

The Key Success Factors in Marketing Strategy: A Case Study of a Global Food and Beverage Company

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Effective marketing strategies play a crucial role in building strong brand equity, and Nestlé has consistently leveraged quality perception, distribution intensity, and advertising to maintain its competitive position in the food and beverage industry. The objective of this research is to examine how Nestlé's marketing strategies, particularly quality perception, distribution intensity, and advertising, influence brand equity in the competitive food and beverage sector. Additionally, this study aims to investigate the mediating role of brand awareness in strengthening the relationship between these marketing factors and brand equity. A questionnaire was distributed to 200 randomly selected respondents through Google Forms to gain insight into consumer perception. The quantitative methodology was used to analyze the data that had been collected. The results indicate that brand awareness plays a significant role in shaping brand equity, acting as a mediator between key marketing factors and brand perception. Quality perception, distribution intensity, and advertising positively influence both brand awareness and brand equity, confirming their importance in brand development. While brand awareness was found to mediate the relationship between distribution intensity, advertising, and brand equity, it did not significantly mediate the link between quality perception and brand equity. The overall model demonstrates strong explanatory power, highlighting the effectiveness of marketing strategies in strengthening brand equity.

Keywords: Advertising; Brand Awareness; Brand Equity; Distribution Intensity; Nestlé Company; Quality Perception

INTRODUCTION

Key success factors are the descriptions of the essential skills and resources required to succeed in a specific market (Grunert & Ellegaard, 1992). The success of a company is attributed to its effective marketing strategies. A marketing strategy is a deep level of marketing knowledge in which businesses create value and gain profits through their relationships with consumers. It plays an important role in business management. At the same time, it acts as a driver of growth and sustainable development (Suharto, 2023). The four Ps of marketing are the framework for marketing success. It can be enhanced, altered, and even deducted within reason, to create the strategy needed to effectively sell a product or service (Thwala & Slabbert, 2018). The first P stands for a product, which is anything that is put out into the market to attract, acquire, utilize, or consume in order to satisfy the wants of customers. The second P is price, which is the value of the product charged by the companies and paid by the consumers to compensate for that value (Karim et al., 2021). The third P is place, which refers to the locations and distribution channels where products and services are sold (Nuseir & Madanat, 2015). The fourth P is promotion, which refers to the tactics of connecting the product with the target market and convincing consumers to buy the product (Karim et al., 2021). An effective marketing strategy plays a role in business management by acting as a driver of growth and sustainable development through understanding their target customers, company goals, advertising methods, and techniques to attract more customers (Suharto, 2023). These are essential for a company to achieve the desired outcomes, maintain a competitive edge, and attain long-term stability.

To define a company's success, there are many different ways. One of the familiar ways is brand equity. Brand equity has many different definitions. Brand equity can be assets that are related to the brand. At the same time, it will affect the value of the product (Aaker, 1996). Another definition of brand equity is how and what the responses of a consumer once he or she compares true and fake product brands if both products involve the same level of marketing stimulus and product attributes (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Researchers used different measurements to evaluate and track brand equity. In the brand equity ten which is a set of measurement tools, there are different sets of measures grouped. In four of the five categories, it was using consumer perception throughout the brand. It distributed the brand equity into four dimensions. One of the dimensions is brand awareness (Aaker, 1996). Brand awareness can let the consumer recall or once seen the brand can recognize it. It can even let someone who does not purchase this brand know about this product (Lehmann et al., 2008). Brand awareness will lead a customer to put the known brand into the consumers' consideration set (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000).

The goal of Nestlé is to embrace the power of food to enhance everyone's quality of life, both today and in future generations. The motto of Nestlé is "Good Food, Good Life". Nestlé aims to achieve this by providing high-quality food and beverage products that are both delicious and nutritious, meeting the needs of consumers at every stage of life. To achieve this, Nestlé puts effort into marketing strategies to target different market segments, promote brand loyalty, create competitive advantage and maximize profitability (Singh et al., 2021).

Today, Nestlé still persists in the beliefs and principles of its founder, committed to understanding the needs of all consumers. As a leading food, nutrition, health and wellness company, Nestlé provides quality food at any time of day and any period of life (Meunier, 2024). It has more than 2000 brands, operates in 188 countries and employs around 270,000 people (Gandhi, 2024). Nestlé is a world-leading brand portfolio. It produces diversified product categories such as cereals, chocolate, coffee, water, dairy,

drinks, healthcare nutrition, ice cream, and more (Gandhi, 2024). As the leading food and beverage company in the world, Nestlé's marketing strategy has been essential to its sustained growth and global dominance. Nestlé implemented the marketing strategies to maintain customer loyalty and stand out in the highly competitive food and beverage industry.

There are some studies that provided information about how Nestlé is facing a brand value decrease. The brand value decreased by about 7% to USD 20.8. However, Nestlé, using its strong brand equity, has successfully maintained its title as a leader in the sector (D'souza, 2024). Since the boycott by Israel-Gaza against Nestlé happened, Nestlé has seen its shares drop the largest number in five years. It was approximately 5.67%. It has already affected brand equity, as Nestlé's brand equity cannot be solely insulated from these influences (Jayanandan, 2024). On the other hand, Nestlé's poor employee training and communication breakdowns had a significant impact on brand equity as the trust of consumers in the brand was broken. There is evidence that the Nestlé workforce had decreased by about 48000 employees. It shows a high turnover rate. At the same time, this problem will lead to delayed innovation and inconsistent product delivery (Chong & Cheong, 2020). Individuals have also been increasingly health-conscious lately. Therefore, in order to keep themselves healthy, they would prefer to eat more nutritious foods. According to another study, 70% of Nestlé's products were, unfortunately, high in fat, salt, and sugar (Adler, 2024). This has led to people having stereotypes that the products that Nestlé produces are not healthy, and the brand equity of Nestlé will also be impacted.

