The impact of brand image on Uniqlo customer loyalty in shandong china

Abstract

This study explores the impact of brand image on Uniqlo's customer loyalty in Shandong, China. With China's retail growth and consumption upgrading, brand image is vital for competitiveness. A quantitative method collected 427 valid questionnaires from Shandong customers. Brand image (six dimensions) was the independent variable; customer loyalty (three dimensions) was dependent, controlling for demographics. SPSS analysis showed moderate overall brand perception. Personality, Culture, and Characteristics significantly boost loyalty; Customers, Value, and Benefits do not. Core customers are middle-aged, young, with moderate income and education. The study enriches clothing retail research and offers practical insights: Uniqlo should enhance brand localization, product features, and social responsibility to strengthen loyalty and ensure sustainable growth.

Keywords: Brand Image; Customer Loyalty; Uniqlo; Shandong Province

Introduction

China's retail and fashion industries are experiencing rapid growth, driven by economic development, rising purchasing power, and visible consumption upgrading. Despite market expansion, the clothing sector faces challenges including overcapacity, intense competition from foreign brands, and limited innovation. The integration of online and offline channels—"new retail"—has become a key industry trend. In this saturated environment, brand image has emerged as a critical factor for building customer loyalty, going beyond product functionality to fulfill psychological needs and foster emotional connections.

Uniqlo, a leading fast-fashion brand, has achieved significant success in China through affordable, functional clothing and minimalist design. With 1,032 stores in Greater China (926 on the mainland) as of August 2024, its strong market presence is especially notable in Shandong Province. The brand's values—customer first, innovation, and quality—support a consistent image that enhances consumer trust and loyalty. However, sustaining this advantage requires understanding how Uniqlo's brand image influences customer loyalty in regional markets.

In competitive landscapes, brand image acts as a strategic differentiator, reducing perceived risk and preventing commoditization. For Uniqlo in Shandong, this is particularly relevant. Shandong consumers value practicality and cultural identity, aligning well with Uniqlo's "high-quality basics" image. A coherent, localized brand image strengthens cross-channel experiences—

from social media to physical stores—building recognition and trust. In contrast, inconsistency can erode confidence and loyalty.

This study investigates the impact of brand image on Uniqlo's customer loyalty in Shandong, addressing a gap in regional brand-consumer dynamics. Given regional differences in perception and behavior, understanding this relationship is both academically valuable and strategically essential for Uniqlo to maintain its competitive edge, enhance localization, and ensure long-term success in China's evolving retail market.

Research Objectives

Based on the above research background and topic nature, the following research objectives have been determined in this study:

Explore the impact of brand image on Uniqlo customer loyalty in Shandong China.

Related documents and research

Brand Image

Brand image is a multi-dimensional concept covering seven key aspects, each of which has been deeply studied by many scholars. In terms of characteristics, Ye (2023) stated that brand characteristics can be divided into form and content levels, with representational and collective traits in form, and leadership and exclusivity in content, and can also be regarded as signals conveying history and cultural values under signal theory. Ma and Zhang (2024) noted that brand image includes tangible functions and intangible content, while Huang and Peng (2023) mentioned that digitalization makes brand characteristics penetrate into consumer interaction and value transmission.

Regarding benefits, Li (2021) and Li & Gui (2021) both divided brand benefits into functional and emotional types, which affect consumers' purchasing decisions and loyalty. Zhang & Sun (2019) and Yang et al. (2018) further verified the positive correlation between brand benefits and consumers' purchase intention through empirical studies.

In terms of value, Yang (2024) pointed out that brand value is the core of brand management and an important source of corporate economic benefits, and its impact on the financial performance of alcohol companies is significant. Wang et al. (2024) and Bo & Yang (2024) confirmed that brand value is closely related to consumers' purchase intention and product value enhancement respectively.

For culture, Zhang (2024) defined brand culture as endowing brands with cultural connotations to form consumer spiritual identification. Li (2024) emphasized that it is a key part

of corporate core competitiveness. Yang et al. (2024) took Tongrentang as an example to highlight its key role in brand internationalization.

In terms of personality, Liu (2024) believed that brand personality is a set of human traits of a brand in consumers' minds, and consistency with consumers' self-concept can enhance loyalty. Sun et al. (2024) added that the consistency of brand and virtual spokesperson's personality can boost consumers' social media participation.

