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The Role of Trust in Strengthening Repurchase Intention: Evidence from the Business-to-Business Oil and Fats Industry

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A B S T R A C T

This study examines the effects of product quality, service quality, and brand image on repurchase intention, with trust as a mediating variable, in the business-to-business (B2B) oil and fats industry. The research was motivated by declining sales performance and increasing customer complaints at PT Multimas Nabati Asahan Serang despite the growth of Indonesia's palm oil industry. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior, this study proposes that operational and reputational factors shape customer trust and subsequently influence repurchase intention. A quantitative explanatory approach with a cross-sectional survey design was employed. Data were collected from business customers and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that brand image significantly affects trust and repurchase intention, while product quality significantly influences repurchase intention. Trust also has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention. However, product quality and service quality do not significantly affect trust, and service quality does not significantly influence repurchase intention. Trust mediates the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention but does not mediate the effects of product quality or service quality. The findings highlight the importance of supplier credibility, reputation, and trust in strengthening customer retention in industrial markets.

KATA KUNCI

Kualitas Produk, Kualitas Layanan, Citra Merek, Kepercayaan, Niat Pembelian Kembali

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A B S T R A K

Penelitian ini menganalisis pengaruh kualitas produk, kualitas layanan, dan citra merek terhadap niat pembelian ulang dengan kepercayaan sebagai variabel mediasi pada industri minyak dan lemak *business-to-business* (B2B). Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh penurunan kinerja penjualan dan meningkatnya keluhan pelanggan di PT Multimas Nabati Asahan Serang meskipun industri kelapa sawit Indonesia terus berkembang. Berdasarkan *Theory of Planned Behavior*, penelitian ini mengusulkan bahwa faktor operasional dan reputasi membentuk kepercayaan pelanggan yang selanjutnya memengaruhi niat pembelian ulang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif eksplanatori dengan desain survei potong lintang. Data dikumpulkan dari pelanggan bisnis dan dianalisis menggunakan *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa citra merek berpengaruh signifikan terhadap kepercayaan dan niat pembelian ulang, sedangkan kualitas produk berpengaruh signifikan terhadap niat pembelian ulang. Kepercayaan juga berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap niat pembelian ulang. Namun, kualitas produk dan kualitas layanan tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap kepercayaan, serta kualitas layanan tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap niat pembelian ulang. Kepercayaan memediasi hubungan antara citra merek dan niat pembelian ulang, tetapi tidak memediasi hubungan yang melibatkan kualitas produk maupun kualitas layanan. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya kredibilitas, reputasi, dan kepercayaan pemasok dalam meningkatkan retensi pelanggan industri.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

The global palm oil industry continues to play a strategic role in sustaining food manufacturing and industrial supply chains, particularly in emerging economies where palm oil derivatives are widely utilized as raw materials for food processing, shortening, frying systems, and industrial fats. As the world's largest palm oil producer, Indonesia has demonstrated consistent production growth despite economic uncertainty and supply chain disruptions. Data from the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency indicate that national crude palm oil production increased steadily from 45.12 million tons in 2021 to 48.36 million tons in 2025, reflecting the resilience of the sector and the sustained demand for palm oil-based products [1], [2]. This condition suggests that fluctuations in company-level performance are not necessarily caused by declining market demand, but may instead originate from internal operational and relational factors affecting customer retention and repurchase behaviour.

Within this context, PT Multimas Nabati Asahan, one of the major subsidiaries of Wilmar International operating in the oil and fats business segment, experienced a significant decline in sales volume despite the favourable macro-industrial environment. The company's sales volume decreased from 204,550,308 kilograms in 2024 to 181,360,657 kilograms in 2025. Simultaneously, customer complaints increased substantially, rising from 5 cases in 2022 to 36 cases in 2024 before declining to 12 cases in 2025. The dominant complaints were associated with product quality inconsistencies and service delivery failures, including nonconformity with Certificate of Analysis, food safety concerns, delayed shipments, inaccurate delivery quantities, and product deterioration during distribution. These operational issues indicate that customer dissatisfaction in business-to-business transactions may not merely reflect transactional inconvenience, but rather signal weakened customer trust and deteriorating long-term relational commitment.

In business-to-business industrial markets, repurchase intention is critically important because long-term purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by supplier reliability, operational consistency, and relational confidence. Unlike business-to-consumer markets where emotional or impulsive purchases are more dominant, business-to-business purchasing decisions involve higher financial risks, technical evaluation processes, contractual obligations, and interorganizational dependencies. Consequently, customers tend to maintain relationships only with suppliers perceived as capable of consistently delivering reliable product quality, dependable service performance, and credible corporate reputation. In this regard, trust becomes a central mechanism that reduces uncertainty and supports sustainable purchasing relationships [3], [4].

Previous studies have identified product quality, service quality, and brand image as important antecedents of repurchase intention. Product quality has been found to positively influence customer trust and repurchase behaviour when customers perceive consistency, safety, and conformity with expected specifications [5]. Similarly, service quality contributes to repurchase intention through responsiveness, reliability, and fulfilment accuracy, especially in logistics-intensive transactions [6], [7]. Brand image also plays a strategic role by reducing perceived risk and strengthening customers' confidence in maintaining long-term partnerships with suppliers [8]. Several studies further suggest that trust acts as a mediating variable linking perceived quality and repurchase intention, particularly in environments characterized by uncertainty and relational dependency [9], [10].

However, despite the growing literature on repurchase intention, several important research gaps remain unresolved. First, most prior studies were conducted within business-to-consumer contexts such as e-commerce, digital services, cosmetics, retail platforms, and online marketplaces [11], [12]. Empirical evidence examining repurchase intention within industrial business-to-business commodity sectors remains limited, particularly in palm oil-based manufacturing industries where purchasing decisions are strongly associated with operational continuity and technical compliance. Second, previous findings regarding the mediating role of trust remain inconclusive. Some studies confirmed that trust significantly mediates the relationship between quality-related variables and repurchase intention, while others reported weak or inconsistent mediation effects across industrial contexts [9], [10]. This inconsistency indicates the need for further investigation in sectors characterized by high operational risk and long-term supply dependency.

