The Mediating Effect of Brand Trust on Purchase Decisions through Perceived Quality and Health Consciousness Using PLS-SEM

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Abstract
        The growing adoption of healthy lifestyles has increasingly challenged the consumption of carbonated beverages, which are widely perceived as unhealthy products. Nevertheless, some brands remain competitive due to strong perceived quality and consumer trust. This study aims to examine the mediating role of brand trust in the relationships among perceived quality, health consciousness, and purchase decisions for Big Cola, addressing inconsistent findings on the Influence of health consciousness on unhealthy product consumption. This study employed a quantitative explanatory design using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Data were collected from 200 respondents who had previously consumed Big Cola through purposive sampling. Measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, and the analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 to evaluate both the measurement and structural models. The results indicate that perceived quality has a strong positive effect on brand trust and a positive Influence on purchase decisions. In contrast, health consciousness negatively affects purchase decisions, suggesting that greater health awareness reduces consumers' willingness to buy carbonated beverages. Furthermore, brand trust plays an important mediating role by strengthening the effect of perceived quality on purchase decisions and partially mitigating the negative Influence of health consciousness. The structural model demonstrates strong explanatory power, with R^2 values of 0.72 for brand trust and 0.81 for purchase decisions. This study provides empirical evidence that health consciousness shows a negative but weak effect, indicating a limited deterrent role in unhealthy product consumption, while brand trust remains a key mechanism sustaining purchase behavior.

Keywords: Perceived Quality; Brand Trust; Health Consciousness; Purchase Decision; Carbonated Beverages

Abstrak
        Penerapan gaya hidup sehat yang semakin luas telah semakin menantang konsumsi minuman bersoda, yang secara luas dianggap sebagai produk tidak sehat. Namun, beberapa merek tetap kompetitif berkat kualitas yang dirasakan kuat dan kepercayaan konsumen. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran mediasi kepercayaan merek dalam hubungan antara kualitas yang dirasakan, kesadaran kesehatan, dan keputusan pembelian untuk Big Cola, menanggapi temuan yang tidak konsisten mengenai pengaruh kesadaran kesehatan terhadap konsumsi produk tidak sehat. Studi ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif eksplanatori dengan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Data dikumpulkan dari 200 responden yang pernah mengonsumsi Big Cola melalui sampling purposif. Item pengukuran dievaluasi menggunakan skala Likert lima poin, dan analisis dilakukan menggunakan SmartPLS 4.0 untuk mengevaluasi model pengukuran dan model struktural. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kualitas yang dirasakan memiliki pengaruh positif

yang kuat terhadap kepercayaan merek dan pengaruh positif terhadap keputusan pembelian. Sebaliknya, kesadaran kesehatan memiliki pengaruh negatif terhadap keputusan pembelian, menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran kesehatan yang lebih tinggi mengurangi kemauan konsumen untuk membeli minuman bersoda. Selain itu, kepercayaan merek memainkan peran mediasi yang penting dengan memperkuat pengaruh kualitas yang dirasakan terhadap keputusan pembelian dan sebagian mengurangi pengaruh negatif kesadaran kesehatan. Model struktural menunjukkan daya penjelas yang kuat, dengan nilai R² sebesar 0.72 untuk kepercayaan merek dan 0.81 untuk keputusan pembelian. Studi ini memberikan bukti empiris bahwa kesadaran kesehatan berperan sebagai penghalang yang terbatas dalam konsumsi produk tidak sehat, sementara kepercayaan merek tetap menjadi mekanisme kunci yang mempertahankan perilaku pembelian.

Kata Kunci: Kualitas Yang Dirasakan; Kepercayaan Merek; Kesadaran Kesehatan; Keputusan Pembelian; Minuman Bersoda

Introduction

The carbonated beverage industry in Indonesia has shown relatively stable development in recent years, despite increasing public awareness of healthy lifestyles. However, this trend has gradually altered consumer preferences, particularly among young people and university students, who are increasingly critical of high-sugar products (Rafly, 2025). According to Euromonitor International, carbonated beverage sales in Indonesia declined by approximately 5.2% over the past five years, indicating a shift toward low- sugar and natural drinks. This condition presents a strategic challenge for brands such as Big Cola, which rely on affordable pricing and wide distribution to retain consumer loyalty amid rising health concerns.