Regarding customers, Yu (2024) defined brand customers as groups with high recognition and loyalty to the brand. Hou (2024) and Yu (2024) respectively stressed that understanding customer needs and strengthening interaction are crucial for enhancing brand-customer connections.

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is measured by three key indicators. In terms of repeat purchase intention, Tan (2024) stated it is a tendency to repurchase based on satisfaction and trust. Tan & Li (2024) found that meeting or exceeding consumer expectations can improve repurchase willingness, while Li & Jiang (2023) proved high-quality logistics services have the same effect.
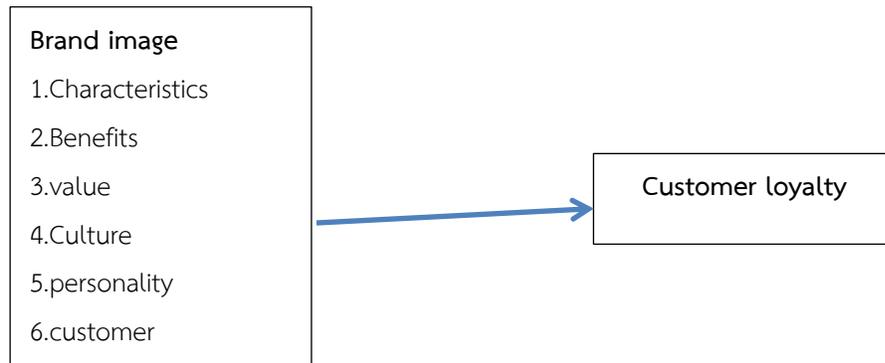
For word-of-mouth communication, Du (2024) defined it as informal interpersonal communication with informality and strong influence. Pang (2024) and Pang Yuli (2024) both emphasized that enterprises can enhance brand influence through word-of-mouth marketing.

Regarding willingness to pay, An (2024) noted it is the maximum price consumers are willing to pay for goods or services. Jia et al. (2025) and Gao & Yu (2024) indicated that environmental awareness and quality cognition are important factors affecting consumers' willingness to pay.

The Relationship between Brand Image and Customer Loyalty

Multiple studies have confirmed that brand image is a key factor affecting customer loyalty. Xue (2023) pointed out that enhancing brand image can improve customer trust and satisfaction, thereby increasing loyalty. Zhang, Zhang & Yang (2022) found that brand image shaping can enhance customers' emotional and behavioral loyalty in the luxury hotel industry. Wang & Jia (2017) took YYK's Tmall flagship store as an example to verify that a positive brand image promotes loyalty in the Internet context. Quan (2016) suggested that time-honored brands can enhance loyalty by strengthening cultural heritage and emotional connections.

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework Diagram

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┌─────────────────────┐
│ Brand image         │
│ 1.Characteristics   │                    ┌──────────────────────┐
│ 2.Benefits          │                    │                      │
│ 3.value             │───────────────────▶│   Customer loyalty   │
│ 4.Culture           │                    │                      │
│ 5.personality       │                    └──────────────────────┘
│ 6.customer          │
└─────────────────────┘
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Research methodology

Population and Sample

This study employs a quantitative research method to empirically investigate the impact of brand image on Uniqlo customer loyalty in Shandong Province. A questionnaire survey will be conducted among 450 randomly selected Uniqlo customers in the region. The questionnaire measures:

Independent Variables (Brand Image): Characteristics, Benefits, Value, Culture, Personality, and Customers.

Dependent Variables (Customer Loyalty): Loyalty behavior and attitude, including repeat purchase intention, recommendation intention, and brand switching cost.Demographic Information: Gender, age, income, and education for comparative analysis.

The questionnaire design is based on existing literature to ensure validity. Data analysis will include:

Descriptive statistics

Factor analysis

Reliability and validity tests

Correlation and regression analysis

Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) to test hypotheses

The study aims to provide data-driven insights for Uniqlo to optimize its marketing strategy and enhance brand value in Shandong.

Population and Sampling

Target Population: All Uniqlo customers in Shandong Province (unknown size).

Sample Size Calculation: Using the Corcoran formula with 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and p=0.5.

Initial sample size: **385**

Adjusted for 10% non-response rate: **427**

Final Plan: Distribute 427 questionnaires to ensure at least 385 valid responses for reliable statistical analysis.

