

The Effect Of Customer Experience And Trust On Customer Loyalty At Seblak Rc Karawang

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ABSTRACT

Aims :

The primary objective of this research is to investigate and analyse the influence of customer experience and customer trust on customer loyalty at Seblak RC Karawang. The study seeks to determine whether these factors act independently or synergistically in fostering long-term consumer commitment within the competitive Indonesian street food sector.

Design/Methodology/Approach :

This study employs a quantitative research design with a descriptive and causal explanatory approach. Data were gathered from 96 respondents via purposive sampling, specifically targeting dine in customers. The instruments were validated using r-table comparisons and Cronbach's Alpha. Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, encompassing classical assumption tests, multiple linear regression, and hypothesis testing (t-tests and F-tests).

Findings :

The results reveal a compelling statistical anomaly; partially, neither customer experience nor customer trust has a significant impact on loyalty (Sig. > 0.05). However, simultaneous testing (F-test) demonstrates a significant collective influence (Sig. 0.000), with a high Coefficient of Determination (R^2) of 86.1%. This indicates that loyalty is not built on isolated factors but on the holistic integration of physical interaction and brand integrity.

Research Limitations/Implications :

The research is limited by its focus on a single geographic location and dine-in consumers. Practically, it implies that MSME owners must manage marketing strategies holistically rather than in fragments to ensure customer retention.

Originality / Value :

This study offers unique insights into the complementary absolute nature of loyalty in the buffet style street food industry, where individual marketing pillars fail unless they are synchronised as a unified value proposition.

Introduction

The global and regional food industries are currently undergoing a paradigm shift, in which a product's value is no longer determined solely by its taste, but also by the overall experience felt by customers. In Indonesia, the rise of self-service food businesses offering traditional dishes like Seblak has created new dynamics in the marketing management of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Seblak Parasmanan RC Karawang is one such business run by an entrepreneur who has embraced this current trend to attract a broad market. However, the data shows significant fluctuations in production volume between peak periods (holidays) and regular business days. This suggests that while transaction volumes are high at certain times, the biggest challenge lies in converting occasional buyers into loyal customers who consistently make repeat purchases amid an increasingly saturated market.

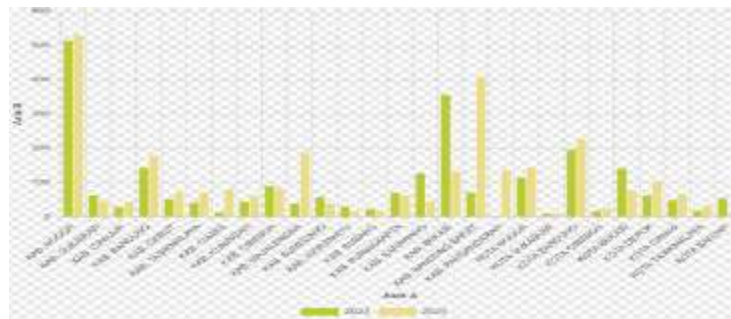


Figure 1. Food Industry in Regencies and Cities of West Java
(Source : Open Data Jawa Barat)

Several previous studies have explored the role of customer experience and trust in fostering loyalty in the service and retail sectors [1], [2], [3]. However, there is a significant research gap in the context of food-related SMEs that operate on a self-service (buffet) model [4]. Most previous research has focused primarily on large-scale restaurants or international franchises, while empirical evidence regarding how tactile experiences (selecting ingredients oneself) and trust in flavor consistency affect micro-businesses remains very limited. Furthermore, findings regarding the influence of trust on loyalty in several studies have yielded mixed (inconclusive) results, with certain studies indicating that loyalty is driven more by ease of access than by trust in the brand [5], [6]. Therefore, this study was designed to address this research gap by re-examining the relationships among these variables in a more specific research context.

Based on the identification of the phenomena and research gaps presented above, this study seeks to address critical questions that remain inadequately explained in the literature on SME marketing management. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions: (1) How does customer experience influence customer loyalty in the context of Seblak Parasmanan RC Karawang? (2) To what extent does the level of customer trust play a role in strengthening their loyalty to the brand? and (3) Using a Marketing Management perspective, how can the integration of physical experience and trust explain the stability of customers' repeat purchase behavior in local culinary businesses? These questions arise with the hope that the mechanisms underlying the formation of customer loyalty in the SME sector can be understood more deeply [7], [8], [9], [10].