This research aims to examine how Nestlé's marketing strategies—specifically quality perception, distribution intensity, and advertising—influence brand equity in the competitive food and beverage industry, while also investigating the mediating role of brand awareness. The study is significant as it provides strategic insights into the key drivers of brand equity, offering valuable implications for businesses seeking to enhance their market positioning. The novelty of this research lies in its integrated approach, analyzing the interplay between marketing factors and brand awareness as a mediator within the context of a leading global brand. By bridging gaps in existing literature, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of effective branding strategies and provides practical recommendations for strengthening brand equity in competitive markets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality Perception and Brand Awareness

For the definition of quality perception, quality perception is a relatively objective definition; it is the impression of quality. This conceptualization of quality perception allows the views of different researchers to be agreed. At the same time, in the case of consumers' limited knowledge of the product, quality perception is more dependent on quality cues (Solin & Curry, 2022). Quality perception can be understood as how the consumers have their own feeling about the quality of the product they would like to purchase, or even, they see. It can affect their decision whether they need to purchase it. It will link to consumers' personal experience, even the brand image of the product.

The definition of brand awareness can be understood as the degree to which consumers know the product through knowing the name of the product. Meanwhile, consumers' awareness of the brand not only means that they have a certain recognition of the brand but also affects their memory of the brand (NielsenIQ, 2024). This can be understood as consumers' brand recognition and brand memory. The customer will be affected by the quality of the product. Once the quality of the product is good, customers will believe in this brand. Consequently, the company will gain brand awareness from the customer

(Eslami, 2020). It suggests that there is a positive correlation and a direct proportionality between brand familiarity and the perception of product quality. Thus, this study formulates the hypothesis like below:

H1: Brand awareness is positively correlated with quality perception.

Quality Perception and Brand Equity

In the actual process, Nestlé puts quality perception in a very important position; their actions are to ensure quality and food safety, and they have formulated a special quality policy for them. They want to build consumer trust by offering products that meet consumer expectations and preferences (Erricker, 2023; Pandey et al., 2021). For the definition of brand equity, we can think of brand equity as the summary of all aspects of the brand in the market. These include, for example, brand awareness, brand loyalty, and customer perceptions of brand product quality.

The relationship between quality perception and brand equity seems to be bound to each other. Quality perception is a major area that lays the foundation for brand equity. It is made up of five aspects, with brand recognition, brand loyalty, and quality perception being the most essential. These all rely on customer brand equity (Qiao et al., 2022).

Through the above description, when customers feel the quality of products and brands, this feeling will make consumers have extreme loyalty to the brand, and loyalty is also a very important part of the brand value. Therefore, while improving product loyalty, it will also improve the value of the brand. Hence, it can be said that quality perception is positive and conducive to the development of brand assets (Meida & Yusran, 2022). Accordingly, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

H5: Brand equity and quality perception are positively correlated.

Quality Perception, Brand Awareness, and Brand Equity

Brand awareness actually is a memory of a photo that has been remembered by the consumers. Brand awareness can be considered a component of brand equity and serves as its foundation. For the perception of quality, we can understand the experience and feelings of consumers after using the brand, but it is an indispensable part of the brand equity.

When exploring the relationship between brand awareness and brand equity, we can find that consumer expectations, brand equity, and brand awareness are all positively correlated. In other words, it means that the deepening of consumers' feelings and cognition of the brand will play a very important factor in the accumulation of brand assets. From another point of view, it is constantly promoting brand equity. In addition, with the rising brand awareness, consumers are more inclined to choose brands that they like and have a sense of trust and dependence during the purchase process (Corkery, 2020).

Quality perception is a basic category of customers' consumption behavior, as well as consumers' subjective experience and feelings towards the product, which involves consumers' subjective judgment and the value and benefits obtained from the purchase of the product (Urrutia, 2023). It also intuitively shows that consumers' positive perception of brand perception will affect the positive growth of brand equity, which also represents that the factors affecting brand equity are the sense of quality (Lesmana et al., 2020).

Through the above findings, we can understand the transition from quality perception to brand awareness, and then from brand awareness to brand equity. The perception of

high quality can promote the growth of brand awareness of consumers and markets, and the growth of brand awareness will promote brand equity (Corkery, 2024). We can understand that brand awareness plays an interrelated role in the perception of quality and brand equity (Waebuesar et al., 2022). Given this, the following is the hypothesis:

H8: Brand awareness acts as a mediator in the relationship between quality perception and brand equity.

Distribution Intensity and Brand Awareness

Distribution intensity is a company's decision on the types and quantity of intermediaries to use to get a product to its end consumer. The intensive level of distribution refers to a business that distributes its products or services through as many intermediaries as feasible. This distribution is mostly used for items and services that are often bought yet have cheap prices, little differentiation, and great demand, such as convenience foods.

Brand awareness is a significant factor in aiding the minds of consumers in the process of recollection and identification of a certain brand, ultimately leading them to select the particular brand. Brand awareness helps consumers to remember and recognize the brand, particularly and influence their purchasing decisions (Chandramohan, 2024). An article claims that because brand awareness influences consumers' purchasing intentions, distribution intensity has a positive correlation with brand equity; consumers who are more aware of a brand are more likely to make larger purchases (Hameed et al., 2023). One study found that increasing brand awareness may be achieved through distribution intensity (Cheung et al., 2020). These statements in the research obviously prove that distribution intensity has a positive relationship with brand awareness; when the distribution intensity is more frequently shown among consumers, brand awareness has a higher probability of becoming successful. Below, this research formulates the hypothesis:

H2: Distribution intensity has a favorable correlation with brand awareness.