Research instruments and instrument evaluation

The study employs a three-part questionnaire: 1) Demographics (gender, age, income, education); 2) Brand Image Scale (18 items across six dimensions, adapted from Kettim, 2018); 3) Customer Loyalty Scale (9 items across three dimensions). Both scales use a 5-point Likert format. Validity was confirmed via Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) analysis, with all items scoring ≥0.67, indicating relevance. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's α (overall α=0.956; brand image α=0.952; loyalty dimensions α between 0.943–0.950) and Corrected Item-Total Correlation (all CITC >0.5), confirming excellent internal consistency. The validated tool ensures robust measurement for subsequent analysis.

Data collection

Data collection followed systematic procedures to ensure quality and validity. A structured questionnaire—covering demographics, brand image (6 dimensions), and customer loyalty (3 indicators)—was designed based on existing scales, pretested, and refined for clarity. Using a mixed online (social media/email) and offline (in-store) approach, questionnaires were randomly distributed to Uniqlo customers in Shandong Province. Anonymity was ensured, and small incentives were offered to improve response rates. After rigorous data validation and cleaning, 427 valid questionnaires were obtained, forming a reliable foundation for analysis.

Data analysis

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

This study employs descriptive statistics—including mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage—to summarize sample characteristics and the central tendency and dispersion of brand image and customer loyalty variables. This step clarifies data distribution and establishes a foundation for subsequent inferential analysis.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression is used to analyze the relationship between brand image dimensions (independent variables: characteristics, benefits, value, culture, personality, customer experience)

and customer loyalty (dependent variable: composite of repeat purchase intention, word-of-mouth communication, and willingness to pay). Prior to modeling, data undergo preprocessing—addressing missing values, outliers, and multicollinearity—to ensure robustness. The model estimates regression coefficients, significance levels, and goodness-of-fit, quantifying the direction, strength, and statistical relevance of each dimension's impact on loyalty. Results identify key brand image drivers (e.g., culture, personality) to guide targeted strategy optimization for Uniqlo.

Data analysis results

Analysis of demographic characteristics of respondents

The survey collected 427 valid responses. Gender distribution showed women accounted for 67.68% (289 participants) and men 32.32% (138 participants), indicating a clear female majority. Age distribution revealed the 35-44 age group as the largest cohort at 43.56% (186 participants), followed by those aged 45-54 (26.46%,113 participants). The 25-34 age group made up 22.01% (94 participants), while younger and older demographics (20-24 years old, 4.22%,18 participants; 55+ years old, 3.75%,16 participants) were smaller. Middle-aged and young adults (35-54) formed the core demographic. Monthly income analysis showed 43.09% (184 participants) in the 5,000-10,000 yuan bracket and 40.75% (174 participants) in the 10,001-20,000 yuan range, collectively constituting 83.84% of respondents. Lower-income groups (32 participants, 7.49%) and higher-income groups (37 participants, 8.67%) were less represented. Educational background analysis indicated bachelor's degree holders as the most common group at 47.31% (202 participants), followed by college graduates (28.81%,123 participants) and master's degree holders (18.50%,79 participants). Doctoral candidates and those with high school education or below constituted the smallest groups at 1.17% (5 participants) and 4.22% (18 participants), respectively, with associate and bachelor's degrees remaining the primary educational levels.

Table 1 Statistical data on demographic characteristics of respondents

name	option	frequency	percentage （%）
Gender	male	289	67.68
	female	138	32.32
age	20-24 years	18	4.22
	25-34 years	94	22.01
	35-44 years	186	43.56
	45-54 years	113	26.46
	55 years and above	16	3.75
Monthly income level	10001-20000 yuan	174	40.75
	5000-10000 yuan	184	43.09
	Below 5000 yuan	32	7.49
	More than 20,000 yuan	37	8.67
Education	doctor	5	1.17
	junior college	123	28.81
	undergraduate course	202	47.31
	Master	79	18.50
	High school and below	18	4.22
amount to		427	100.0