Previous studies have extensively examined the determinants of repurchase intention; however, most research has focused on partial relationships among product quality, service quality, brand image, trust, and repurchase intention rather than integrating these constructs into a comprehensive framework. For example, a study examined the influence of product quality and brand image on repurchase intention, while different one emphasized the mediating role of trust in the relationship between service quality and repurchase intention. Similarly, a study investigated the effects of service quality and brand image on repurchase intention through trust. Although these studies provide valuable insights, they generally examine selected variables independently and are predominantly conducted in business-to-consumer contexts such as e-commerce, retail, cosmetics, and digital services [5], [9], [10]. Consequently, there remains limited theoretical understanding regarding how operational factors, represented by product quality and service quality, interact with reputational factors such as brand image and relational mechanisms such as trust in influencing repurchase intention within business-to-business industrial environments. To address this gap, the present study develops an integrated framework grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior by simultaneously examining the effects of product quality, service quality, and brand image on repurchase intention while incorporating trust as a mediating variable. This approach provides a more comprehensive explanation of customer repurchase behavior in the business-to-business oil and fats industry, where purchasing decisions are characterized by high operational dependency, technical requirements, and long-term supplier relationships.

The Theory of Planned Behavior explains that behavioral intention is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control [3]. Within the context of business-to-business purchasing relationships, product quality, service quality, and brand image may function as evaluative antecedents shaping favorable attitudes toward suppliers, while trust strengthens customers' confidence and perceived control in maintaining long-term business transactions. Therefore, the Theory of Planned Behavior provides a relevant theoretical lens to explain why industrial customers continue or discontinue repurchasing decisions under conditions of operational uncertainty and supplier performance variability.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it extends repurchase intention research into the underexplored context of business-to-business palm oil-based industrial transactions. Second, it enriches the Theory of Planned Behavior perspective by positioning trust as a relational mediating mechanism linking operational and reputational factors to behavioural intention. Third, the study provides empirical evidence from Indonesia’s oil and fats industry, which remains strategically important but underrepresented in international marketing and supply chain literature. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effects of product quality, service quality, and brand image on repurchase intention, with trust serving as a mediating variable, among business-to-business customers in the oil and fats industry. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effects of product quality, service quality, and brand image on repurchase intention, with trust serving as a mediating variable, among business-to-business customers of PT Multimas Nabati Asahan in the oil and fats sector.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Icek Ajzen is one of the most widely used behavioural theories for explaining intention-based decision-making processes. The theory posits that behavioural intention is determined by three major components: attitude toward behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Behavioural intention subsequently becomes the strongest predictor of actual behaviour. The theory explains that individuals are more likely to perform a behaviour when they possess favourable evaluations toward the behaviour, perceive social support for performing it, and believe they have sufficient capability and control to execute the behaviour successfully [3].

Within the context of business-to-business transactions, the Theory of Planned Behavior provides a relevant theoretical foundation for explaining repurchase intention because industrial purchasing decisions involve complex evaluations associated with supplier reliability, operational continuity, technical compliance, and long-term relational commitment. Previous studies demonstrated that repurchase intention in industrial and logistics-related environments is strongly associated with customer perceptions regarding supplier value, reliability, and relationship quality [4]. Product quality, service quality, and brand image may shape customers’ attitudes toward suppliers, while trust reinforces customers’ confidence and perceived control in maintaining sustainable business relationships. Furthermore, prior studies confirmed that trust and service-related evaluations significantly influence customers’ intentions to continue transactions and maintain long-term purchasing relationships [13].

This study adopts the Theory of Planned Behavior as the grand theory because repurchase intention in industrial markets is not solely influenced by transactional considerations, but also by psychological confidence and relational assurance developed through quality performance and supplier credibility. Previous studies also emphasized that trust and brand-related perceptions play important roles in strengthening behavioural intention and repurchase decisions across relational purchasing environments [8], [9]. Therefore, the Theory of Planned Behavior offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationships among product quality, service quality, brand image, trust, and repurchase intention.

1.2.2. Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention refers to customers’ willingness or tendency to continue purchasing products or services from the same supplier in the future. It represents a behavioural intention reflecting customer commitment, loyalty, and long-term relationship sustainability. In business-to-business markets, repurchase intention becomes critically important because repeated transactions indicate customers’ confidence in supplier reliability and operational capability [4].

Industrial customers generally prioritize suppliers capable of maintaining consistent quality, reliable delivery, and effective communication because supplier failure may disrupt operational processes and increase business risks. Therefore, repurchase intention in business-to-business relationships is influenced not only by economic value, but also by trust, perceived reliability, and relational satisfaction. Previous studies identified repurchase intention as an important outcome variable affected by product quality, service quality, brand image, and trust [5], [6], [7]. Furthermore, prior studies demonstrated that trust and relational assurance significantly strengthen customers’ willingness to continue transactions and maintain long-term purchasing relationships [9]. Repurchase intention in this study is measured using the following indicators: intention to repurchase products in the future, preference for continuing transactions with the same supplier, willingness to prioritize the supplier over competitors, commitment to maintaining long-term purchasing relationships, and willingness to recommend the supplier to other business partners [13].

1.2.3. Product Quality

Product quality refers to the ability of a product to consistently satisfy customer expectations, technical requirements, and industrial standards. In industrial business-to-business contexts, product quality is highly important because customers depend on suppliers to ensure operational continuity and production efficiency. Quality inconsistency may result in production disruptions, financial losses, and operational risks [14].

Within the oil and fats industry, product quality includes conformity with Certificate of Analysis, Product Information Sheet, food safety standards, product consistency, durability, and the absence of contamination or deterioration. Customers tend to evaluate suppliers based on their capability to deliver products according to agreed specifications consistently. Previous studies demonstrated that product quality significantly affects customer trust and repurchase intention because quality reliability strengthens confidence and reduces operational uncertainty [5]. In industrial purchasing environments, customers are more likely to maintain long-term purchasing relationships with suppliers capable of consistently providing products that meet technical and operational requirements. Product quality in this study is measured using the following indicators: conformity with technical specifications, product consistency and reliability, food safety and product security, product durability and stability, and compliance with industrial standards and documentation [15].

