INCREASE RESTAURANT CUSTOMER LOYALTY THROUGH SERVICE QUALITY WITH CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine whether customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and restaurant service quality are positively correlated. In addition, research is being done on customer satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between customer loyalty and service quality in restaurants. Purposive sampling was used to gather information from 300 patrons of fast-food restaurants using a questionnaire survey. Using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) in SMART PLS 3, the suggested model's hypotheses were investigated. The study's conclusions support the notion that customer loyalty, customer pleasure, and restaurant service quality are all positively correlated. However, the association between customer satisfaction and restaurant customer loyalty is not mediated by consumer satisfaction. This study emphasizes the significance of patron loyalty as a critical behavioral reaction in restaurants. The study's findings will help restaurant managers comprehend the vital significance that customer satisfaction and service quality play as marketing strategies to uphold and cultivate restaurant patron loyalty.

Keywords: customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, restaurant, service quality

1. INTRODUCTION

The restaurant industry has become one of the highly competitive sectors in today's business world. The rapid growth of this industry has presented a variety of choices for consumers when choosing where to eat. In recent years, there has been a drastic change in consumer behaviour in the restaurant industry (Agrawal & Mittal, 2019). The restaurant business, which is currently competing in a tough race, is making efforts to satisfy and retain customers with quality service delivery because one of the reasons why some businesses cannot survive in difficult market conditions is the lack of customer satisfaction (Uslu, 2020). In order to survive and thrive, restaurants must be more than just food providers; they should be attractive destinations for their customers. In the midst of increasing competition, the main challenge for restaurant owners and managers is to retain existing customers and attract new ones.

Customer loyalty is an important concept in the restaurant industry. Loyal customers tend to return to visit, spend more, and may even become restaurant promoters to others. Therefore, maintaining and increasing customer loyalty is a strategic goal for restaurants to maintain the growth and sustainability of their business. Restaurants focus on loyal customers, as the cost of retaining them is lower than acquiring new customers. Loyal consumers create positive word-of-mouth in the community and bring profits to the restaurant (Saengchai & Jermsittiparsert, 2020). Customer loyalty encourages customers to make repeated purchases of services and products. Achieving customer loyalty is an important competitive advantage asset for the restaurant business (Uddin, 2019). Another key factor that influences the success of restaurants is the quality of service they offer to customers.

Service quality covers a number of aspects, such as responsiveness of restaurant staff, ease of reservation, quality of food and beverages, restaurant atmosphere, and more. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) and Uslu (Uslu, 2020) make many contributions to the service industry with SERVQUAL instruments. Previous research has verified the significance of service quality parameters in influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty in the restaurant industry (Abdullah, 2022; Agrawal & Mittal, 2019; Danish Ali et al., 2021; Lau et al., 2019; Saengchai & Jermsittiparsert, 2020). Good service quality not only creates a satisfying experience for customers but can also shape their positive perception of the restaurant. Service quality can significantly affect customer satisfaction and loyalty, which is critical to the success of a restaurant business (Zhong & Moon, 2020).

Along with improving service quality, restaurants also need to understand the important role of guest satisfaction in maintaining and increasing customer loyalty. According to Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller (2016), customer satisfaction is the level of pleasure or disappointment that arises after comparing the actual performance of a product with expected expectations. Customer satisfaction is a customer's positive response to their experience at the restaurant, reflecting the extent to which their expectations are met. In this situation, guest satisfaction is not only the ultimate goal desired by the restaurant but can also act as a key element that links service quality with customer loyalty. Previous research has suggested that satisfied customers will become loyal to the restaurant industry (Abdullah, 2022; Danish Ali et al., 2021; Ing et al., 2020; Macias et al., 2023; Syah et al., 2022; Zhong & Moon, 2020). However, some research results state that customer satisfaction actually has no impact on customer loyalty to restaurants (Zardi et al., 2019). Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are two different concepts in the context of a restaurant or other service business. Although it is often assumed that customer satisfaction will automatically result in customer loyalty, the reality is that the relationship between the two is not always so direct. Customer satisfaction may be high at a given restaurant, but customers still have many other options around. Intense competition can make customers try other restaurants even if they are satisfied with previous experiences.

