde, O. J., Simon-ilogho, B., & Kehinde, K. (2024). *Effective Customer Relationship Marketing: Roadmap to Organization's Optimal Customer Retention. November*. <https://doi.org/10.56225/finbe.v3i2.230>
- Keller, K. L. (2013). *Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Manajemen* (15th ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2018). *Manajemen Pemasaran*. PT Indeks.
- Lee-Kelley, L., Gilbert, D., & Mannicom, R. (2003). How e-CRM can enhance customer loyalty. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 21(4), 239–248.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/02634500310480121>
- Madeline, S., & O. Sihombing, S. (2019). The Impacts of Brand Experiences on Brand Love, Brand Trust, and Brand Loyalty: An Empirical Study. *Jurnal Bisnis Dan Manajemen*, 20(2), 91–107. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jbm.v20i2.241>
- Malhotra, N. K. (2009). *Riset Pemasaran, Pendekatan Terapan, Edisi Keempat*. PT. Indeks.
- Mazic, M., Ristic, Z., & Aleksic, M. (2024). Customer Relationship Management (Crm)—A Model For Improving The Market Performance Of Companies In The. *Science and Business*, 3(3), 89–95. <https://doi.org/10.35120/sciencej0303089m>
- Mujiburrahman, M. (2021). Peran Customer Satisfaction Sebagai Variabel Pemeditasi Antara Perceived Value dengan Affective Loyalty dan Behavioral Loyalty. *Ekobis Syariah*, 1(1), 29. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ekobis.v1i1.9991>
- Munandar, J. M., Oktaviani, D., & Angraini, Y. (2022). How important is CRM toward customer's loyalty to conventional and Islamic bank marketing strategy? A case study from Indonesia. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 13(1), 246–263.
- Nilashi, M., Abumalloh, R. A., Ahmadi, H., Samad, S., Alrizq, M., Abosaq, H., & Alghamdi, A. (2023). The nexus between quality of customer relationship management systems and customers' satisfaction: Evidence from online customers' reviews. *Heliyon*, 9(11), e21828. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e21828>
- Prestasyawati, R. M., Ferichani, M., & Setyowati, N. (2021). Pengaruh Customer Relationship Management Terhadap Loyalitas Konsumen di Cold n' Brew. *E-Journal Ekonomi Bisnis Dan Akuntansi*, 8(2), 125. <https://doi.org/10.19184/ejeba.v8i2.20757>
- Rudzewicz, A., & Strychalska-Rudzewicz, A. (2021). The Influence of Brand Trust on Consumer Loyalty. *European Research Studies Journal*, XXIV(Special Issue 3), 454–470. <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/2439>
- Salamena, A. M. C., & Emanuel, A. W. R. (2024). Pengaruh Customer Relationship Management dan Kepuasan Pelanggan Terhadap Loyalitas di Cafe Pelangi. *Jurnal JTik (Jurnal Teknologi Informasi Dan Komunikasi)*, 8(2), 333–340.
<https://doi.org/10.35870/jtik.v8i2.1747>

- Sayani, H. (2015). Customer satisfaction and loyalty in the United Arab Emirates banking industry. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 33(3), 351–375.
- Siregar, D. N. P., Cahyani, W., & Chaniago, A. U. (2020a). Pengaruh Customer Relationship Management (Crm) Terhadap Loyalitas Pengguna Irian Card (I-Card) Pada Irian Dept Store & Supermarket Medan Marelan. *Jurnal SAINTIKOM (Jurnal Sains Manajemen Informatika Dan Komputer)*, 19(1), 17–23.
- Siregar, M. (2021). Hubungan Antara Kepercayaan Pelanggan Dengan Loyalitas Pelanggan Terhadap Online Shop. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan, Psikologi Dan Kesehatan (J-P3K)*, 2(1), 83–88.
- Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif*. Alfabeta.
- Syahrianda, D. A. (2025). Service excellence at sea: User satisfaction with Belawan Samudera Fishing. *Maritime Technology and Research*, 7(1), 1–14.
- Tjiptono, F. (2007). *Strategi Pemasaran* (kedua). Andi.
- Toha, M., Zuana, M. M. M., & Isbahi, M. B. (2024). Acculturation of Mataraman Local Wisdom with Islamic Values: Implications for Social and Economic Development. *Danadyaksa: Post Modern Economy Journal*, 2(1), 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.69965/danadyaksa.v2i1.143>
- Wardani, E. K. (2022). *PENGARUH BRAND IMAGE DAN BRAND TRUST TERHADAP CUSTOMER LOYALTY PADA PELANGGAN KOPI DI JAKARTA DENGAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SEBAGAI VARIABEL INTERVENING*. UNIVERSITAS NEGERI JAKARTA.
- Widyananda, I. W. A. K., & Seminari, N. K. (2022). Peran Brand Trust Dalam Memediasi Pengaruh Customer Perception, Terhadap Repurchase Intention Pengguna Smartphone Samsung. *E-Jurnal Manajemen Universitas Udayana*, 11(8).
- Yolanda, V., & Keni, K. (2022). Customer Brand Engagement Dan Brand Experience Untuk Memprediksi Brand Loyalty Skincare Lokal: Variabel Brand Trust Sebagai Variabel Mediasi. *Jurnal Muara Ilmu Ekonomi Dan Bisnis*, 6(2), 380–393. <https://doi.org/10.24912/jmieb.v6i2.19506>
- Zamroni, M. A., Toha, M., Zuana, M. M. M., & Baiqun Isbahi, M. (2023). Exploring Zakat Distribution Via Blockchain in Indonesia Perspective of Maslahah Mursalah Wahbah Zuhaili. *Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Sharia Economics (IIJSE)*, 6(3), 3544-3555. <https://doi.org/10.31538/ijse.v7i3.5821>