1.2.4. Service Quality

Service quality refers to a company's ability to provide reliable, responsive, accurate, and professional services according to customer expectations. In business-to-business transactions, service quality is not limited to interpersonal interactions, but also includes logistics coordination, delivery reliability, complaint handling, and communication effectiveness [6]. Reliable service performance is essential in industrial supply relationships because operational continuity depends heavily on suppliers' ability to deliver products accurately and on time [6].

Industrial customers rely heavily on suppliers' service capability because delivery delays, inaccurate shipments, or ineffective responses may negatively affect operational performance and production schedules. Consequently, service quality becomes an essential determinant of customer trust and long-term purchasing relationships. Previous studies found that service quality positively influences customer trust and repurchase intention because reliable service performance reduces uncertainty and strengthens supplier relationships [7].

In logistics-intensive industrial environments, responsive communication and accurate service coordination also contribute to stronger relational commitment and purchasing continuity. Service quality in this study is measured through the following indicators: timeliness of product delivery, accuracy of delivery quantity and specifications, responsiveness to customer complaints, reliability of service processes, and professionalism and communication effectiveness [9].

1.2.5. Brand Image

Brand image refers to customers' overall perceptions, associations, and beliefs regarding a company or brand. In business-to-business industrial environments, brand image reflects supplier credibility, professionalism, operational capability, and long-term reliability. A strong brand image reduces perceived purchasing risk because reputable suppliers are associated with consistent quality, dependable service, and business stability [8]. Industrial buyers generally prefer suppliers with positive reputations because procurement decisions involve long-term contractual commitments and operational dependencies [8].

Previous studies showed that brand image positively affects customer trust and repurchase intention because strong reputational capital strengthens confidence and loyalty [5], [10]. In industrial purchasing relationships, customers tend to maintain long-term cooperation with suppliers perceived as credible and professionally managed because strong brand perceptions reduce uncertainty regarding future operational performance and business continuity. Brand image in this study is measured using five indicators, namely corporate reputation, brand credibility and reliability, professional company image, perceived market leadership, and capability to maintain long-term partnerships [8].

1.2.6. Trust

Trust refers to customers' confidence that suppliers possess integrity, competence, and commitment to fulfill business obligations consistently [9]. In business-to-business relationships, trust plays a crucial role because industrial transactions involve operational dependency, financial risks, and long-term partnerships [9]. Trust reduces uncertainty in supplier relationships and strengthens customers' confidence regarding future operational and transactional outcomes [3].

Customers are more likely to maintain relationships with suppliers they perceive as reliable, honest, and capable of consistently delivering products and services according to expectations. Trust strengthens relational commitment because customers believe that suppliers will fulfil obligations responsibly and maintain operational consistency over time. Previous studies consistently demonstrated that trust significantly affects repurchase intention because trusted suppliers are perceived as lower-risk business partners capable of sustaining long-term business cooperation [13]. Trust in this study is measured using the following indicators namely confidence in supplier reliability, confidence in product consistency, confidence in service accuracy, supplier integrity and honesty, and commitment to long-term relationships. Prior studies show that trust reduces uncertainty and encourages customers to maintain stable and continuous supplier relationships in industrial purchasing environments.

1.3. Hypothesis Development

Product quality represents a supplier's capability to consistently deliver products that comply with customer specifications, industrial standards, and operational requirements. In business-to-business transactions, customers evaluate suppliers based on product consistency, reliability, food safety, and conformity with technical documentation. High product quality reduces operational uncertainty and minimizes production risks, thereby strengthening customers' confidence in supplier capability [14]. When suppliers consistently maintain quality standards, customers perceive them as competent and dependable business partners. Previous studies demonstrated that product quality positively influences customer trust because consistent product performance reflects supplier reliability and operational competence [5], [15]. Customers are more likely to trust suppliers capable of maintaining stable quality and fulfilling agreed specifications over time. In industrial markets, trust becomes increasingly important because purchasing decisions involve long-term operational dependency and contractual commitment. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior explains that favourable evaluations regarding supplier performance strengthen behavioural confidence and relational intention toward maintaining business relationships [3].

H1: Product quality has a significant positive effect on trust.

Service quality refers to a company's ability to provide responsive, reliable, and accurate services according to customer expectations. In business-to-business environments, service quality includes delivery reliability, responsiveness to complaints, communication effectiveness, and coordination accuracy. Industrial customers depend heavily on suppliers' service performance because operational disruptions caused by delayed deliveries or inaccurate shipments may negatively affect production activities and business continuity [6]. Reliable service performance enhances customer confidence because it signals professionalism and commitment to maintaining business relationships. Customers tend to trust suppliers capable of handling transactions consistently, resolving operational problems effectively, and providing dependable support throughout the purchasing process.

Previous studies confirmed that service quality positively influences customer trust in industrial and logistics-related transactions because reliable service reduces uncertainty and strengthens relational assurance [7]. Furthermore, trust and service-related evaluations have been identified as important determinants influencing customers' intentions to maintain long-term purchasing relationships. The Theory of Planned Behavior also explains that favourable evaluations regarding supplier performance strengthen customers' behavioural confidence and intention to sustain business relationships [3]

H2: Service quality has a significant positive effect on trust.

Brand image reflects customers' perceptions, beliefs, and associations regarding a company's credibility, professionalism, and reliability. In industrial business-to-business markets, brand image plays a strategic role because customers often prefer suppliers with strong reputations and proven operational capabilities. A favourable brand image reduces uncertainty and strengthens confidence in the supplier's ability to maintain quality consistency and long-term partnership stability [8]. Customers generally perceive reputable companies as more trustworthy because strong brands symbolize accountability, professionalism, and reliability. Positive brand perceptions encourage customers to develop confidence in supplier capability and reduce concerns regarding potential operational risks.

Previous studies demonstrated that brand image positively affects customer trust because reputable brands strengthen perceived credibility and relational assurance [5], [10]. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior explains that favourable evaluations toward an organization strengthen behavioural confidence and intention to maintain sustainable relationships [3]. In relational purchasing environments, trust becomes stronger when customers perceive suppliers as credible and professionally managed business partners [13].

H3: Brand image has a significant positive effect on trust.