The novelty of this study lies in the examination of variables based on customer experience and trust in a traditional culinary business model adapted into a buffet system a unique geographical and operational context in Karawang that has not yet been extensively explored academically [11], [12], [13], [14]. Unlike conventional marketing studies, this research adopts a straightforward operational perspective on SMEs and demonstrates how they can build strong customer loyalty through personalised customer experiences [15]. In theory, this study contributes to the development of marketing management literature relating to customer retention strategies in the micro-enterprise sector [16]. The recommendations of this study are intended to assist the owners of Seblak RC Karawang and similar SME operators in making strategic decisions regarding the allocation of their resources to enhance the service elements that have the greatest impact on fostering long-term customer loyalty.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The sociological and economic foundations of this study are rooted in marketing management that takes consumer behaviour as the core of MSME business strategy [15], [17]. In the modern era, marketing is no longer viewed merely as the exchange of goods for money, but rather as the art of managing relationships and interactions between service providers and customers [18], [19]. In the local food industry, this means that business owners must be able to coordinate all elements of the marketing mix to create a positive emotional response [20]. The main focus of this theory is that the sustainability of a micro-enterprise depends heavily on its ability to consistently integrate service quality with the psychological needs of consumers.

One of the key tools for building that connection is through the creation of the customer experience) [21], [22]. The customer experience is not merely about satisfaction after a meal, but a subjective journey that involves the senses, emotions and even the customer's mindset when interacting with a brand [23]. In the buffet business model, customers' active involvement in selecting their own food creates a sense of ownership and a unique sensory experience [24], [25]. The essence of applying this theory lies in demonstrating a well-managed customer experience through the five senses, as the customer experience forms the primary basis on which consumers assess a brand's quality.

Trust is built when a business demonstrates integrity and consistency, particularly in terms of taste and price transparency. In the food industry, trust acts as a bridge that minimises customers' hesitation when making repeat purchases [26], [27]. This theory emphasises that trust is a key factor in transforming transactional interactions into emotional relationships, and that customers feel confident in choosing the same service provider again.

Loyalty is demonstrated not only through repeat purchases, but also through customers' resistance to competitors' offers and their willingness to act as voluntary promoters to others [28]. The combination of a satisfying experience and sustained trust is the key driver of this loyalty [29], [30]. The theory of customer loyalty views customers not merely as buyers, but as long-term assets that ensure the company's revenue stability amidst fierce market competition.

Framework

The theoretical framework of this study describes the structural relationship between customer experience (X₁) and trust (X₂) as independent variables, and customer loyalty (Y) as the dependent variable. This model assumes that loyalty does not arise

spontaneously, but is formed through the accumulation of positive experiences when interacting with products and services, which in turn strengthens consumers' trust in the brand's integrity. Theoretically, this framework posits that when customers perceive high experiential value and possess a strong level of trust, this acts as a powerful stimulus driving the creation of repurchase intent and long-term loyalty. Thus, this framework serves as a foundation for testing the extent to which the synergy between experiential and trust aspects can holistically explain the variance in customer loyalty.

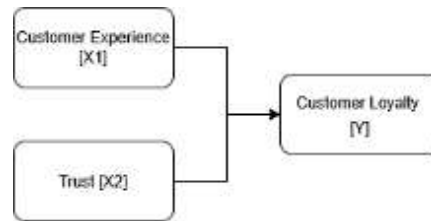


Figure 2. Framework
(Source : Literature Review)

Research Methods

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design using an explanatory survey approach. This design was chosen because it is relevant to the study's objective, which is to empirically test the causal relationship between customer experience and trust in relation to customer loyalty at Seblak Parasmanan RC Karawang [31], [32]. The data obtained was statistically analysed to test the hypotheses formulated on the basis of the marketing management theoretical framework outlined earlier. The primary focus of this study is to provide an objective picture of customers' repeat purchasing behaviour through systematically measured figures.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The population in this study includes all individuals who have ever made a dine-in purchase at Seblak Parasmanan RC Karawang. Given that the exact size of the customer population is unknown, the sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula with a 10% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. Based on these calculations, the minimum sample size was determined to be 96 respondents. The sampling technique used was accidental sampling, in which the researcher collected data from customers encountered by chance at the research location during the data collection period. The primary criterion for respondents was that they had direct experience interacting with the buffet service system at that location.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure indicators for each research variable. This instrument used a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) to minimize respondents' tendency to choose neutral answers, ensuring that the resulting data more clearly reflects customer preferences. In addition to the questionnaire, data collection was supported by field observation to understand the physical and operational context of the business, as well as a documentary study using