Multivariate linear regression analysis

Using customer loyalty as the dependent variable and variables such as "custome," "culture," "value," "benefit," and "personality" from brand image as independent variables, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The results showed an R^2 of 0.882 (adjusted R^2: 0.880), indicating strong explanatory power (88%) for customer loyalty. A significant F-value of 523.769 (p=0.000) confirmed the model's overall significance. Specifically, "culture" (Beta=0.358, p<0.01), "customer" (Beta=0.492, p<0.01), and "characteristics" (Beta=0.206, p<0.01) demonstrated significant positive impacts on customer loyalty, with "culture" having the strongest effect. However, "customer" (Beta=0.033, p=0.390), "value" (Beta=-0.013, p=0.732), and "benefit" (Beta=-0.035, p=0.307) showed no statistically significant effects. The collinearity diagnostic indicated that all variables had Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) between 3.775-5.588 and Tolerance Levels (0.179-0.265), suggesting moderate but non-significant multicollinearity. The Durbin-Dublinian (D-W) value of 1.976 indicated no significant autocorrelation in the residuals.

Table 4.11 Multivariate linear regression analysis table

	Non-standardized coefficient		Standardization factor	t	p	collinearity diagnostics	
	B	standard error	Beta			VIF	tolerance
constant	0.180	0.522	-	0.345	0.731	-	-
customer	0.100	0.116	0.033	0.861	0.390	5.364	0.186
personality	1.335	0.088	0.492	15.125	0.000**	3.775	0.265
culture	0.980	0.104	0.358	9.462	0.000**	5.102	0.196
value	-0.036	0.105	-0.013	-0.343	0.732	5.066	0.197
benefits	-0.067	0.065	-0.035	-1.022	0.307	4.099	0.244
characteristic	0.578	0.111	0.206	5.211	0.000**	5.588	0.179
R^2	0.882						
Adjust R^2	0.880						
F	F (6,420)=523.769,p=0.000						
D-W price	1.976						

Note: The dependent variable is customer loyalty; $*p < 0.05$ and$** p < 0.01$

Findings:

The most critical insight from the study is that brand personality is the primary driver of customer loyalty for Uniqlo in Shandong Province. Regression analysis revealed that "personality" had the strongest positive impact (Beta=0.492, p<0.01), significantly outperforming other brand image dimensions. This indicates that consumers' loyalty is most influenced by their perception of Uniqlo as modern, compatible with their self-image, and trend-aligned, rather than by functional benefits or value perceptions.

Strategic Implication: Uniqlo should prioritize strengthening and communicating its modern, relatable brand personality in Shandong's market, as this dimension directly and powerfully enhances customer retention and advocacy.

Discussion and conclusion

Demographics: Uniqlo's core customer base in Shandong is predominantly middle-income, middle-educated, young-to-middle-aged women. This profile should guide localized strategy.

Descriptive Stats: Brand image perceptions are moderately positive (scores: 2.778-3.450).

Strengths: Personality (modernity, self-compatibility) and perceived **uniqueness** are top-rated.

Weaknesses: Reputation and quality-price value perceptions are relatively low.

Mixed: Cultural alignment with Shandong showed divergent views (high standard deviation).

Hypothesis Testing: The regression model (R^2=0.882) shows:

Significant drivers of loyalty: Personality (strongest, Beta=0.492), Culture (Beta=0.358), and Characteristics (Beta=0.206).

Non-significant factors: Customers (Beta=0.033), Value (Beta=-0.013), and Benefits (Beta=-0.035).

Discussion

Key Drivers: Findings align with prior research. Strong personality matches consumer lifestyle needs. Cultural appeal exists but needs more localization (e.g., integrating Shandong's culture). Characteristics like technology are valued, supporting quality signals.

Non-significant Factors: Potential reasons for the lack of impact:

Customers: Possible measurement issue (questionnaire items adapted from cosmetics may misfit clothing).

Value & Benefits: Market competition may have increased price sensitivity and homogenized functional benefits (like pricing and service), reducing their differentiating power.

Recommendation

Strengthen Brand Localization & Digital Communication: Deepen integration with Shandong culture (e.g., Confucian-inspired products) and leverage new media (short videos, social commerce) for storytelling and promotion.

Optimize Product Value Proposition: Invest in and communicate advanced product characteristics (e.g., fabric tech). Implement tiered pricing and transparent communication to improve perceived value and cost-effectiveness.

Enhance Social Responsibility (SR): Integrate SR initiatives (e.g., recycling, sustainable materials, community support) into the brand identity. This can bolster the "trustworthy" aspect of personality, strengthening emotional connection and loyalty.

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