Distribution Intensity and Brand Equity

According to past research, distribution intensity refers to the fact that a product is available all day and distributed in many stores covering the entire market (Lang et al., 2022). The difference between the value of a product with a brand and the value of the same thing without the brand name attached is known as brand equity (Williams, 2021). The collection of brand assets and liabilities, such as the name and logo, that affect how much a product or service is worth to a business or its customers is known as brand equity. This includes awareness, associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. (Lang, Behl et al., 2022).

The positive relationship between distribution intensity and brand equity can be observed through some recent research. According to current studies, items that are distributed in a large number of outlets and use intense distribution have a beneficial impact on brand equity. When more private labels are distributed to consumers, they have more exposure to the product, having the greatest satisfaction and strongest brand awareness. This leads to building up brand equity as they save time in searching the products, which shows that the effect of distribution intensity on brand equity is positive (Abril & Rodriguez-Cánovas, 2016). The brand equity of a product is considered successful when the distribution intensity is high and the consumers have the greatest satisfaction. When the distribution of intensity of that particular brand is increasing, this illustrates that the brand equity performance is improving. Accordingly, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

H6: Brand equity and distribution intensity are positively correlated.

Distribution Intensity, Brand Awareness, and Brand Equity

Distribution intensity, which is defined as a product that is offered in many places to satisfy a customer's purchase, is the number of outlets used by a manufacturer in its commercial region (Vo & Nguyen-Anh, 2024). Brand identification and awareness are increased by high distribution intensity because it makes it easier for customers to locate and purchase the brand, which boosts customer happiness and preserves brand loyalty (Vo & Nguyen-Anh, 2024; Ganatra et al., 2021). Brand equity is very important, and it is measured based on the consumers' loyalty (Zia et al., 2021).

As the mediator, brand awareness is crucial in the entire interaction process and has a vital impact on consumers' decisions. According to the same research, brand awareness will affect brand equity directly because consumers have faith in the brand after different distribution and media channels (Zia et al., 2021). Thus, brand awareness acts as a mediating variable, moderating between distribution intensity and brand equity. The coherence between these three variables is that high distribution intensity will strengthen brand awareness through consumers' loyalty, and this dimension of loyalty in brand awareness positively affects brand equity.

Distribution channel intensity may be utilized to develop consumer-based brand equity for communicating with customers and providing product information, according to a business research publication (Cheung et al., 2020). In other words, the low distribution intensity will weaken brand awareness and affect brand equity negatively. Accordingly, this study puts up the following theory:

H9: The link between brand equity and distribution intensity is mediated by brand awareness.

Advertising and Brand Awareness

Introducing a company's products and services to the public in an effort to boost sales is known as advertising (Dilip et al., 2021). Advertising can be done through various media such as print, electronic, and mass media. Advertising also showcases the benefits and features of the product (Mahaputra, 2021). From the perspective of the customer, brand awareness is an essential part of the entire knowledge system. It concerns the consumer's likelihood of recognizing the brand in various contexts, the frequency with which the familiar brand's name comes into people's minds. At the same time, it also indicated how much was the degree to which the consumer prefers the brand (Sundararaj & Rejeesh, 2021). The consumers will recognize the brand through frequent advertising. Advertising and brand awareness have a good link and are significant because advertising is one of the ways to highlight the differences and brand features between a company and its competitors. Advertising creates emotional content and brand awareness for consumers, which significantly influences consumer behavior and purchasing decisions (Hameed et al., 2023). In light of this, this study puts out the following theory:

H3: Brand awareness is positively correlated with advertising.

Advertising and Brand Equity

An advertisement will affect consumers' rational inference process, making them hold optimistic beliefs about the product category. Consumers with strong preferences can be exposed to targeted advertising about products that they were previously unaware of (Shin & Yu, 2021). According to the study, source attractiveness is enhanced by advertising transparency, and this, in turn, increases buy intention (Weismueller et al.,

2020). As the value of the brand itself, brand equity can be defined as having a well-known name that brings in money, increases brand awareness, fosters customer loyalty, opens up new prospects, and ultimately provides a competitive advantage (Jangga et al., 2020). Research shows that advertising plays an important role in creating brand equity (Lang, Lim et al., 2022). Thus, this study formulates the hypothesis like below:

H7: Brand equity is positively correlated with advertising.

Advertising, Brand Awareness, and Brand Equity

Advertising helps consumers decide which products and services to purchase. Advertising enables businesses to gain benefits by getting more people to consider their products and services, which leads to more transactions (Waebuesar et al., 2022). Without advertising, it is difficult for consumers to discover good products and services (Ilyas & Nayan, 2020). As the consumers become aware of a product, they will start repurchasing the product. The brand awareness increases and the loyalty also increases (Shabbir, 2020). The study leads to the conclusion that advertising increases consumer loyalty and positive purchase behavior, which denotes brand equity. This relationship is strengthened by brand awareness (Zhao et al., 2022). Another study states that it has been found that advertising enhances overall brand equity and its associated aspects, such as brand awareness (Lang, Behl et al., 2022). Accordingly, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

H10: The link between advertising was mediated by brand awareness with brand equity.