From a consumer behavior perspective, perceived quality plays an important role in shaping purchasing decisions. defines perceived quality as a consumer's subjective assessment of a product's superiority, while Aaker (2009) emphasizes its contribution to brand equity development. In line with this view Chen (2009) argue that individual values and beliefs shape consumers' attitudes toward products, which subsequently influence their intentions and behaviors in the decision-making process. High perceived quality can reduce perceived risk and strengthen consumer confidence.

In the context of young consumers in the digital era, purchasing decisions are increasingly shaped by a combination of cognitive evaluations and emotional responses, where perceived quality serves as a key heuristic in simplifying decision-making processes (Wardhana, 2024). Empirical studies support this relationship, showing that perceived quality positively influences purchase intention Syahadat, Amirullah and Ansari (2024) and similar outcomes in health-related products such as green cosmetics (Lala et al., 2024). However, most prior research has focused on health-oriented products, leaving limited empirical evidence on whether perceived quality remains a key driver of purchase decisions for unhealthy products, including carbonated beverages.

Health consciousness has also become increasingly influential in modern consumption patterns. Panji (2024) explains that increased access to digital information encourages young consumers to critically evaluate product-related risks, leading to more selective consumption behavior, particularly in food and beverage categories. Similarly, Tran, Pham, Pham and Nguyen (2020) emphasize that health consciousness plays a critical role in shaping consumer decision-making, as consumers tend to reassess products that are perceived to pose potential health risks.

Consistent with this perspective, argue that consumer attitudes significantly influence behavioral intentions, while motivational factors such as concern for product safety and ethical considerations play an essential role in shaping those attitudes. Health consciousness reflects an individual's concern for maintaining a healthy lifestyle Lee and Lim (2021) and encourages consumers to select products perceived as safe and beneficial Kim and Kim (2022) While several studies confirm its positive influence on healthy product preferences Putri, Faizal and Pintakmi (2025) empirical findings regarding unhealthy products remain inconsistent.

Zainuddin, Russell-Bennett and Previte (2013) reported a negative relationship between health consciousness and soft drink consumption, whereas Rosalin, Barkah and Pebrianti (2022) found insignificant effects that varied by contextual and cultural factors. In the Indonesian setting, particularly among university students, empirical evidence on this relationship remains limited. Furthermore, brand trust may function as a psychological mechanism that explains continued consumption of unhealthy products despite health concerns. Brand trust reflects consumers' belief in a brand's reliability and integrity Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2004) and contributes to long-term loyalty through reliability and virtue dimensions.

Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2004) explain that trust in a brand is a critical element shaping consumer evaluations and contributing to positive behavioral responses toward the brand. Prior studies confirm that brand trust significantly influences purchase decisions Bachtiar, Indriani and Rupianti (2025) and mediates the relationship between perceived quality and purchasing behavior (Ramadiansyah, Pradhana and Haes, 2024). In the context of Big Cola, brand trust may act as a buffer, allowing consumers to continue purchasing despite awareness of health risks (Marcella, 2024).

Based on these gaps, this study explicitly addresses the limited empirical evidence on the influence of health consciousness on purchase decisions for unhealthy products among Indonesian university students. In addition, this research positions brand trust as a mediating mechanism linking perceived quality and health consciousness to purchase decisions in the carbonated beverage category, a field that remains underexplored. By doing so, this study offers novel empirical insights into the paradox between increasing health awareness and continued consumption of unhealthy products. Therefore, this study aims to examine the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between perceived quality and health consciousness toward Big Cola purchase decisions among public and private university students in Mataram City.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the consumer behavior literature by addressing the paradox of healthy lifestyle adoption health conscious consumers continue to purchase unhealthy products despite their health-consciousness, driven by trust in brands. This research extends existing studies by integrating brand equity theory and the concept of health-conscious consumption within the context of carbonated beverages, a category that remains underexplored. In practice, the findings are expected to provide Big Cola with managerial insights for designing marketing communication strategies that are more transparent, credible, and emotionally engaging, while simultaneously addressing rising consumer concerns about health.