Trust is one of the most important determinants of long-term business relationships because customers are more likely to continue transactions with suppliers perceived as reliable and dependable. In business-to-business transactions, trust reduces uncertainty associated with operational risks, product inconsistency, and service failure. Customers who trust suppliers tend to believe that future transactions will provide satisfactory outcomes and stable operational performance [4]. Trust also strengthens relational commitment because customers become more confident in maintaining long-term partnerships with suppliers capable of fulfilling promises consistently. When trust is established, customers are less likely to switch to competitors despite competitive market conditions.

Previous studies consistently found that trust positively influences repurchase intention across industrial and service-related contexts because trusted suppliers are perceived as lower-risk and more reliable business partners [9]. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior explains that confidence and perceived behavioural assurance strengthen customers' intentions to continue future transactions [3].

H4: Trust has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.

Product quality directly influences customers' willingness to continue purchasing because industrial buyers prioritize operational reliability and technical consistency. Customers tend to repurchase products that consistently meet expected standards and minimize operational disruption. In business-to-business environments, quality failure may create significant financial losses and negatively affect production continuity, making product quality a critical purchasing consideration [14]. High product quality strengthens customer satisfaction and increases confidence in supplier performance. Customers are more likely to maintain relationships with suppliers capable of delivering stable and reliable products over time. Previous studies demonstrated that product quality positively affects repurchase intention because customers prefer suppliers capable of maintaining operational consistency and reducing business risk [5], [15]. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior explains that favourable evaluations regarding product performance strengthen behavioural intention toward continuing purchasing behaviour [3].

H5: Product quality has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.

Service quality plays an important role in strengthening long-term purchasing relationships because customers expect suppliers to provide reliable and responsive services throughout the transaction process. In industrial markets, timely delivery, accurate shipment handling, and effective communication are essential for maintaining operational continuity. Poor service performance may disrupt production schedules and reduce customer confidence in supplier capability [6]. Customers are more likely to continue purchasing from suppliers capable of consistently providing efficient and dependable services. Reliable service interactions create positive transactional experiences and reduce operational uncertainty, thereby encouraging customers to maintain long-term business relationships. Previous studies confirmed that service quality positively influences repurchase intention because reliable service performance strengthens customer confidence and purchasing continuity [7], [9]. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior explains that favourable service evaluations contribute to stronger behavioural intention toward future purchasing behaviour [3].

H6: Service quality has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.

Brand image influences repurchase intention because customers generally prefer suppliers with strong reputations and positive market perceptions. In business-to-business transactions, a favourable brand image signals professionalism, operational capability, and business stability. Customers tend to perceive reputable suppliers as lower-risk business partners capable of maintaining consistent product and service performance [8].

A strong brand image also strengthens emotional and relational attachment because customers feel more confident continuing partnerships with credible companies. Positive reputational value reduces customers' uncertainty regarding future transactions and increases purchasing confidence. Previous studies demonstrated that brand image positively affects repurchase intention in both industrial and consumer-related contexts because favourable brand perceptions strengthen customer confidence and long-term purchasing commitment [5], [10]. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior explains that favourable evaluations toward suppliers contribute to stronger behavioural intention and future purchasing behaviour [3]. Customers who perceive suppliers as credible and professionally managed are more likely to maintain sustainable purchasing relationships and demonstrate stronger repurchase intention [13].

H7: Brand image has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention.

Repurchase intention may be strengthened through trust because customers who feel confident in a supplier's capability and reliability are more likely to continue future purchases. Such confidence reduces uncertainty and encourages long-term business relationships [14]. In industrial markets, trust becomes increasingly important because operational continuity depends heavily on supplier consistency. When customers trust suppliers based on previous product quality experiences, they are more likely to maintain long-term purchasing relationships. Trust acts as a psychological mechanism that transforms quality evaluation into behavioural commitment in the form of repurchase intention. Previous studies suggested that trust mediates the relationship between product quality and repurchase intention because reliable product performance strengthens customer confidence and encourages future purchasing behaviour [5], [9]. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior explains that favourable evaluations regarding supplier performance strengthen behavioural confidence and intention to maintain sustainable business relationships [3].

H8: Trust mediates the relationship between product quality and repurchase intention.

Reliable service quality strengthens customer trust because customers perceive responsive and dependable suppliers as more capable of fulfilling business commitments consistently. Effective complaint handling, accurate delivery, and responsive communication contribute to positive relational experiences and increase confidence in supplier reliability [6]. Reliable service quality strengthens customer trust because customers perceive responsive and dependable suppliers as more capable of fulfilling business commitments consistently. Effective complaint handling, accurate delivery, and responsive communication contribute to positive relational experiences and increase confidence in supplier reliability [6]. In industrial transactions, trust becomes essential because service failures may directly affect operational performance and business continuity. Customers who trust suppliers based on positive service experiences are more likely to continue purchasing in the future. Trust therefore functions as an intermediary mechanism linking service quality and repurchase intention. Previous studies indicated that trust mediates the influence of service quality on repurchase intention by strengthening customers' confidence in maintaining long-term business relationships [7], [9]. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior explains that positive service evaluations and relational confidence strengthen behavioural intention toward maintaining future purchasing relationships [3].

H9: Trust mediates the relationship between service quality and repurchase intention.

Brand image may indirectly influence repurchase intention through trust because reputable suppliers are generally perceived as more reliable, credible, and professionally managed. Positive brand perceptions reduce uncertainty and increase customers' confidence regarding future business transactions. In business-to-business relationships, trust becomes stronger when suppliers possess favourable reputational value and stable market positioning [8]. Customers who trust suppliers due to strong brand image are more likely to sustain long-term purchasing relationships because they perceive lower operational and transactional risks. Trust therefore acts as a mediating mechanism explaining how positive brand perceptions encourage repurchase intention. Previous studies demonstrated that trust mediates the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention because favourable corporate reputation strengthens relational confidence and behavioural commitment toward future purchasing behaviour [9], [10]. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior explains that positive evaluations and confidence toward suppliers strengthen behavioural intention and sustainable relationship commitment [3].

H10: Trust mediates the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention.