sales data from March through August 2025. This approach ensures that the data obtained has strong validity before proceeding to the analysis stage.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted comprehensively using SPSS statistical software. The first step involved validity and reliability tests to ensure that the questionnaire was capable of measuring the variables consistently and accurately. Next, classical assumption tests were conducted, including tests for normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, to ensure that the resulting regression model is unbiased and meets statistical criteria. The core stage of the analysis involved the use of Multiple Linear Regression to determine the direction and magnitude of the influence of independent variables, both simultaneously and partially. Hypothesis testing was conducted using the t-test to examine individual effects and the F-test to examine the combined effects of experience and trust on loyalty. Finally, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to measure the extent to which these variables can explain the variation in customer loyalty, thereby providing a clear picture of the dominant factors driving consumer behavior in this study.

Result and Discussion

1) Results

A descriptive analysis was conducted to capture the trends in respondents' answers regarding three main variables: customer experience (X_1), customer trust (X_2), and customer loyalty (Y). Assessments were made using an interval-based Likert scale to avoid biased or neutral responses, with a category interval of 0.75. Based on data collected from 96 respondents, the following picture of consumer perceptions emerged:

Table 1. Likert Scale Interval

Interval	Category
1.00 – 1.75	Very Poor
1.76 – 2.50	Poor
2.51 – 3.25	Good
3.26 – 4.00	Very Good

(Source : Data Processed)

Respondent Characteristics

Based on data collected from 96 respondents, the customer profile of Seblak RC Karawang is significantly dominated by women, a finding consistent with the characteristics of the spicy food market and the self-service system in the region [33], [34].

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	64 Respondents	33,8%
Female	32 Respondents	62,2%
Total	96 Respondents	100%

(Source : Data Processed)

This gender dominance indicates that consumer preferences for buffet-style seblak products are closely linked to women's psychographic characteristics, consequently, future strategies for creating experiences and building trust must consider approaches

relevant to this segment. Furthermore, the homogeneous nature of the respondents as dine-in customers ensures that the data obtained is highly relevant to real-world experiences, whilst also providing a valid foundation for the descriptive analysis phase and subsequent hypothesis testing.

Data Analysis Results

Validity Test

A validity test was conducted to ensure that each statement in the questionnaire was capable of accurately measuring the variables of customer experience, trust and loyalty. This test was carried out by comparing the calculated correlation coefficient (r-count) with the r-table value of 0.169, determined based on a 10% significance level and a sample size of 96 respondents. The results of the analysis showed that all items in this research instrument had an r-count value greater than the r-table value; consequently, all items were deemed valid for use. Thus, this research instrument met the measurement accuracy criteria required for conducting primary data collection and subsequent statistical analysis.

Table 2. Validity Test

Variables	Item	r-Count	r-Table	Description
X1 Customer Experience	X1.1	0,677	0,169	Valid
	X1.2	0,644	0,169	Valid
	X1.3	0,668	0,169	Valid
	X1.4	0,554	0,169	Valid
	X1.5	0,666	0,169	Valid
	X1.6	0,680	0,169	Valid
	X1.7	0,592	0,169	Valid
	X1.8	0,765	0,169	Valid
	X1.9	0,722	0,169	Valid
	X1.10	0,568	0,169	Valid
X2 Customer Trust	X2.1	0,699	0,169	Valid
	X2.2	0,703	0,169	Valid
	X2.3	0,611	0,169	Valid
	X2.4	0,645	0,169	Valid
	X2.5	0,597	0,169	Valid
	X2.6	0,648	0,169	Valid
	X2.7	0,662	0,169	Valid
	X2.8	0,755	0,169	Valid
	X2.9	0,699	0,169	Valid
Y Customer Loyalty	Y1.1	0,608	0,169	Valid
	Y1.2	0,659	0,169	Valid
	Y1.3	0,638	0,169	Valid
	Y1.4	0,662	0,169	Valid
	Y1.5	0,746	0,169	Valid
	Y1.6	0,682	0,169	Valid
	Y1.7	0,764	0,169	Valid
	Y1.8	0,771	0,169	Valid
	Y1.9	0,651	0,169	Valid
	Y1.10	0,475	0,169	Valid

(Source : Data Processed)