Methods

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research design with a causal approach to examine the relationships among perceived quality, health consciousness, brand trust, and purchase decisions. The research was conducted in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara, with participants comprising students from public and private universities who had previously consumed Big Cola. Respondents were selected

purposively, yielding 200 valid samples after data screening. Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms from March to April 2025. The research instrument consisted of structured statements measured using a five-point Likert scale, covering perceived quality, health consciousness, brand trust, and purchase decisions. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0 software.

Results And Discussion

Carbonated beverage consumption reflects a paradox in consumer behavior: although increased health awareness is expected to reduce the purchase of unhealthy products, these beverages remain widely consumed. From the perspective of consumer behavior theory, purchasing decisions are not only driven by rational health considerations but also influenced by subjective evaluations and brand perceptions. This raises questions about how health awareness interacts with other factors in shaping purchasing decisions in the carbonated beverage category. Furthermore, from a brand equity perspective, perceived quality and brand trust are key assets that strengthen brand value and reduce perceived risk. High perceived quality can strengthen trust, enabling consumers to maintain a purchase decision despite health concerns.

1. Responden Profile

Therefore, this study examines the role of perceived quality, health awareness, and brand trust in explaining purchase decisions, with brand trust positioned as a mediating mechanism. The respondents in this study were 200 university students in Mataram City who had previously consumed Big Cola products. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents based on gender, age, university type, and product consumption experience. The majority of respondents were female (59%), while male respondents accounted for 41%, indicating that female students were more active participants in this survey.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents were between 20 and 25 years old (82.5%), followed by those over 25 years old (12.5%), and a small proportion under 20 years old (5%). These results indicate that Big Cola's consumer group is dominated by young people in the typical college-age range. Regarding educational background, 55% of respondents came from public universities and 45% from private universities, indicating that this study successfully captured perspectives from both academic environments.

Furthermore, all respondents (100%) reported consuming Big Cola, meeting the inclusion criteria for participation in this study. Overall, these demographic findings confirm that Big Cola's primary consumers are young people, especially female students, who represent a key potential market segment for affordable soft drink brands in Mataram City.

Table 1. Respondents' Profile

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	82	41%
	Female	118	59%
	< 20 years	10	5%
Age	20–25 years	165	82.5%
	> 25 years	25	12.5%
	Public (PTN)	110	55%
Type of University	Private (PTS)	90	45%

Ever Consumed Big Cola	Yes	200	100%
	No	0	0%

Source: Processed Data by Researchers, 2025

This study used the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) data analysis technique. Testing was conducted in two stages: the outer model (measurement model) and the inner model (structural model).

2. Outer Loading

Table 1 presents the outer loading values for all indicators in the measurement model. As shown in the table, the outer loading values of all indicators exceeded the minimum threshold value of 0.70, indicating that each measurement item had a strong correlation with its respective latent construct. These results confirm that all indicators met the criterion of convergent validity as suggested (Hair, Matthews, Matthews and Sarstedt, 2021). Based on the results of the outer loading analysis, all indicators in the measurement model demonstrate strong validity in explaining their respective constructs.

Each indicator measures its latent variable with strong accuracy. For instance, HC1 has a loading of 0.91, indicating it accounts for 91% of Health Consciousness variance. This value reflects a very high contribution, suggesting that the statement represented by HC1 accurately captures the respondent's perception of human capital. Likewise, PQ4 with a loading value of 0.87 and PQ1 with 0.86 demonstrate strong convergent validity in measuring Product Quality, confirming that the items used in this construct effectively capture respondents' assessments of product quality attributes. Furthermore, the BT4 indicator (loading = 0.87) contributes significantly to the Brand Trust construct, illustrating that the item strongly reflects consumer trust toward the brand.

In the same way, the PD3 indicator with a loading value of 0.88 provides substantial explanatory power for the Purchase Decision construct, indicating that this statement effectively represents consumers' decision-making behavior. Since all outer loading values exceed the cut-off of 0.70, it can be concluded that all indicators in this study meet the criteria for convergent validity, meaning that the items in the questionnaire are valid and appropriate for measuring their respective constructs. These results imply that respondents understood the questionnaire items consistently with the conceptual definitions of the variables used in this research.