This study proposes a conceptual framework in which product quality, service quality, and brand image directly influence trust and repurchase intention. Furthermore, trust functions as a mediating variable explaining the indirect relationships between product quality, service quality, brand image, and repurchase intention. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, this framework explains that positive evaluations toward supplier performance and credibility strengthen behavioural intention in the form of repurchase intention

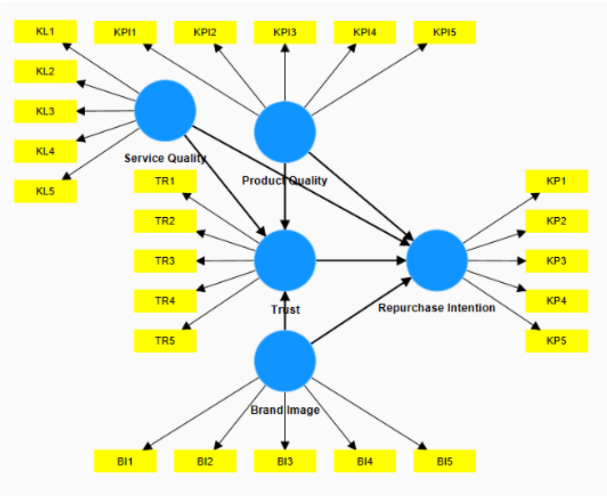

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

2. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the relationships among product quality, service quality, brand image, trust, and repurchase intention in the business-to-business oil and fats industry. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design in which data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. This approach is appropriate for testing causal relationships among variables and examining the proposed mediation model empirically [16].

The population of this study consisted of business-to-business customers of PT Multimas Nabati Asahan Serang, a subsidiary of Wilmar International operating in the oil and fats sector. The target respondents included customers who conducted purchasing transactions during the 2022-2025 period. The study focused on customers who had experience interacting and conducting purchasing activities with the company, enabling them to evaluate product quality, service quality, brand image, trust, and repurchase intention comprehensively. This study employed a non-probability sampling approach using purposive sampling techniques. Respondents were selected based on specific criteria, namely customers who had conducted purchasing transactions and possessed sufficient experience in evaluating the company's products and services. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study required respondents with relevant transactional experience and knowledge related to business-to-business purchasing relationships in the oil and fats industry.

Data collection was conducted through direct and online questionnaire distribution to eligible respondents. A total of 189 valid questionnaires were successfully collected and used for further analysis. This sample size was determined based on the criteria of PLS-SEM, which requires an adequate number of observations to estimate complex models involving multiple constructs and mediation effects. In addition, the number of responses was considered sufficient because it exceeded the minimum recommended sample size for variance-based structural equation modeling and provided enough statistical power for hypothesis testing. The final sample size was justified by the use of purposive sampling and by the need to include respondents who had direct purchasing experience with the company during the study period, so that the data reflected informed evaluations of product quality, service quality, brand image, trust, and repurchase intention. The research instrument used a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 representing "strongly disagree" to 7 representing "strongly agree." The use of a seven-point Likert scale allows respondents to express perceptions more precisely and improves measurement sensitivity in capturing behavioural and attitudinal differences among respondents. Measurement indicators for each construct were adapted from previous studies and adjusted to fit the business-to-business oil and fats industry context.

The collected data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling with SmartPLS software. This analytical method was selected because it is appropriate for explanatory research involving latent variables, predictive models, and mediation analysis. The analysis consisted of measurement model evaluation and structural model assessment to test the proposed hypotheses and mediation relationships

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Respondent Demographic Profile

A total of 189 valid responses were collected from business-to-business customers of PT Multimas Nabati Asahan Serang operating in the oil and fats industry. The respondents represented organizational buyers who were directly involved in purchasing activities, supplier evaluation, logistics coordination, and procurement decision-making processes. The demographic profile of respondents is presented to provide an overview of the organizational characteristics and purchasing behaviour of the participating firms involved in this study.

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Position	Procurement Staff	48	25.4
	Purchasing Supervisor	61	32.3
	Purchasing Manager	46	24.3
	Director / Owner	34	18.0
Type of Industry	Food Manufacturing	81	42.9
	Distributor / Wholesaler	47	24.9
	Consumer Goods Manufacturing	38	20.1
	Bakery and Restaurant Supplier	23	12.1
Length of Business Relationship	< 2 Years	29	15.3
	2 – 5 Years	74	39.2
	6 – 10 Years	58	30.7
	>10 Years	28	14.8
Purchase Frequency	Monthly	83	43.9
	Quarterly	61	32.3
	Semi-Annually	29	15.3
	Annually	16	8.5
Average Purchase Volume	< 10 Tons	36	19.0
	10 – 50 Tons	79	41.8
	51 – 100 Tons	48	25.4
	>100 Tons	26	13.8

The respondent profile on Table 1 indicates that purchasing supervisors represented the largest proportion of respondents, followed by procurement staff and purchasing managers, suggesting that the collected data primarily originated from individuals directly involved in procurement coordination and supplier evaluation activities. Several respondents also occupied strategic positions as directors or company owners, indicating the involvement of top-level decision makers in industrial purchasing activities. In terms of organizational background, most respondents operated within the food manufacturing sector, followed by distributors and consumer goods manufacturers, reflecting the broad industrial utilization of oil and fats products within business-to-business supply chains. The majority of respondents had maintained business relationships with PT Multimas Nabati Asahan Serang for two to five years and conducted purchasing transactions on a monthly basis, indicating relatively intensive and continuous transactional interactions with the company. Furthermore, most firms reported average purchase volumes ranging between 10 and 50 tons per transaction period, demonstrating that the respondents represented active industrial buyers with substantial operational dependence on supplier performance. These findings confirm that the respondents possessed sufficient transactional experience and organizational authority to evaluate product quality, service quality, brand image, trust, and repurchase intention within the business-to-business oil and fats industry context.

3.2. Measurement Model Evaluation

The convergent validity assessment was conducted by evaluating the outer loading values of each indicator. In Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling, indicators are considered acceptable when they achieve outer loading values above 0.70, indicating that the indicators adequately represent their respective latent constructs and possess satisfactory indicator reliability. The initial measurement model evaluation, which can be seen on Figure 1, revealed that several indicators did not meet the minimum outer loading threshold of 0.70 and therefore required elimination to improve construct validity and reliability. Within the repurchase intention construct, indicators KP1 and KP5 were eliminated. Within the product quality construct, indicators KPI3, KPI4, and KPI5 were removed from the model. In the service quality construct, indicators KL4 and KL5 were also eliminated. Additionally, indicator BI1 within the brand image construct did not satisfy the recommended loading criterion and was therefore excluded from further analysis. After the elimination process, all remaining indicators achieved outer loading values above 0.70, indicating satisfactory convergent validity and adequate representation of their corresponding constructs. The refined measurement model therefore fulfilled the recommended validity requirements and was considered appropriate for subsequent structural model evaluation.