Based on the results of the validity test conducted on all research instruments, it was found that every statement item within the Customer Experience (X₁), Customer Trust (X₂), and Customer Loyalty (Y) variables demonstrated a high level of measurement accuracy.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
X1 Customer Experience	0.948	Reliable
X2 Customer Trust	0.948	Reliable
Y Customer Loyalty	0.948	Reliable

(Source : Data Processed)

Classical Assumption Test Results

Normality Test Results

A normality test was conducted to ensure that the residuals in the regression model are normally distributed, as evidenced by the Normal Probability Plot, in which the data points lie along the diagonal line, and supported by the results of the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

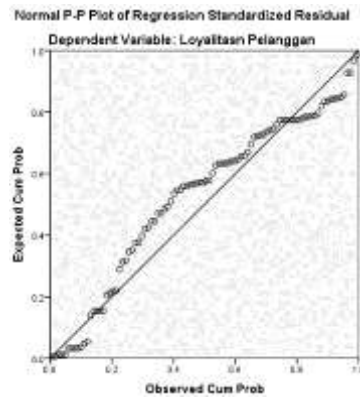


Figure 3. Normal Probability Plot Test Result Graph
(Source : Statistical Data Analysis)

Analysis of the Normal Probability Plot indicates that the regression model residuals are normally distributed, as evidenced visually by the distribution of the actual data points, which follow and cluster around the diagonal line [35]. Based on this graphical approach, the model in this study satisfies the assumption of normality as there are no data points deviating extremely from the linear line; consequently, the data are suitable for use in subsequent parametric statistical tests.

To minimise potential bias in the graphical analysis, the study applied the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical test to obtain more accurate and objective results regarding normality. Based on the results of the test using IBM SPSS Statistics, a significance value (Asymp. Sig.) of 0.124 was obtained, which clearly exceeds the significance threshold of 0.05. These results indicate that the residual distribution in this research model is normal, meaning that the prerequisite assumptions for conducting multiple linear regression analysis have been fully met.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		96
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	1.33580033
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.081
	Positive	.081
	Negative	-.072
Test Statistic		.081
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.124 ^c

Figure 4. Statistical Results of the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test
(Source : Statistical Data Analysis)

Based on the results of statistical tests using IBM SPSS Statistics, the significance value (Asymp. Sig.) from the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was found to be 0.124. As this value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, the preliminary conclusion is that the data in this study are normally distributed.

The criteria for visual normality are met if the data points on the Normal Probability Plot are scattered along and close to the diagonal line without showing any extreme deviations [36]. Furthermore, the data are statistically considered to be normally distributed if the significance value (Asymp. Sig.) in the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is greater than 0.05.

Multicollinearity Test

A multicollinearity test was conducted to ensure that there was no excessive correlation between the independent variables in the regression model, thereby maintaining the validity of the regression coefficients. Based on the data analysis results, a Tolerance value of 0.134 was obtained, which is greater than 0.100, and a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of 7.478, which is below the threshold of 10.00. These results indicate that no evidence of multicollinearity was found between the customer experience and customer trust variables; consequently, the regression model in this study is deemed valid and free from linear relationship interference among the independent variables.

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test

Coefficients ^a							
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.296	1.055		1.233	.224	
	Pengalaman Pelanggan	.774	.089	.914	8.697	.000	.134
	Kepercayaan Pelanggan	.017	.116	.016	.148	.883	.134

a. Dependent Variable: Loyalitas Pelanggan

(Source : Statistical Data Analysis)

A multicollinearity test was conducted to ensure there was no high correlation between the independent variables, thereby guaranteeing the objectivity of the resulting regression model. Based on the test results, a Tolerance value of 0.134 was obtained, which is greater than 0.100, and a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value for the customer experience and customer trust variables of 7.478, which is below the threshold of 10.00 [37]. These results indicate that this research model is free from multicollinearity, meaning that the two independent variables can be considered orthogonal or lacking a strong linear relationship with one another. With these criteria met, the experience and trust variables can be used together in the regression model to predict customer loyalty without introducing statistical bias.

Heteroskedasticity

A heteroscedasticity test was conducted to ensure that the variances of the residuals are consistent across observations in the regression model, where the ideal model is one that exhibits homoscedasticity [38]. Based on the results of the Glejser test, the customer experience (X₁) and customer trust (X₂) variables each showed significance values greater than the 0.05 threshold. These findings indicate that there are no signs of heteroscedasticity in this research model, meaning that the residual variance is stable and consistent. Consequently, the regression model used meets the validity criteria for

predicting customer loyalty without the interference of unequal variances that could affect the accuracy of the estimates.