Table 2. Outer Loading Results

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Description
Perceived Quality (X1)	PQ1	0.86	Valid
	PQ2	0.85	Valid
	PQ3	0.75	Valid
	PQ4	0.87	Valid
Health Consciousness (X2)	HC1	0.91	Valid
	HC2	0.84	Valid
	HC3	0.84	Valid
	HC4	0.89	Valid
Brand Trust (X3)	BT1	0.86	Valid
	BT2	0.81	Valid
	BT3	0.85	Valid
	BT4	0.87	Valid
	PD1	0.86	Valid

Purchase	PD2	0.84	Valid
Decision (Y1)	PD3	0.88	Valid
	PD4	0.86	Valid

Source: Processed Data by Researchers, 2025

3. Construct Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's Alpha value for all constructs is greater than 0.7, which indicates good internal consistency in the indicators used to measure each construct. For the Brand Trust construct, Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.87, for Health Consciousness is 0.89, for Purchase Decision is 0.88, and for Perceived Quality is 0.85. All these values indicate that the instrument has excellent reliability. In addition, the Composite Reliability (rho_a and rho_c) also indicates the overall reliability of the construct, with all values being above 0.7, which signifies good reliability. The Composite Reliability values for Brand Trust were 0.87 (rho_a) and 0.91 (rho_c), for Health Consciousness it was 0.95 (rho_a) and 0.92 (rho_c), for Purchase Decision it was 0.88 (rho_a) and 0.91 (rho_c), and for Perceived Quality it was 0.86 (rho_a) and 0.90 (rho_c).

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (Rho_A)	Composite Reliability (Rho_C)
BT	0,87	0,87	0,91
HC	0,89	0,95	0,92
PD	0,88	0,88	0,91
PQ	0,85	0,86	0,90

Source: Processed Data by Researchers, 2025

4. Avarage Variance Extracted (AVE)

Table 4 shows the results of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct in the research model. The AVE values obtained are 0.72, 0.75, 0.74, and 0.69, all of which exceed the minimum threshold of 0.50. This indicates that each construct meets the criterion for convergent validity, meaning that the indicators used are able to explain more than half of the variance of their respective latent variables. In other words, the measurement items consistently and accurately represent the constructs being measured. Therefore, the results demonstrate that the model has good validity and reliability in terms of convergent validity.

Table 4. Avarage Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Avarage Variance Extracted (AVE)
BT	0,72
HC	0,75
PD	0,74
PQ	0,69

Source: Processed Data by Researchers, 2025

5. Path Coefficient Test Results

Table 5 shows the results of the path coefficient test for the relationship between brand trust, health awareness, purchase decisions, and perceived quality. The results showed that brand trust had a moderate positive influence on purchase decisions with a value of 0.72. Health awareness showed a substantively weak negative association with brand trust (-0.06) and purchase decisions (-0.02). Perceived quality had a strong positive

influence on brand trust (0.86) and a weak positive influence on purchase decisions (0.21). Overall, brand trust has a strong influence on purchasing decisions, while perceived quality also has an effect even though it is weaker. Health awareness did not show a significant effect.

Table 5. Path Coefficient Test Results

	BT	HC	PD	PQ
BT			0,72	
HC	-0,06		-0,02	
PD				
PQ	0,86		0,21	

Source: Processed Data by Researchers, 2025

6. R-Square

Inner-model analysis assesses the strength and direction of relationships among latent constructs, as well as the extent to which the independent variables explain the dependent variables in the model. The table shows the R-squared and Adjusted R-squared values for Brand Trust and Purchase Decision. For Brand Trust, an R-squared value of 0.72 indicates that the model can account for 72% of the variation within the Brand Trust, with an Adjusted R-squared value of 0.71 which is slightly lower when adjusted for the number of independent variables. As for Purchase Decision, an R-squared value of 0.81 indicates that the model can account for 81.6% variation in Purchase Decision, with an Adjusted R-squared of 0.81. These values indicate that the model has good predictive power, since most of the variation in both variables can be explained by the construct being tested.