This study discusses the impact of service quality on restaurant customer loyalty while considering the mediating role of restaurant customer satisfaction. The study explains whether customer satisfaction can be considered as a channel through which service quality affects customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction is often closely tied to the emotional experience they have in the restaurant. Good service quality tends to increase customer satisfaction because it encourages a positive experience. This positive experience can then increase customer loyalty as they feel emotionally connected to the restaurant. The results of this study provide a more comprehensive insight into the mechanisms behind these relationships. They can provide valuable information for restaurant owners and managers to design more effective service strategies and improve customer retention. By understanding and examining the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty in the context of restaurants, this research is expected to

provide deeper insights into the factors that influence customer loyalty in the restaurant industry.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of service quality on customer loyalty in the context of the restaurant industry, taking into account customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. This research will apply path analysis techniques using SMART PLS software to test and form a model of the relationship between these variables.

The study population is customers of the restaurant Bakso Lapangan Tembak in Jabodetabek who have visited the restaurant more than twice in the period from March 2023 to August 2023. There were 17 restaurants in Jabodetabek that were the research object. The sampling process is carried out through non-probability sampling techniques (Sekaran, U., & Bougie, 2016). Data collection was carried out for two months. The sample in this study is customers who have bought at the restaurant Bakso Lapangan Tembak more than two times as many as 300 people. Repeat visits show that customers have a stronger relationship with the restaurant. This could include an emotional connection, brand identification, or a sense of community with the restaurant. Therefore, the experience of customers who have come many times can provide a better insight into their level of loyalty. Data was collected through surveys with questionnaires containing questions that measured the main variables in the study, namely service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Respondents were asked to respond or answer questions using the Likert scale.

Service quality variables are measured by questions that evaluate various aspects of service quality in restaurants, such as reliability, responsiveness, certainty, empathy, and tangible (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Customer satisfaction variables are measured by questions that evaluate guests' level of satisfaction with their experience in the restaurant, such as overall customer satisfaction, functional customer satisfaction, and technical customer satisfaction (Abu-Elsamen et al., 2011). The customer loyalty variable is measured by questions that measure the extent to which customers plan to return to the restaurant, recommend to others, or give positive statements to others (Zhong & Moon, 2020).

This study used the SMART PLS (Partial Least Squares) software tool to analyze the data. SMART PLS is a suitable tool for path analysis and structural equation modelling. The data were analyzed descriptively to summarize the characteristics of the sample and the variables of the study. Path analysis has been used to examine the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction is tested as a mediating variable.

The bootstrap technique is applied to test the significance of path coefficients and mediation effects. Research findings are presented in the form of detailed tables, graphs, and narratives. The interpretation of the findings will be linked to the conceptual framework that has been built in the introduction. This research has complied with the principles of research ethics, such as obtaining consent from respondents, maintaining data confidentiality, and minimizing potential bias in data collection and analysis.
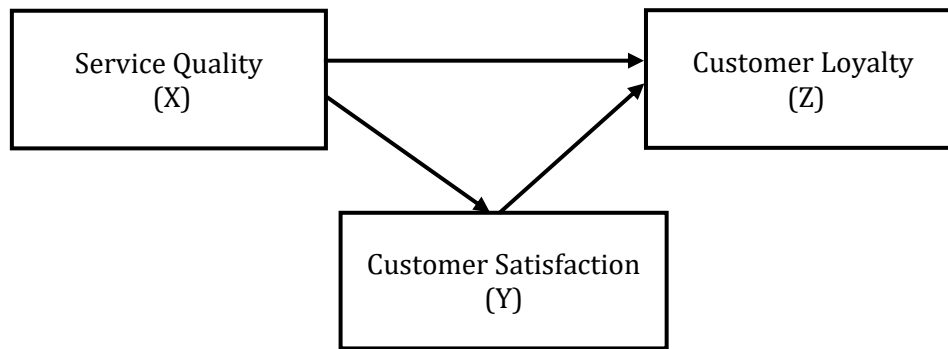
Figure 1. Conceptual Model
[Source: Research Document, 2023]

Based on this conceptual model (Figure1), the following hypotheses can be submitted:

H_1: There is a positive influence between service quality (X) and customer loyalty (Z).

H_2: There is a positive influence between service quality (X) and customer satisfaction (Y).

H_3: There is a positive influence between customer satisfaction (Y) and customer loyalty (Z).

H_4: Customer satisfaction (Y) is able to mediate the relationship between service quality (X) and customer loyalty (Z).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Data Description

The profile of respondents in this research includes gender, age, number of visits, and income per month. Below (Table 1) is presented the frequency and percentage of respondents based on the profile.