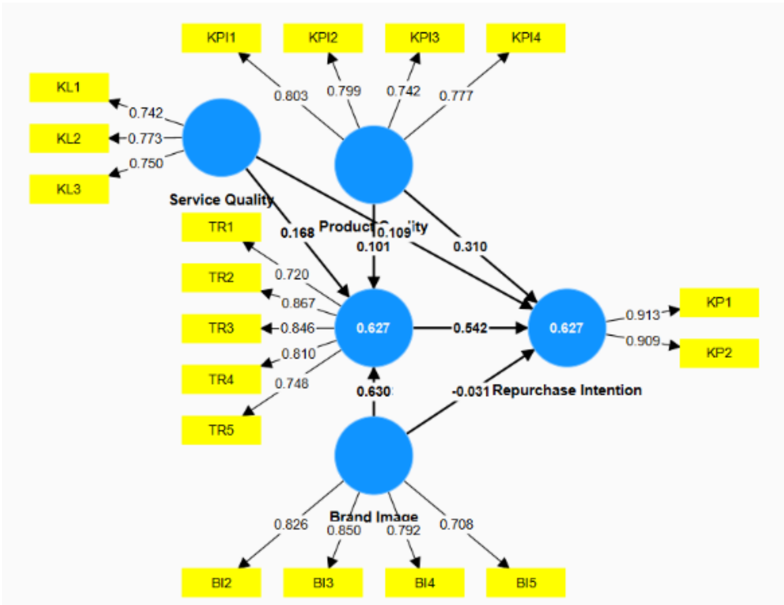

Figure 2. Outer model

3.3. Measurement Model Analysis

Table 2 present the results of the measurement model evaluation, including outer loading, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted values. The convergent validity assessment showed that all retained indicators achieved outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the indicators adequately represented their respective latent constructs. The outer loading values ranged from acceptable to high, demonstrating satisfactory indicator reliability and construct representation.

The reliability assessment further demonstrated that all constructs achieved acceptable levels of internal consistency reliability. The composite reliability values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 for all constructs, indicating strong construct reliability. Similarly, the Cronbach's alpha values generally satisfied the acceptable reliability criterion, confirming the consistency of the measurement items used in this study. Although the service quality construct demonstrated a relatively lower Cronbach's alpha value compared to the other constructs, the value remained acceptable for exploratory and explanatory research within Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling.

In addition, the average variance extracted values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. These findings demonstrate that each construct was capable of explaining more than half of the variance of its indicators. Overall, the measurement model fulfilled the recommended validity and reliability requirements, indicating that the constructs were appropriate for subsequent structural model analysis and hypothesis testing.

Table 2. Measurement Model Evaluation

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Avg Variance Extracted
Brand Image	BI2	0.826	0.806	0.873	0.633
	BI3	0.850			
	BI4	0.792			
	BI5	0.708			
Product Quality	KPI1	0.803	0.788	0.862	0.609
	KPI2	0.799			
	KPI3	0.742			
	KPI4	0.777			
Repurchase Intention	KP1	0.913	0.795	0.907	0.830
	KP2	0.909			
Service Quality	KL1	0.742	0.624	0.799	0.570
	KL2	0.773			
	KL3	0.750			
Trust	TR1	0.720	0.858	0.898	0.640
	TR2	0.867			
	TR3	0.846			
	TR4	0.810			
	TR5	0.748			

3.4. Discriminant Validity Analysis

Table 3 presents the discriminant validity assessment among the latent constructs. Discriminant validity evaluates the extent to which a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs within the research model. The assessment was conducted by examining the inter-construct correlation values to ensure that each construct captured unique conceptual dimensions.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Assessment

Construct	Brand Image	Product Quality	Repurchase Intention	Service Quality	Trust
Brand Image	—				
Product Quality	0.611	—			
Repurchase Intention	0.739	0.763	—		
Service Quality	0.749	0.682	0.766	—	
Trust	0.921	0.597	0.883	0.749	—

The results indicate that several constructs demonstrated relatively strong correlations, particularly between brand image and trust, as well as between trust and repurchase intention. This finding suggests that customers' perceptions regarding corporate reputation and credibility are closely associated with the development of trust and long-term purchasing commitment within business-to-business relationships. Similarly, the strong relationship between trust and repurchase intention indicates that customer confidence in supplier reliability plays a substantial role in encouraging future purchasing behaviour. Despite the relatively high correlation values among several constructs, the measurement model remained theoretically acceptable because each construct represented conceptually different dimensions grounded in prior literature and the Theory of Planned Behavior framework. Product quality and service quality also demonstrated moderate relationships with the other constructs, indicating that operational performance contributes to trust formation and repurchase intention in industrial purchasing relationships. Overall, the findings indicate that the constructs possessed acceptable discriminant validity and were sufficiently distinct to proceed with structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing

3.5. Structural Model Analysis

Table 4 and Figure 3 present the results of the structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing. The findings indicate that brand image had a positive and significant effect on repurchase intention and trust, demonstrating that stronger corporate reputation and credibility increased customer confidence and encouraged long-term purchasing commitment in the business-to-business oil and fats industry. The substantial effect of brand image on trust suggests that organizational buyers strongly consider supplier reputation and perceived professionalism when evaluating long-term business relationships. Product quality was found to have a significant positive effect on repurchase intention, indicating that customers were more likely to continue purchasing when products consistently met technical specifications and operational expectations. However, the relationship between product quality and trust was not statistically significant. This finding suggests that although customers valued product consistency for operational purposes, trust formation in the industrial context was influenced more strongly by broader relational and reputational factors than by product performance alone.