Table 6. R-Square

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
BT	0,72	0,71
PD	0,81	0,81

Source: Processed Data by Researchers, 2025

7. F-Square

The table shows the value of f-square which illustrates the relative influence of each relationship in the model. Brand Trust has a important factor on Purchase Decision with an f-square value of 0.79, indicating a significant impact on purchase decisions. The relationships between Health Consciousness and Brand Trust ($f^2 = 0.013$) and between Health Consciousness and Purchase Decision ($f^2 = 0.004$) indicate negative effects with very small effect sizes. This suggests that although higher levels of health consciousness tend to reduce consumers' trust in the brand as well as their purchase decisions toward Big Cola, the practical impact of this influence is weak.

In other words, health consciousness does not represent a dominant factor in explaining variations in either brand trust or purchase decisions in the context of carbonated beverages. Perceived Quality showed a very strong influence on Brand Trust with an f-square value of 2,460, indicating a important factor in building brand trust. However, the relationship between Perceived Quality and Purchase Decision had a small influence with an f-square value of 0.06. Overall, these results show that Perceived Quality plays a very important role in forming Brand Trust, while Health Consciousness shows a negative but weak effect on purchasing decisions, reflecting that health awareness contributes to the decreased purchase of carbonated beverages.

Table 7. F-Square	
	f-square
BT -> PD	0,79
HC -> BT	0,01
HC -> PD	0,00
PQ -> BT	2,46
PQ -> PD	0,06

Based on the results of the analysis using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), this study found several important findings that illustrate the relationship between quality perception, health awareness, brand trust, and purchasing decisions. The results of the analysis showed that the perception of quality has a very strong influence on the brand trust, with a path coefficient of 0.86, which indicates that the higher the consumer's perception of the quality of the product, the more likely they are to decide to buy the product. These findings are in line with Zeithaml (1998) research that the quality perceived by consumers is a major factor in purchasing decision-making.

Although healthy lifestyle trends are evolving, product quality remains a major driver of purchasing decisions, as also found by Marcella (2024) which suggests that the perception of quality has a great effect on purchase intent, even for products that may not be healthy. On the other hand, the results of the path coefficient test for health awareness showed a negative and weak effect on purchase decisions, with a path coefficient value of -0.06. This indicates that as consumers become more aware of the importance of health, their likelihood of purchasing carbonated beverages such as Big Cola slight reduction.

This finding suggests that growing health awareness contributes to the decline in purchase decisions, as consumers increasingly avoid products perceived as unhealthy or high in sugar. These results are consistent with Martha (2025) who found that higher health consciousness leads consumers to reduce their consumption of soft drinks due to perceived health risks. Similarly, Megananda and Sanaji (2021) discovered that in several cultural contexts, increased health awareness strongly influences consumer behavior, prompting them to limit or avoid the purchase of products considered detrimental to health.

Meanwhile, brand trust had a moderate positive influence on purchase decisions with a path coefficient value of 0.720, indicating that consumers who have high trust in the brand are more likely to purchase products from the brand, even if they are aware of the health risks associated with the product. These findings support Aaker (2009) research that brand trust is an important factor in shaping consumer loyalty to certain brands. Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2004) also emphasized that brand trust can act as a psychological buffer that reduces uncertainty in purchasing decision-making.

This is further reinforced by Putri, Faizal and Pintakmi (2025) who found that brand trust mediates the relationship between quality perception and purchase decisions, providing evidence that consumers who trust brands are more likely to continue to buy products despite concerns about the health of the product. In addition, this model shows that all constructs in the study have excellent reliability and validity. Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs show values greater than 0.7 and 0.5, indicating the excellent consistency and validity of the measuring tool used.

R-squared shows good predictability, where Purchase Decision can be explained by 81.6%, while Brand Trust can be explained by 72%. This shows that the tested model has a good capacity to explain the variation in the two variables. However, in terms of f-

square, which measures the relative influence of each relationship in the model, Perceived Quality shows a very strong influence on Brand Trust with an f-square value of 2,460, which indicates that product quality has a major impact on building consumer trust in the brand. In contrast, health awareness showed very little influence on Brand Trust and Purchase Decision, with f-square values of 0.013 and 0.004, respectively, indicating that health factors were not significant enough to influence purchase decisions in the context of these products.