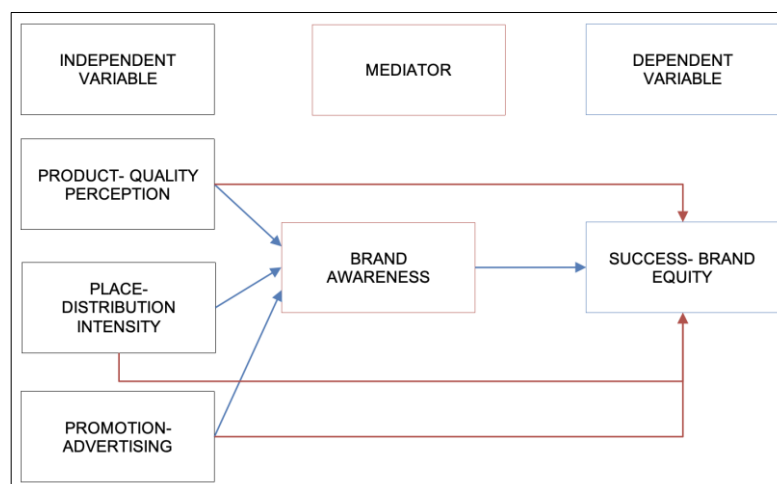
Brand Equity - Brand Awareness

According to the research, brand equity will be an important way for companies that want to continue surviving in the competitive market because they are similar products to their competitors (Zia et al., 2021). Brand equity is also a set of assets that will become a competitive advantage that competitors could easily copy and adopt (Eslami, 2020). Once a brand gained brand equity, it would successfully establish a perception of value among customers. Thus, it enhances their trust, loyalty, and willingness to pay a premium. It leads to higher sales and profitability (Ebrahim, 2020). Brand equity was distributed into five dimensions which involved brand awareness (Zia et al., 2021). When a buyer can identify or know a brand, especially when comparing it with a similar brand, it refers to brand awareness. Brand awareness can let a customer, or non-customer, create a sense of brand superiority above the brand. It can enhance the brand's appeal (Eslami, 2020). There are two elements in brand awareness: recall and recognition. In this research, brand awareness plays a role as a mediating factor in the framework by influencing the dependent variable of brand equity (Patimah et al., 2023). There is a positive relationship between brand awareness and brand equity, which has been shown by earlier research. It is because brand awareness anchors the brand in consumers' brains and assigns higher value to it. Brand equity will strengthen than before (Zia et al., 2021). So, according to the explanation, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H4: Brand equity and brand awareness are positively correlated.

The framework of this study is illustrated as follows in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Framework



RESEARCH METHOD

The goal of this study is to understand how Nestlé employs marketing strategies to achieve success in the tough food and beverage sector. The researchers investigate quality perception, distribution, advertising, brand awareness, and brand equity toward the Nestlé brand. In this research, the researchers used quantitative methods to measure relationships among variables. Quantitative method is used to measure something that can be in percentage or in number (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014). The researchers have used an online survey as primary data. Primary data actually is the original and current information that is gathered for the first time, and is referred to as primary data (Mazhar et al., 2021). The sample size of this survey was 200 respondents, and the targeted respondents were the public. In this research, we directly collected data from respondents. The researchers used a convenience sampling method to collect data from the respondents. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are chosen according to their availability and desire to participate (Golzar & Tajik, 2022). As this research focuses on Nestlé's marketing strategies, convenience sampling will help to understand the opinions of the general consumers who interact with the brand.

Data collection regarding the Nestlé brand was gathered through a Google Forms survey. Respondents receive Google Forms by social media applications like Telegram and WhatsApp. There are six sections in this survey, and below each section are five to six questions. Data analysis is done using a five-point Likert scale, where "1" represents strongly disagree, "2" represents disagree, "3" represents neutral, "4" represents agree, and "5" represents strongly agree. This enables respondents to express their level of agreement or disagreement with the question.

Table 1. Questionnaire Instrument

Section	Questions		Sources	Cronbach's Alpha
2	1	I think this brand has value.	Adopted from Wang et al. (2008)	0.885
	2	This brand is stable and reliable.		
	3	This brand is easy to use and comfortable.		
	4	This brand is capable of upgrading.		
	5	This brand has a very good style.		
	6	This brand has a series of choices.		
3	1	Compared to competing brands, this brand is stocked in more stores.	Adopted from Yoo	0.825

	2	The number of stores selling this brand is higher than the number of stores selling competing brands.	et al. (2000)	
	3	This brand is distributed through the largest possible number of stores.		
	4	The stores in which I can buy this brand sell well-known brands.		
	5	This brand can be bought only in high-quality stores.		
	6	The stores in which I can buy this brand carry products of high-quality.		
4	1	This brand 's advertising is very attractive.	Adopted from Lang, Behl et al. (2022)	0.881
	2	I like this brand's advertising very much.		
	3	In general, I think this brand's advertising is effective.		
	4	This brand's advertising appears frequently.		
	5	I am impressed by this brand's advertising.		
5	1	I aware this particular brand that appeared in the social media.	Adopted from Severi and Ling (2013)	0.856
	2	I can recognize this particular brand in comparison with the other competing brand that appeared in the social media.		
	3	I know how this particular brand looks like.		
	4	Some characteristics of the particular brand that appeared in the social media come to my mind quickly.		
	5	I can quickly recall symbol or logo of the particular brand that appeared in the social media.		
6	1	It makes sense to buy this brand instead of some other brand even if these two brands are the same.	Adopted from Rajh and Došen (2009) Adapted from White et al. (2013)	0.872
	2	If another brand is not different from this brand in any way, it would still seem smarter to buy this brand.		
	3	Even if another brand had the same characteristics as this brand, I would rather buy this brand.		
	4	If there was another brand of the same quality as this brand, I would rather buy this brand.		
	5	I have a more favorable attitude toward this brand than other brand.		

In Section 1, the researchers gathered demographic information such as gender, age, ethnicity, employment status, and frequency of purchasing Nestlé products. There are 30 respondents who purchase the product daily, 68 purchase it weekly, 76 purchase it monthly, 25 rarely purchase it, and 1 never purchases it.

For sections 2-6, there are 5-6 questions in each section, as detailed in Table 1. The researchers selected one question from each section to analyze the data. In section 2, "I think this brand has value" was chosen because it reflects perceptions of value and quality. When consumers perceive a brand as being of high quality relative to price, they will purchase the product. High quality and value perceptions can increase brand

awareness and strengthen brand equity because consumers will feel that Nestlé products are worth purchasing. In section 3, “The number of stores selling this brand is higher than the number of stores selling competing brands” was selected because it refers to the fact that Nestlé products can be easily found in a variety of stores. Wide distribution enhances brand accessibility, which directly impacts brand awareness and is critical to building brand equity. In section 4, “This brand’s advertising appears frequently” was chosen because it indicates the frequency of exposure of Nestlé advertising to the consumers. This will increase brand awareness because consumers often see Nestlé advertisements and thus become more familiar with the brand. Frequent advertising will strengthen brand equity.