Table 1: Respondent Profile
[Source: Research Document, 2023]

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Male	126	42
Female	174	58
Age		
17-24 years	69	23
25-34 years	82	27,3
35-44 years	85	28,3
> 45 years	64	21,3
Number of Visits		
3 - 4 times	111	37
5 - 6 times	120	40
> 6 times	69	23
Income per month		
Rp. 1-3 million	17	5,7
Rp. 3-5 million	161	53,7
> Rp. 5 million	122	40,7

Table 2 presents the analysis involves Structural Equations Model-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) using Smart-PLS v3.2.8 and performed with a bootstrapped 5,000 procedure (Ringle et al., 2020). SEM-PLS is suitable for this analysis because it aims to predict the main target construct measured by a large number of indicators with a small number of samples, as in the case of this study, which had a sample of less than 500 (Hair et al., 2022). The

process proceeds in two stages, where the reliability and validity of the outer measurement model are measured first, followed by an assessment of the inner structural model. The reliability of latent constructs is evaluated through the payload of individual items, Cronbach's Alpha, and Composite Reliability (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 2: Structural Model Assessment
[Source: Research Document, 2023]

Construct	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's-Alpha	rho_A	Composite-Reliability	AVE
Service Quality					
1. The restaurant has clean equipment to serve customers	0.750				
2. The waitress knew to answer my questions about the restaurant's menu	0.861				
3. The waitress is able to provide recommendations for the suitability of drinks and food	0.872	0.875	0.923	0.907	0.663
4. The waitress was able to accommodate my needs	0.753				
5. The waitress gives personal attention	0.828				
Customer Satisfaction					
1. I always receive excellent service from the waitress	0.890				
2. The waitress put me in a good mood	0.890	0.872	0.878	0.921	0.796
3. I feel satisfied with the service in this restaurant.	0.896				
Customer Loyalty					
1. I plan to continue visiting this restaurant	0.886				
2. I will give this restaurant recommendation to others	0.885	0.776	0.790	0.872	0.696
3. I will give positive testimonials about this restaurant to others	0.721				

The results show that Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability for each construct is > 0.7, indicating a good level of internal consistency in responses (Nunnaly & Bernstein, 1994). The outer loading of each item is >0.675. The mean extracted variance (AVE) was used to assess the convergent validity of the model, and scores for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, meeting the AVE criteria (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 3: Discriminant Validity
[Source: Research Document, 2023]

	Customer Loyalty	Customer Satisfaction	Service Quality
Fornell-Larcker Criterion			
Customer Loyalty	0.834		
Customer Satisfaction	0.341	0.892	
Service Quality	0.461	0.317	0.814
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)			
Customer Loyalty			
Customer Satisfaction	0.424		

Service Quality	0.520	0.335

The validity of the discriminant was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larker, 1981). In addition, the validity of the discriminant can also be assessed by Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT). The HTMT value must be below 0.9 to ensure the validity of the discriminant between the two reflective constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). In Table 3, it is seen that the square root of AVE for the latent construct is greater than the corresponding correlation of the latent variable, indicating the existence of discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2022). In the HTMT table, all HTMT values < 0.9, so it can be concluded that all constructs have discriminant validity based on HTMT calculations.

Table 4: Multicollinearity Test Results
[Source: Research Document, 2023]

Indicators	VIF
CL1	2.388
CL2	2.309
CL3	1.273
CS1	2.464
CS2	2.323
CS3	2.212
SQ1	1.896
SQ2	2.400
SQ3	2.191
SQ4	2.321
SQ5	2.770

The assumption or requirement that must be met in the analysis of the outside model is the absence of the problem of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2022). Multicollinearity is a problem where there is a strong intercorrelation or correlation between indicators. The limit is usually expressed as a correlation value exceeding 0.9, which is often indicated by a Variance Inflating Factor (VIF) value at an indicator level exceeding 5. Based on Table 4 above, it can be seen that all indicators have a VIF value of less than 5; this shows that there is no multicollinearity problem in all indicators.