Table 4. Structural Model and Indirect Effect Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T-Statistic	P-Values	Result
H1	Product Quality → Trust	0.101	0.081	1.240	0.215	Not Supported
H2	Service Quality → Trust	0.168	0.101	1.665	0.096	Not Supported
H3	Brand Image → Trust	0.630	0.083	7.633	0.000	Supported
H4	Trust → Repurchase Intention	0.542	0.107	5.051	0.000	Supported
H5	Product Quality → Repurchase Intention	0.364	0.080	4.547	0.000	Supported
H6	Service Quality → Repurchase Intention	0.200	0.110	1.822	0.068	Not Supported
H7	Brand Image → Repurchase Intention	0.310	0.085	3.650	0.000	Supported
H8	Product Quality → Trust → Repurchase Intention	0.055	0.044	1.237	0.261	Not Supported
H9	Service Quality → Trust → Repurchase Intention	0.091	0.059	1.534	0.125	Not Supported
H10	Brand Image → Trust → Repurchase Intention	0.341	0.075	4.521	0.000	Supported

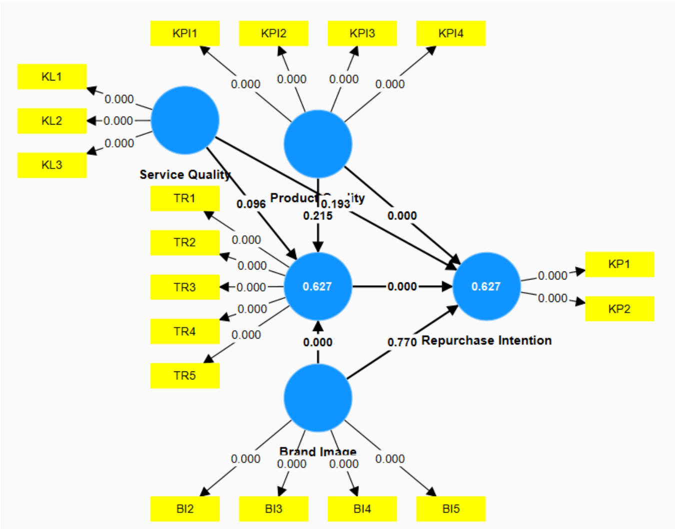

Figure 3. Inner model

The results further revealed that service quality did not significantly influence either repurchase intention or trust. Although service quality demonstrated positive coefficients, the relationships were statistically insignificant. This finding may indicate that industrial customers perceived service quality as a basic operational requirement rather than a strategic differentiating factor influencing long-term purchasing decisions. Within business-to-business industrial transactions, customers may prioritize product reliability and supplier reputation more strongly than routine service interactions.

Trust demonstrated a strong positive and significant effect on repurchase intention, confirming its critical role in sustaining long-term business relationships. Customers who trusted the supplier were more likely to maintain purchasing relationships and continue future transactions despite competitive market conditions. This finding supports the Theory of Planned Behavior perspective, which emphasizes that confidence and behavioural assurance strengthen purchasing intention.

Regarding indirect effects, trust significantly mediated the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention. This result indicates that favourable brand perceptions strengthened repurchase intention through the development of customer trust. However, trust did not significantly mediate the relationships between product quality and repurchase intention or between service quality and repurchase intention. These findings suggest that trust primarily functioned as a relational mechanism associated with corporate reputation rather than operational performance variables within the business-to-business oil and fats industry context.

3.6. Discussion

Product quality does not significantly influence trust. Although product quality demonstrates a positive relationship with trust, the effect remains statistically insignificant. This finding suggests that customers may perceive product quality as a standard operational requirement that all suppliers in the industrial oil and fats sector must fulfill. Consequently, quality performance alone may not be sufficient to strengthen trust formation. This result differs from several previous studies that identified product quality as an important determinant of trust [5], [15].

Three alternative reasons may explain this insignificant relationship. First, in highly standardized commodity markets such as palm oil derivatives, product quality may have reached a baseline threshold where variations no longer significantly differentiate suppliers in building trust. Second, customers may separate technical/operational evaluations from relational evaluations, viewing product quality as a minimum expectation rather than a trust-building factor. Third, other unexamined factors such as long-term contract stability, personal relationships, or third-party certifications may exert stronger influence on trust formation than day-to-day product consistency. This finding partially contrasts with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which explains that favourable evaluations toward supplier performance strengthen behavioural confidence and relational intention [3]. In this industrial B2B context, customers may not fully translate product quality perceptions into the attitudinal confidence that the theory predicts.

Brand image has a strong positive and significant effect on trust. This finding indicates that customers develop higher levels of confidence toward suppliers possessing strong reputational value, professionalism, and market credibility. In business-to-business industrial relationships, trust is often formed through long-term perceptions regarding supplier reliability and corporate consistency rather than solely through transactional experiences. This result supports previous research emphasizing that reputable brands strengthen customer confidence because strong corporate image signals integrity, competence, and long-term stability [8], [10]. In the oil and fats industry, where operational reliability and supply continuity are critical, customers tend to trust suppliers perceived as credible and professionally managed [17]. The finding further confirms that brand image functions as an important relational asset capable of strengthening trust formation within industrial purchasing relationships. This finding is also consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which explains that favourable organizational evaluations strengthen behavioural confidence and relational commitment [3].

Trust positively and significantly influences repurchase intention. This result confirms that trust serves as a critical factor sustaining long-term purchasing relationships within business-to-business industrial markets. Customers who trust suppliers become more likely to continue transactions because trust reduces operational uncertainty and strengthens confidence regarding future business interactions. This finding supports previous studies suggesting that trust functions as a central mechanism encouraging relational commitment and long-term purchasing behaviour [4], [13]. In the context of PT Multimas Nabati Asahan Serang, trust likely emerges from customers' perceptions regarding supplier reliability, consistency, and integrity. The finding also supports the Theory of Planned Behavior perspective, which emphasizes that confidence and perceived behavioural assurance strengthen behavioural intention [18] and encourage sustainable purchasing relationships [3].

Product quality positively and significantly affects repurchase intention. This result suggests that customers become more likely to continue purchasing when products consistently meet technical specifications, safety standards, and operational requirements. In industrial business-to-business transactions, product quality holds high importance because product inconsistency may directly disrupt production processes and increase operational risks. The finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that product quality significantly influences customers' willingness to maintain long-term purchasing relationships [5], [15].

Customers in industrial markets prioritize suppliers capable of maintaining stable product performance because operational continuity depends heavily on supplier reliability. Within the context of PT Multimas Nabati Asahan Serang, the result indicates that customers consider product consistency and technical conformity as major determinants influencing future purchasing behaviour. This finding further supports the Theory of Planned Behavior, which explains that favourable product evaluations strengthen behavioural intention toward future purchasing decisions [3].