In section 5, “I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the particular brand that appeared in the social media” was selected because it refers to high brand awareness. The consumers can remember and recognize the Nestlé brand, and they are more likely to choose Nestlé products over competitors’ products, thus contributing to brand equity. In section 6, “Even if another brand had the same characteristics as this brand, I would rather buy this brand” was chosen because it shows customer loyalty and preference. It highlights the competitive advantage that loyalty provides, which drives consumers’ willingness to choose Nestlé over competing brands. Brand equity is built when consumers choose a brand consistently. This shows that Nestlé’s marketing strategies have been successful in differentiating it from its competitors. By focusing on these questions, the research will effectively measure and analyze how quality perceptions, distribution, and advertising affect Nestlé’s brand awareness and brand equity.

In addition, the researchers also used secondary data such as websites, articles, and journals to gain knowledge and information about the research topic. The researchers believe that the information obtained from secondary data is valuable and will help them in conducting this research. Data that has been gathered by another party and statistically examined is known as secondary data (Mazhar et al., 2021).

In the analysis result, we used the IBM SPSS version 27 to get the result. In our survey, we will first use Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency. This measurement actually shows the reliability of the questionnaire that we used in the survey for the independent variables and dependent variables (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The range is from 0 to 1, and the higher values had greater internal consistency among the items. After that, we used descriptive analysis to analyze the demographic data. For gathering and summarizing quantitative data, descriptive statistics—which in some circumstances might be referred to as “explorative statistics”—are ideal (Marshall & Jonker, 2010). Besides, multiple linear regression had been used to test the direct impact of each independent variable on the mediator and the independent variable on the dependent variable. Multiple linear regression can investigate how each of the variables is correlated with each other (Hayes, 2024). At the same time, as we had a mediator, the Process Macro by Hayes (2015) is used for analysis of whether the effects of direct, indirect, and total effects, which will be affected by mediation.

RESULTS

Table 2. Respondents’ Profile Summary (N=200)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	118	59.00
Female	82	41.00
Age		
16-20 years old	25	12.50

21-30 years old	115	57.50
31-40 years old	35	17.50
41-50 years old	18	9.00
51-60 years old	3	1.50
61 years old and above	4	2.00
Ethnicity		
Malay	69	34.50
Chinese	102	51.00
Indian	28	14.00
Other: SIKH	1	0.50
Employment Status		
Employed	77	38.50
Unemployed	29	14.50
Student	89	44.50
Retired	5	2.50
Frequency of Purchasing Nestlé Products		
Daily	30	15.00
Weekly	68	34.00
Monthly	76	38.00
Rarely	25	12.50
Never	1	0.50

According to the data that have been collected in Table 2, the total number of respondents is 200. In the gender, there are 118 males (59%) and 82 females (41%). The age section was distributed into six categories, which are 16-20 years old, 21-30 years old, 31-40 years old, 41-50 years old, 51-60 years old, and 61 years old and above. Most of the respondents are about 21 to 30 years old, which is 115 of respondents with 57.50%. The second highest is 16 to 31 to 40 years old, with 35 respondents (17.50%). The third highest is 16 to 20 years old, which involves 25 respondents and contents of 12.50%. Then followed by the 41 to 50-year-olds, which is 18 of the respondents (9%). The 51 to 60 years old is about three respondents and 1.50, and the 61 years old and above is about four respondents and 2%. In the ethnicity section, there are 69 of Malay (34.50%), 102 of Chinese (51.00%), 28 of Indian (14.00%), and 1 of SIKH (0.50%). In the employment status, there are about 77 employed (38.50%), 29 unemployed (14.50%), 89 students (44.50%), and 5 retired 2.5%. In the frequency of purchasing Nestlé Products, the respondents who daily purchase are 30 respondents and 15.00%. The weekly is accompanied by 68 respondents (34.00%), the monthly is about 76 respondents and 38.00%, and the rarely purchasing is about 25 respondents, 12.50%. The least of respondents is about the frequency of never purchasing, which is one respondent with 0.50%.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Coefficients Alpha, and Zero-Order Correlations for All Study Variables

Variables		1	2	3	4	5
1	Quality Perception	0.885				
2	Distribution Intensity	0.835**	0.825			
3	Advertising	0.782**	0.845**	0.881		
4	Brand Awareness	0.804**	0.848**	0.857**	0.856	
5	Brand Equity	0.800**	0.867**	0.870**	0.891**	0.872
Number of Items		5	5	5	5	5
Mean		4.0092	3.9950	3.9500	4.0270	3.9840
Standard Deviation		0.86210	0.82431	0.87850	0.83339	0.85074

Note: N = 200; *p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01. The diagonal entries represent Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. Interpreting Cronbach's Alpha Values: $\alpha \geq 0.9$ (Excellent internal consistency) | $0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$ (Good internal consistency) | $0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$ (Acceptable internal consistency) | $0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$ (Questionable internal consistency) | $0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$ (Poor internal consistency) | $\alpha < 0.5$ (Unacceptable internal consistency).

The Cronbach's alpha that was analyzed from SPSS IBM is presented in Table 3. Due to all these, the Cronbach's alpha is higher than the original, thus we do not delete any item or questionnaire to increase the reliability. In the result of SPSS, the quality perception is 0.885 of Cronbach's alpha values, which shows good internal consistency. The distribution intensity showed good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.825. The advertising had a Cronbach's alpha, which is 0.856, also categorized as good internal consistency. Brand awareness and brand equity, each of them 0.856 and 0.872, also show that there is good internal consistency. All of the variables are highly correlated with each other and are reliable in assessing their construct. Thus, all the data that had been collected by using these scales can be trusted and analyzed.