Table 5: SEM-PLS Results
[Source: Research Document, 2023]

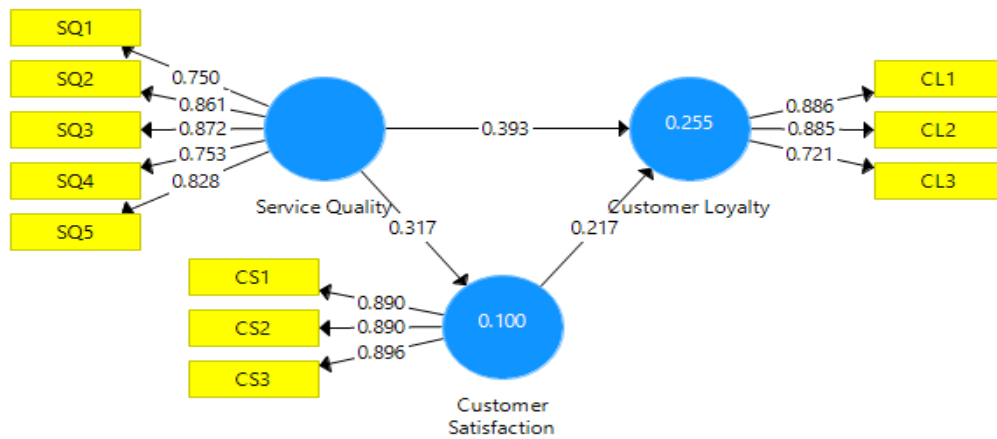|	Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Information
Service Quality → Customer Loyalty	0.393	7.545	0.000	Significance
Service Quality → Customer Satisfaction	0.317	6.029	0.000	Significance
Customer Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty	0.217	3.426	0.001	Significance
Service Quality → Customer Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty	0.069	2.697	0.007	Significance

Figure 2. Results Conceptual Model
[Source: Research Document, 2023]

Using the results of the inner (structural) model, hypotheses related to relationships in the conceptual model are tested through the value of t-values, the standard coefficient of β, and the coefficient of determination (R^2). The hypothesis is considered accepted if the t-value is greater using a two-tailed test. The significance of the measurement and structural model is tested by comparing the results with critical values (i.e., t=1,96, p=0,05) (Hair et al., 2022). The results support four research hypotheses (Table 5; Figure 2).

Direct influence between service quality and customer loyalty (β=0,393, t-value=7,545, p-value=0.000), the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction (β=0,317, t-value=6,029, p-value=0,000), and the effect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty (β=0,217, t-value=3,426, p-value=0,001), all indicate that H_1, H_2, and H_3 are acceptable because the t-value >1,96 and the p-value <0,05. In addition, the indirect influence of service quality on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction (β=0,069, t-value=2,697, p-value=0,007) also supports the acceptance of H_4 because the t-value >1,96 and the p-value <0,05.

The R^2 value is used to assess the explanatory strength of the conceptual model (Figure 2), with $R^2 > 0,10$ being the recommended criteria benchmark (Chin, 1998). The R^2 value for customer loyalty (R^2=0,255) indicates that the model explains a meaningful proportion of endogenous variable variation.

Table 6: Total Effect
[Source: Research Document, 2023]

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Service Quality → Customer Loyalty	0.461	0.466	0.041	11.194	0.000

The parameter coefficients for service quality variables on customer loyalty, including direct and indirect influences through customer satisfaction, have a value of 0,461 (Table 6). This indicates a total positive effect of service quality on customer loyalty, either directly or indirectly through customer satisfaction, by 46%. With these results, the hypothesis can be answered.

Table 7: Relevance of Predictions
[Source: Research Document, 2023]

	SSO	SSE	Q² (=1-SSE/SSO)

Customer Loyalty	900.000	745.534	0.172
Customer Satisfaction	900.000	830.838	0.077
Service Quality	1500.000	1500.000	

Q^2 can be used to evaluate how consistent the observations generated by the model are with the estimation of its parameters. If the Q^2 value exceeds 0 (zero), this indicates that the model has good predictive relevance. Conversely, suppose the value of $Q2$ is less than 0 (zero). In that case, this indicates that the model has limitations in terms of prediction relevance or even has no predictive relevance at all (Chin, 1998). In this study, the calculation result of Q^2 is 0.172, which is greater than 0 and equivalent to 17,2%. Thus, it can be concluded that the model used in this study has a good degree of predictive relevance (Table 7).