Service quality does not significantly affect trust. This finding suggests that operational service performance alone proves insufficient to strengthen customers' confidence toward suppliers within the industrial oil and fats sector. Customers may evaluate trust based on broader organizational credibility and long-term relational consistency rather than solely on day-to-day service interactions. This result contrasts with previous studies that emphasized the significant role of service quality in trust formation [7], [9].

Three alternative explanations account for this insignificance. First, service quality may function as a basic hygiene factor in B2B industrial transactions expected as standard but insufficient to generate additional trust. Second, frequent service interactions in logistics-heavy sectors may normalize customer expectations, thereby diminishing their impact on relational trust. Third, trust formation may depend more heavily on strategic elements such as financial stability, executive relationships, or proven track record than on routine operational service metrics. From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior, customers may not necessarily translate routine service evaluations into stronger behavioural confidence unless accompanied by broader relational assurance [3].

Service quality does not significantly influence repurchase intention. Although service quality demonstrates a positive coefficient, the relationship remains statistically insignificant. This finding suggests that customers may perceive service quality as a basic operational expectation rather than a strategic differentiating factor influencing long-term purchasing decisions. In industrial business-to-business transactions, customers often prioritize operational continuity, product reliability, and supplier reputation more strongly than routine service interactions. Delivery accuracy, responsiveness, and communication effectiveness may be viewed as minimum operational standards that suppliers are expected to fulfil consistently. Consequently, service quality may not directly encourage repurchase intention unless accompanied by stronger relational or strategic value creation. This finding differs from previous studies that identified service quality as a significant predictor of repurchase intention [6], [7], indicating that industrial purchasing behaviour may be influenced more strongly by operational assurance and reputational factors.

Three possible reasons explain this result. First, service quality represents a threshold requirement in B2B commodity markets where meeting expectations yields limited additional impact on repurchase intention. Second, customers may maintain multiple supplier options as contingency, reducing the influence of service variations on long-term decisions. Third, reputational and product-related factors tend to overshadow service quality in strategic purchasing behaviour. This finding partially contrasts with the Theory of Planned Behavior, in which service evaluations should contribute to stronger behavioural intention [3].

Brand image positively and significantly influences repurchase intention among business-to-business customers in the oil and fats industry. This result indicates that customers become more likely to continue purchasing from suppliers perceived as reputable, credible, and professionally managed. In industrial purchasing environments, supplier reputation becomes increasingly important because business transactions involve operational continuity, technical dependency, and long-term contractual relationships. A strong brand image therefore reduces perceived uncertainty and strengthens customers' confidence in maintaining long-term purchasing relationships. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that brand image positively affects repurchase intention because favourable brand perceptions strengthen customer loyalty and purchasing confidence [5], [8]. Within the context of PT Multimas Nabati Asahan Serang, the result suggests that organizational buyers consider corporate reputation and market credibility as important factors influencing future purchasing decisions. The finding also supports the Theory of Planned Behavior, which explains that favourable evaluations toward suppliers strengthen behavioural intention in the form of repurchase intention [3].

Trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between product quality and repurchase intention. Although product quality directly influences repurchase intention, the indirect effect through trust remains statistically insignificant. This result suggests that customers primarily evaluate product quality from an operational perspective rather than as a relational mechanism influencing trust formation. In industrial purchasing environments, customers may consider product quality as a mandatory technical requirement that directly affects operational performance and production continuity. Consequently, product quality may influence repurchase decisions independently without necessarily strengthening emotional or relational confidence toward suppliers. This finding indicates that trust development within business-to-business industrial relationships is influenced more strongly by reputational and relational factors than solely by technical product performance. The result therefore differs from previous studies suggesting that trust mediates the relationship between product quality and repurchase intention [9].

Trust does not significantly mediate the relationship between service quality and repurchase intention. This finding suggests that service quality alone proves insufficient to strengthen trust and subsequently encourage long-term purchasing commitment. Customers may perceive operational service performance as a routine supplier obligation rather than a strategic relational factor capable of strengthening purchasing intention. Within industrial business-to-business contexts, purchasing decisions are often influenced more strongly by operational reliability, supplier reputation, and strategic partnership considerations than by routine service interactions. Consequently, although service quality remains operationally important, it may not substantially contribute to trust development or repurchase intention unless integrated with broader relationship-building strategies and organizational credibility enhancement. This finding contrasts with previous studies emphasizing the mediating role of trust between service quality and repurchase intention [7], [9].

Trust significantly mediates the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention. This finding suggests that favourable brand perceptions strengthen customers repurchase intention through the development of trust. In industrial business-to-business relationships, customers tend to maintain purchasing relationships with suppliers perceived as reputable and trustworthy because strong corporate image reduces uncertainty and increases confidence regarding future transactions. This result confirms that trust functions as an important relational mechanism linking reputational value and long-term purchasing behaviour. Customers who perceive suppliers as credible and professionally managed become more likely to develop confidence in supplier capability, which subsequently encourages future purchasing commitment. Therefore, brand image not only directly affects repurchase intention but also indirectly strengthens purchasing intention through trust development. This finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that trust mediates the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention [8], [10].

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the effects of product quality, service quality, and brand image on repurchase intention, as well as the mediating role of trust among business-to-business customers in the oil and fats industry. The results indicate that brand image significantly influences both trust and repurchase intention, while product quality significantly affects repurchase intention. Trust also has a significant positive effect on repurchase intention. However, product quality and service quality do not significantly influence trust, and service quality does not significantly affect repurchase intention. These findings suggest that industrial customers place greater emphasis on supplier reputation, credibility, and trustworthiness than on operational performance alone when making future purchasing decisions. Furthermore, the mediation analysis reveals that trust significantly mediates the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention, whereas the mediating effects of trust on the relationships between product quality and repurchase intention and between service quality and repurchase intention are not supported. Therefore, trust functions primarily as a relational mechanism driven by corporate reputation rather than by operational factors. The findings contribute to the Theory of Planned Behavior by demonstrating the importance of trust and reputational perceptions in shaping repurchase intention within business-to-business industrial markets.

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