Table 5. Heteroskedasticity

Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.292	1.268		1.223
	Pengalaman Pelanggan	.774	.388	.914	.057
	Kepercayaan Pelanggan	.017	.116	.018	.148

a. Dependent Variable: Loyalitas Pelanggan

(Source : Statistical Data Analysis)

Based on the results of the heteroscedasticity test, it was found that the significance values for the Customer Experience (X₁) and Customer Trust (X₂) variables were consistently above the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that there is no heteroscedasticity in the residuals across observations in the developed regression model; therefore, heteroscedasticity is deemed not to be present. With this assumption of homoscedasticity met, the regression model is deemed valid and has good accuracy in explaining the relationship between variables without any bias in the parameter estimates.

2) Discussion

The findings of this study provide food for thought and are an interesting topic for discussion regarding the anomaly between partial and simultaneous effects, whereby customer experience and trust cannot act independently in influencing loyalty at Seblak RC Karawang. From the perspective of Experiential Marketing theory, consumer experience is often regarded as the primary driver of loyalty; however, within the context of a culinary SME operating a buffet-style model, sensory experiences and the act of selecting ingredients appear to serve merely as initial stimuli. Without the support of other variables, this unique experience is not strong enough to create long-term commitment. This indicates that customers may feel satisfied with their interaction experience at the outlet, but that satisfaction is transactional in nature and has not yet reached the stage of deep affective loyalty.

From a Relationship Marketing perspective, the failure of the trust variable to influence loyalty, even partially, indicates a shift in consumer behaviour within the local fast-food industry. Trust in hygiene and taste is often regarded as a 'basic need' (hygiene factor) rather than a distinctive added value. Therefore, although customers trust the quality of Seblak RC products, this trust does not automatically translate into loyalty unless accompanied by other emotional aspects. This analysis underscores that within a highly competitive culinary business ecosystem, trust is merely a prerequisite for market entry (entry requirement), but not the sole differentiating factor that guarantees customer retention.

The success of the simultaneous influence, reaching 86.1%, directs the analysis towards consumer behaviour theory, in which loyalty is the result of the integration of all perceptions. This finding demonstrates that customer loyalty is formed through the inseparable synergy between the physical experience felt when selecting ingredients and trust in the brand's integrity. Customers process these two variables as a single package of value; a pleasant experience reinforces trust, and trust provides comfort in enjoying that experience. The high value of this coefficient of determination confirms that the Seblak

RC business model is highly dependent on the balance of these two elements, where a weakness in one aspect will undermine the overall structure of loyalty.

This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of the Customer Value Hierarchy, whereby the value perceived by customers extends beyond product attributes alone. Although the individual influence is statistically weak, the immense collective power indicates that fragmented marketing strategies will not be effective. The theoretical implication is that for culinary SMEs, building loyalty requires a management approach that unifies all customer touchpoints, ensuring that every element of the experience is underpinned by a consistent foundation of trust to secure consumer loyalty amidst a multitude of competing alternatives.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that customer loyalty at Seblak RC Karawang is the result of a systematic integration between customer experience and trust. The main findings reveal an interesting and distinct statistical anomaly: whilst neither customer experience nor trust individually exerts a significant influence on loyalty, together they act as a very strong primary driver, contributing 86.1%. This indicates that in the buffet-style culinary business model, the experience of physical interaction and trust in product quality are absolutely complementary; that is, neither variable alone can secure consumer loyalty without the consistent presence of the other.

The limitations of this study lie in its geographical scope being confined to a single outlet in Karawang and its focus on dine-in customers; consequently, generalising the results to the context of delivery services or different regions may reveal distinct dynamics. Furthermore, the use of a four-point Likert scale and a self-administered quantitative approach may not have been able to capture the deeper emotional nuances underlying why customers remain loyal, even though individual factors such as experience or trust were found to be statistically insignificant. The presence of a residual effect of 13.9% also indicates that there are other external variables not yet accounted for in this model. Based on these findings, it is recommended that business owners manage their marketing strategies holistically by ensuring that every experiential innovation (such as changes to the shop's atmosphere) is always accompanied by a strengthening of the pillars of trust (such as quality certification or consistency of taste). For future research, it is recommended to employ qualitative research methods to explore various perceptions, including price, e-word of mouth, or brand image.

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