Besides, the variables that had been analyzed had strong positive correlations with each other. Correlations are used to measure how strong the relationship is between the variables. According to the zero-order correlations, each of the variables is significantly correlated with each other as there are ($p < 0.01$). For the H1, the correlation between quality perception and brand awareness is significant as their correlation is ($r = 0.804$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, it is proved that they had been a positive correlation in a strong manner. For H2, distribution intensity, and brand awareness also significantly correlated ($r = 0.848$, $p < 0.01$). For H3, the relationship between advertising and brand awareness also had a positive correlation as the $r = 0.857$, $p < 0.01$. In H4, brand awareness and brand equity have a positive correlation with $r = 0.891$, $p < 0.01$. For H5, the $r = 0.800$, $p < 0.01$, had been shown by the positive correlation between quality perception and brand equity. In H6, the correlation between distribution intensity and brand equity was shown by the $r = 0.867$, $p < 0.01$. The last of the correlations between advertising and brand equity was shown to have a result of $r = 0.870$, $p < 0.01$. All hypotheses, which form H1 to H6, are supported by significant positive correlations.

Brand awareness had shown the strongest correlation and the brand equity correlation (abbreviation, r) is 0.891. The second strong correlation has been shown between advertising and brand equity as their correlation is 0.870. In sideways, it shows that the advertising, brand awareness, and brand equity had a strong correlation. The means for all variables range between 3.95 and 4.03, indicating that the respondents generally had a positive view of the brand in terms of quality, distribution intensity, advertising, brand awareness, and brand equity. The SD values are fairly similar (ranging from 0.82 to 0.88), indicating moderate variability in respondents' opinions across all variables. The highest variability is found in advertising, while distribution intensity and brand awareness show slightly more consistent responses.

Table 4. Regression Analysis

Outcome: Brand Equity (Without mediator)		
Variables		Brand Equity
1	Quality Perception	0.138**
2	Distribution Intensity	0.379***
3	Advertising	0.441***
Adjusted R ²		0.820
F value		303.474
Durbin-Waston Statistic		2.029
Outcome: Brand Equity (with mediator)		

Variables		Brand Equity
1	Quality Perception	0.054
2	Distribution Intensity	0.255***
3	Advertising	0.266***
Brand Awareness		0.403***
Adjusted R ²		0.852
F value		288.212
Durbin-Waston Statistic		2.043
Outcome: Brand Awareness		
Variables		Brand Awareness
1	Quality Perception	0.058***
2	Distribution Intensity	0.308***
3	Advertising	0.433***
Adjusted R ²		0.797
F value		261.238
Durbin-Waston Statistic		1.934

Based on Table 4, in the first regression model table, it shows the dependent variable is indicated by brand equity and the independent variables are quality perception, distribution intensity, and advertising. The coefficient of the quality perception is 0.138, $p < 0.05$. It demonstrates how brand equity and quality perception are positively correlated. When the quality perception increases, the brand equity also tends to increase. It had proved that the H1 is correct. Distribution Intensity also had a coefficient with the $\beta = 0.379$, $p < 0.01$, also shows a positive effect on brand equity. H2 approved. Advertising with the $\beta = 0.441$, which is significant at the 0.01 level, also indicated that advertising has a significant positive impact on brand equity. H3 approved. In the adjusted R², the result was 0.820, which means that about 82% of the independent factors can be used to explain brand equity. On the other hand, the F value with the number of 303.474 indicates that the overall model is significant. All paths from the independent variables to the dependent variable will be denoted as path c.

The third regression model table shows that brand awareness will become the dependent variable, but the independent variables will remain the same as in the previous one. The quality perception and the brand awareness had shown a positive relationship as $\beta = 0.058$ with $p < 0.01$. Thus, H5 had been supported. The distribution intensity and advertising also had a positive relationship with brand awareness. Each of the coefficients is 0.308 ($p < 0.01$) and 0.433 ($p < 0.01$). It means that the H6 and H7 are supported. In the adjusted R², the result was 0.797, which means that about 79.7% of the brand equity can be explained by the independent variables. On the other hand, the F value with the number of 261.238 indicates that the overall model is significant. All the paths the independent variable direct to the dependent variable will be indicated as path a.

In the second regression model table, path c' indicates the direct effect of the independent variables on brand equity, but it is controlled by the mediator, which is brand awareness. It shows that brand awareness as a mediator has been added to the regression model. The relationship between brand awareness and brand equity is characterized by a coefficient of 0.403, also known as path b. When the brand awareness had been added into the regression model, the quality perceived was dropped to 0.054 and became not statistically significant as the $p = 0.538$. The H8 cannot be approved. Distribution intensity and advertising also had a coefficient which is 0.225 ($p < 0.01$) and 0.266 ($p < 0.01$). It supported the H9 and H10. In the adjusted R², the result was 0.852, which means that about 85.20% of the brand equity can be explained by the independent variables. On the other hand, the F value with the number of 288.212 indicates that the overall model is significant.