Perceived quality exerts a very strong positive influence on brand trust (path coefficient = 0.86), reaffirming that superior product perception drives purchase behavior. However, the health consciousness variable shows a weak and negative effect on purchase decisions (path coefficient = -0.06, f^2 = 0.004). Although health consciousness negatively relates to purchase decisions, the magnitude of this effect remains limited, indicating that health awareness alone is insufficient to substantially discourage consumption. The negative but weak relationship aligns with the growing consumer trend of avoiding high-sugar beverages and indicates a clear behavioral shift toward health-oriented consumption.

This result strengthens previous findings by Martha (2025); and Zainuddin, Russell-Bennett and Previte (2013) which reported negative associations between health awareness and sugary drink consumption. Nevertheless, this study's contribution lies in validating such an effect in a non-health product context, among Indonesian university students a segment previously underexamined. The finding demonstrates that even among young consumers typically driven by price and brand familiarity, health consciousness emerges as a limited behavioral deterrent.

Furthermore, brand trust positively influences purchase decisions (β = 0.72), serving as a mediating mechanism that can partially mitigate the negative impact of health consciousness. Consumers with strong brand trust may still purchase Big Cola despite awareness of its health risks, illustrating how emotional attachment and brand credibility can counterbalance rational health concerns. Overall, these findings enrich consumer behavior theory by demonstrating a dual mechanism: while perceived quality and brand trust drive purchase intention, health consciousness strongly and negatively regulates it, revealing a tension between emotional trust and rational health concerns.

Despite the significant role of brand trust in shaping purchase decisions, this study's findings indicate that its influence is not absolute. The coexistence of high brand trust and declining purchase decisions under increasing health consciousness highlights a critical boundary condition in consumer decision-making. While brand trust represents an affective and relational component of consumer behavior, health consciousness reflects a rational and self-regulatory evaluation based on long-term well-being. When health considerations become more salient, rational judgment may override emotional attachment to the brand, thereby limiting the capacity of brand trust to fully counteract declining purchase intentions.

This finding suggests that brand trust serves as a buffer rather than a dominant force in unhealthy product categories. From a theoretical perspective, this result extends consumer behavior theory by demonstrating that purchasing decisions are shaped by a dynamic tension between affective and cognitive processes. Emotional drivers such as trust and perceived quality can encourage consumption, yet they are constrained when consumers engage in deliberate health-based evaluations. Similarly, from a brand equity theory perspective, this study reveals that brand-related assets, including perceived quality and brand trust, have situational effectiveness. In product categories associated with health risks, brand equity cannot entirely neutralize rational health concerns, indicating that its influence is context-dependent rather than universal. Therefore, this

study contributes theoretically by clarifying that brand trust has limited power in overcoming health-conscious consumption, particularly among educated young consumers who are increasingly sensitive to health information.

Conclusion

This study aims to examine the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between perceived quality, health consciousness, and purchase decisions for carbonated beverages among university students in Mataram City. The findings indicate that perceived quality plays a dominant role in influencing purchase decisions, both directly and indirectly through brand trust, highlighting the importance of quality perceptions in sustaining consumer purchases even in unhealthy product categories. Brand trust also shows a positive influence on purchase decisions and functions as a partial mediating mechanism, suggesting that trust can strengthen the impact of perceived quality and partially buffer the negative influence of health consciousness. However, health consciousness is negatively associated with purchase decisions, indicating that increased awareness of health issues tends to reduce consumers' willingness to purchase carbonated beverages, although its practical influence remains relatively weaker than that of brand-related factors. These results reveal a behavioral paradox in which emotional attachment and trust in brands coexist with rational health-based considerations. Theoretically, this study contributes to the consumer behavior and brand equity literature by clarifying the limited capacity of brand trust to fully overcome health-conscious consumption in contexts of unhealthy products. Practically, the findings suggest that beverage companies should balance quality-based branding and trust-building strategies with transparent health communication to remain relevant in increasingly health-conscious markets.

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