A mediation effect is created when a third variable or construct intervenes between two other related constructs, as shown in Figure 1. To understand how the mediation effect works, path models are considered in terms of direct and indirect effects. Direct effects are relationships that connect two constructs with one construct, while indirect effects are relationships that involve a sequence of relationships with at least one construct. So, indirect effects are a series of two or more direct effects. This indirect influence is referred to as the mediation effect. In Figure 1, customer satisfaction is a mediator between service quality and customer loyalty. The purpose of mediation is to explain why there is a relationship between exogenous and endogenous constructs. The role of a mediating variable is to clarify or explain the relationship between the two original constructs. (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 8: Model Fit
[Source: Research Document, 2023]

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	95%	99%
Saturated Model	0.092	0.047	0.053	0.056
Estimated Model	0.092	0.048	0.053	0.056

Based on Ghozali (2006), one of the limitations or criteria of the fit model is the SRMR or Standardized Root Mean Square value, which should be <0,10. In this context, the value of SRMR is 0,092, which is less than 0,10. Thus, it can be concluded that this model corresponds to the data.

3.2 Discussion
The profile of respondents in this study is very important to ensure the accuracy and applicability of research findings. The respondent description table shows the demographic diversity that exists among restaurant customers. The respondent profile in this study already includes customers who have varying levels of frequency of visits to the restaurant. This will help in understanding how repeated visiting experiences can affect their perception of service quality, customer satisfaction, and, ultimately, customer loyalty.

Research findings show that service quality influences customer loyalty. In this model, it can be seen that there is a direct influence of service quality predictor variables on customer loyalty without involving customer satisfaction mediators. Although the customer satisfaction relationship has not been included in the model, service quality expectations significantly predict customer loyalty (β=0,393, t-value=7,545, p-value=0,000). The findings of this study corroborate previous research on the positive and significant relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in the restaurant industry.

(Abdullah, 2022; Agrawal & Mittal, 2019; Danish Ali et al., 2021; Lau et al., 2019; Saengchai & Jermsittiparsert, 2020). Service quality also indirectly affects restaurant customer loyalty. Thus, the role of customer satisfaction as a mediator of the relationship between service quality and restaurant customer loyalty is partial mediation. Partial mediation occurs if the direct relationship of the independent variable is directly significant to the mediation variable and the dependent variable, and the significant mediation variable is direct to the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2017)

Customers who are well served will become loyal to the restaurant. Judging from the outer loading value of the service quality variable statement, it is recommended that restaurant managers prioritize the allocation of their resources to train waiters according to the magnitude and importance of the service quality dimension. A top priority may be to improve the ability of waiters to provide food and beverage suitability recommendations. Increasing knowledge to answer restaurant diners' questions regarding the menu is also important. Their empathy for customers by openly paying attention to customers' personal needs. The waiter should also be able to provide recommendations and the speed of drinks and food to be ordered by guests. Improving the appearance of waiters by encouraging their neat and well-groomed appearance, offering informative and easy-to-read menu lists is also important, as well as encouraging waiters to demonstrate their credibility by clearly demonstrating their qualifications. All in all, strengthens the target. (Lau et al., 2019).

The results also show that service quality is also an important predictor of creating satisfied customers. This supports previous research that well-served restaurant customers are satisfied (Abdullah, 2022; Agrawal & Mittal, 2019; Danish Ali et al., 2021; Lau et al., 2019; Saengchai & Jermsittiparsert, 2020). The results of this study also strengthen the Theory by providing evidence of a positive and significant influence between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the restaurant industry (Abdullah, 2022; Danish Ali et al., 2021; Ing et al., 2020; Macias et al., 2023; Syah et al., 2022; Zhong & Moon, 2020), which emphasizes the importance of customer satisfaction in the process of building customer loyalty. Managers are recommended to strengthen customer satisfaction by improving service quality to build customer loyalty, which in turn can contribute to the restaurant's competitive advantage.

4. CONCLUSION

These findings show a positive relationship between customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and service quality in restaurants. From the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that service quality has a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty, both directly and indirectly, through customer satisfaction in restaurants. Statistical tests also show that service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction. However, customer satisfaction does not play an as a mediator in linking service quality with customer loyalty in restaurants, as shown by the path coefficient that shows the direct effect of service quality on customer loyalty is greater than the indirect influence through customer satisfaction. Therefore, the results suggest that restaurant management prioritizes service quality and customer satisfaction, as both have a direct impact on customer loyalty in the modern restaurant industry.

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