The research model is presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Research Model

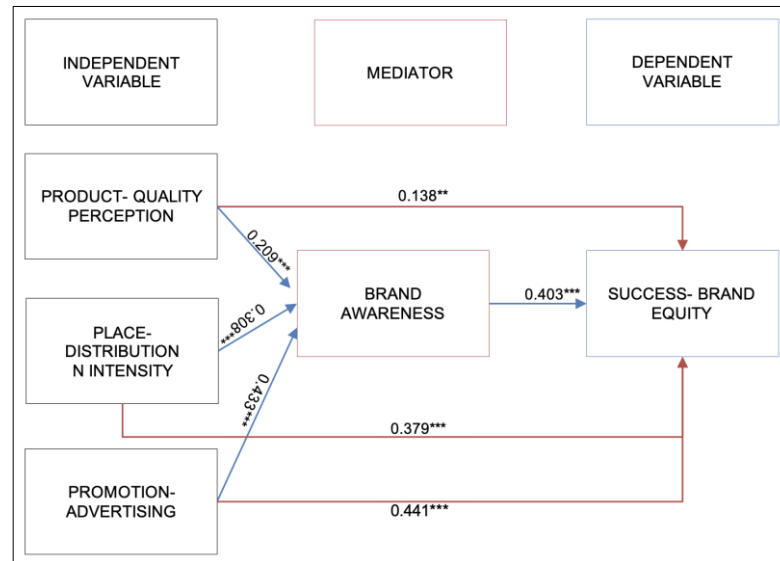


Table 5. Process Macro

Predictor Variable (X)	R ²	Direct Effect (b, p-value)	Indirect Effect (b, BootCI)	Total Effect (b, p-value)	Mediation Proportion (%)
Quality Perception (QUALITYP)	0.8135	b = 0.2319, p < 0.0001	b = 0.5573, BootCI = [0.4204, 0.6853]	b = 0.7892, p < 0.0001	70.6%
Distribution Intensity (DISTRIBU)	0.8384	b = 0.4105, p < 0.0001	b = 0.4848, BootCI = [0.3649, 0.6227]	b = 0.8952, p < 0.0001	54.2%
Advertising (ADVERTIS)	0.8364	b = 0.3863, p < 0.0001	b = 0.4557, BootCI = [0.3230, 0.6048]	b = 0.8420, p < 0.0001	47.4%

Table 5 presents the process macro-analysis of the relationship between the variable, whether the independent or dependent variable, and even the mediator. According to the process macro, the quality perception had a direct effect with the coefficient of 0.2319 ($p < 0.0001$). It had supported the H5. At the same time, it indicates that when quality perception increases by one unit, the dependent variable will increase by 0.2319 units directly. The indirect effect had shown that 0.5573, BootCI= [0.4204, 0.6853]. Increasing one unit of quality perception will lead to the brand equity increasing by 0.5573 units through the mediator. The total effect is $\beta = 0.7892$. It indicated that quality perception will have a substantial overall impact on brand equity, which supported H8. According to the analysis above, 70.6% of quality perception's total effect on brand equity is mediated by brand awareness. It highlights that brand equity is a key mechanism through which quality perception influences brand equity.

The distribution intensity had a direct effect with the coefficient of 0.4105 ($p < 0.0001$). It had supported the H6. At the same time, it indicates that when distribution intensity increases by one unit, the dependent variable will increase by 0.4105 units directly. The indirect effect had shown that 0.4848, BootCI= [0.3649, 0.6227]. Increasing one unit of quality perception will lead to the brand equity increasing by 0.4848 units through the mediator. The total effect is $\beta = 0.8952$. It indicated that distribution intensity will have a substantial overall impact on brand equity, which supported H9. More than half (54.2%) of distribution intensity's total effect on brand equity is mediated by brand awareness, which also shows a considerable mediating role of brand awareness.

The advertising had a direct effect with a coefficient of 0.3863 ($p < 0.0001$). It had supported the H7. At the same time, it indicates that when distribution intensity increases by one unit, the dependent variable will increase by 0.3863 units directly. The indirect effect had shown that 0.4557, BootCI= [0.3230, 0.6048]. Increasing one unit of quality perception will lead to the brand equity increasing by 0.4557 units through the mediator. The total effect is $\beta = 0.8420$. It indicated that distribution intensity will have a substantial overall impact on brand equity, which supported H10. Nearly half of advertising's total effect on brand equity is mediated by brand awareness.

DISCUSSION

After using SPSS IBM to analyze the hypothesis, the results indicate that quality perception, which is in the H8, had not been supported by the linear regression model when brand awareness became one of the variables. Other than that, to make the result more supportive, the process macro was used. In this model, all the hypotheses are supported. Brand awareness as the mediator has significant direct and indirect effects on the independent variables. According to process macro, distribution intensity, advertising, and quality perception all have significant impacts on Nestlé's brand assets in varying proportions. This can be stated as a fact as in the latest research, sustaining an effective marketing strategy in place, promotion, and product helps Nestlé to build brand awareness and increase consumer loyalty, which is a crucial point to emphasize in brand equity (Ellitan & Rinata, 2024).

In our research, the distribution intensity is the most influential factor in building strong brand equity. The statement was supported in some recent research: the easier the customer obtains the product, the more it is considered a good and mature distribution channel, and this situation vitally influences the customers' purchasing decision on Nestlé cereal (Patimah et al., 2023). Another research study by Lang, Behl et al. (2022) indicated that consumers were more satisfied when the product had a high distribution intensity because it saved them time searching and traveling to the stores. Also consistent in an economic journal, the good channels of distribution could attract brand awareness, and brand awareness has a positive impact on brand equity through distribution intensity (Langga, 2020).

The second crucial factor that influences brand equity is advertising. Advertising is key to an organization, and this consists of a Nestlé study (Singh et al., 2021). Nestlé used different promotion tools to reach the potential and target customers to purchase their products through traditional media, due to the growth of technologies and era transformation, Nestlé needs to make some changes, they also promote the product through social media to reach out even more and wide range of consumers. According to another review of Patimah's (2023), advertising is a communication activity that involves sellers or buyers to achieve a satisfying exchange relationship between each other. Consumer satisfaction is a main determinant of brand awareness because it will build a strong relationship with customers when their satisfaction reaches the maximum level. This is where brand awareness boosts brand equity, as satisfied customers will

provide word-of-mouth promotions, which reduces the expenses of searching for new customers (Pushpanathan & Edirisinghe, 2020). In this case, obvious that brand awareness is successful in promoting and the customers can recall the brands undoubtedly. Aligned with the statement in research, brand awareness is an essential element in brand equity; it can affect the brand equity directly as it involves brand recognition and brand recall (Alonso, 2022).

Lastly, in our research, quality perception is the last key success factor to investigate. The result is consistent with Eslami (2020), perceived quality has a positive and significant impact on brand awareness. At the same time with the mediating role of brand awareness, perceived quality is highly correlated with brand equity throughout the research. This is consistent with Sheikh and Asemani (2024) by ensuring the perceived quality of the product, the company can build a strong connection between brand awareness and brand equity.

First and foremost, the positive effects of brand awareness and perceived quality on brand equity suggest that businesses should focus on creating product value and quality. A study (Tran et al., 2022), according to their definition, co-creation is the voluntary, interactive, and active consumer behaviors connected to the customer-brand connection and is a predictor of quality perception and brand loyalty. Providing a value co-creation platform using associated brands, marketers, app designers, and businesses can work together to increase the interactivity and engagement of customers. The personalized brand experience will maximize the value created by businesses, retain the loyalty of customers, and change their perception of quality towards the particular product, directly enhancing the brand equity.

Other than that, the positive effect of brand awareness and distribution intensity on brand equity suggests that marketers must emphasize the development of the distribution network. The variety of distribution levels is significant for a business; it is highly related to sales and could be defined as a sales-distribution relationship (Michis, 2022). When marketers add new stores to the market, there is an increase in sales at the new outlet. Increased distribution intensity will boost market share performance and provide customers with the best brand value, which will ultimately boost a company's brand equity.

Moreover, the positive impact of brand awareness and advertising on brand equity suggests that the business should focus on utilizing different advertising strategies. In the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry, they have different channels to promote the products or services and to reach their audiences (Kloutatou, 2024). Advertising through promotional events and sponsorship might be useful for the industry as the businesses will have a real-world connection with the target population. For example, there are sporting events, festivals, and community meetings. Sponsorship in these events will increase the brand visibility to the public as it offers opportunities for businesses to promote the brand indirectly and simultaneously. The customers will also benefit from participation, and both parties will benefit from this situation.

However, there are some issues with the current study. The 200 respondents in the tiny sample size are mostly targeted at certain youthful respondent categories. Similar backgrounds, such as questions on age, ethnicity, and job position, limit the findings' generalizability, and the outcomes could not accurately reflect Nestlé's worldwide success determinants. Future studies should aim to include a more diverse sample that represents various demographics, religions, or industry groups. The study was based on self-reported data, which could be subject to social desirability bias. As Nikolopoulou (2023) points out, social desirability bias is a type of response bias, the respondents will

conceal their true opinions and experiences about Nestlé's product because the respondents may exhibit a tendency to provide responses that align with socially acceptable norms or seek to get approval from others. Social desirability bias often occurs in self-report questionnaires by exaggerating or downplaying their behavior. Surveys are an important part of data collection for information systems in case study research. Their usefulness is related to respondents' need to provide accurate and truthful responses about the information. This bias poses a challenge for research data as it weakens the reliability of survey-based conclusions in the case study research (Kwak et al., 2021). Future studies should put more effort into research is needed to use social desirability scales, which are common in other survey-based fields like dietary studies, and to apply special questioning techniques for sensitive topics (Gamarel et al., 2021).

In summary, the link between quality perception, distribution intensity, advertising, and brand equity is significantly mediated by brand awareness. This study gains a deeper understanding of how these factors interact to enhance brand value and provides practical guidance for marketers seeking to build stronger brands. The company's consistent focus on customer needs and its ability to adapt to changing market conditions through innovative marketing, distribution strategies, and advertising has significantly contributed to its long-term growth and brand loyalty. Practical recommendations included enhancing perceived quality through customer value co-creation, expanding distribution networks for better performance, and diverse advertising strategies like sponsorships to boost engagement. Limitations included a small sample size and social desirability bias, calling for a broader and diverse data collection method for future research.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine how Nestlé's marketing strategies—quality perception, distribution intensity, and advertising—contribute to building long-term brand equity, with brand awareness as a potential mediator. The findings confirm that all three marketing factors positively influence brand equity, with brand awareness significantly mediating the effects of distribution intensity and advertising. However, brand awareness did not significantly mediate the relationship between quality perception and brand equity. These results highlight the importance of marketing strategies in strengthening brand positioning in the competitive food and beverage industry.

To enhance brand equity, Nestlé can strengthen quality perception by implementing strict quality control measures and transparently communicating product quality to consumers. Expanding distribution channels through local retailer partnerships and supply chain optimization can improve product availability. Additionally, increasing digital marketing investments, particularly in social media and e-commerce, can amplify brand awareness and engagement. By leveraging these strategies, Nestlé can sustain its strong market presence and long-term brand equity.

LIMITATION

Numerous limitations of this study open the door to further investigation. First, this study focuses on marketing strategies as the key area of analysis. Although the marketing strategies of Nestlé are crucial, the other success factors such as supply chain management and financial strategies may also affect the overall success of Nestlé. Future research could investigate other factors that contribute to Nestlé's success in this competitive industry. Second, 200 respondents may be sufficient for basic quantitative analysis, but it may not represent different consumer demographics or preferences, especially in different regions where consumer preferences may vary widely. Future

research could increase the sample size by including respondents from multiple countries to enhance the applicability of the findings. Third, this study employed a cross-sectional design, which was unable to capture the development of marketing strategies over time. To address this limitation, future research could employ a longitudinal approach that will provide significant findings regarding how marketing strategies develop over time and how they affect Nestlé's long-term brand equity.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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