

How the Influence of Brand Equity, Perceived Quality on Loyalty, Mediated Trust and Customer Satisfaction: Foodservice Sector in Indonesia

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Abstract

Keywords:

customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, creative economy, food service, digital influencers.

This research seeks to examine the impact of brand equity and perceived quality on customer loyalty, with customer trust and customer happiness serving as mediating factors among patrons of Cafe & Resto the Bahagia in Bontang City. The cafe and restaurant sector in Indonesia is undergoing notable post-pandemic changes, necessitating a marketing approach that may enhance client loyalty sustainably. The study used a quantitative methodology with a proportionate random sample strategy, including 375 participants. Data analysis was conducted via Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). Based on SEM analysis, this research tested confirmatively, to provide a sequential explanation of customer trust that creates loyalty in the foodservice sector. The research found that brand equity and perceived quality positively affect customer loyalty. Perceived quality drives customer trust, contentment, and loyalty. Client trust greatly affects customer satisfaction but not loyalty. Customer happiness is the main factor in customer loyalty. Additional research shows that brand equity does not greatly affect consumer trust, although it does impact early customer opinions. All external factors significantly affect customer loyalty, directly and indirectly via mediating variables. This research establishes that consumer loyalty in the restaurant sector is mostly shaped by real experience and service quality rather than only by brand perception; hence, business stakeholders must emphasize enhancing service quality and customer satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

The cafe and restaurant industry in Indonesia is an integral part of the foodservice sector that supports tourism, the creative economy, and urban lifestyles. Before 2020, the sector recorded strong growth of 7.78% (year-on-year), driven by the rising middle class, urbanization, and culinary tourism. However, in 2020-2021, the growth of the national food and beverage industry slowed to 1.58%, due to operational restrictions and a decline in people's purchasing power, which actually triggered rapid adaptation through digitalization and business innovation, becoming a strong foundation for an explosive recovery in the following years (Eser, 2026).

Post-pandemic, the industry managed to make a remarkable rebound with annual growth again exceeding 6%, thanks to rapid adaptation through the digitization of services such as integration with online delivery platforms, the development of a hybrid dining concept that combines the on-site dining experience with *takeaway*, as well as innovative marketing strategies through collaborations with digital influencers, local communities, and social media campaigns targeted specifically at millennials as well as Gen Z, ultimately not only accelerating the sector's economic recovery, but also strengthening its position as one of the key drivers of national economic growth in the post-COVID era (Nisaputra, 2022).

This phenomenon reflects that in practice, there is a need to comprehensively understand how these aspects interact with each other, as well as ensuring that marketing strategies not only focus on building brand image or improving customer satisfaction alone but also strengthening customer loyalty as a key mediating variable (Kotler et al., 2017). In other words, this study aims

to answer an important question about how much influence customer-based brand equity and customer satisfaction have on revisit intention through the role of customer loyalty, which has been studied separately. This in-depth understanding is expected to help cafe & restaurant business actors in Bontang City develop more effective strategies in increasing customer loyalty and desire to return, as well as maximizing the long-term value of the customer base (Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The Influence of Brand Equity on Customer Loyalty

Sarvari (2012) delineates five elements of brand equity: brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other proprietary brand assets. Nonetheless, other intellectual assets, like trademarks, patents, and distribution channel ties, do not influence customer impressions (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Consequently, this research will focus only on four variables for assessing customer-based brand equity: brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is seen as a fundamental aspect of consumer-based brand equity for management (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). A customer's unwavering dedication to repeatedly buying a product or service indicates loyalty, even in the face of situational factors and marketing strategies that may encourage switching behaviors (Oliver, 1999).

H1. Brand Equity has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at The Bhagia cafe and restaurant customers in Bontang City.

H1a. Brand Equity has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty through customer trust and customer satisfaction among customers of The Bahagia cafe and restaurant in Bontang City.

The Influence of Perceived Quality on Customer Loyalty

Through cognitive and affective pathways, consumer perceptions of product/service quality affect revisit intention: higher quality assessments increase satisfaction and/or perceived value, which strengthens the intention to return. Literature on tourism and hospitality shows this direct and indirect link; Several models have revealed that satisfaction mediates between perceived quality and behavioral intentions, thus enhanced quality perception may lead to loyalty visits when customer contentment is maintained (Zabkar et al., 2010).

H2. Perceived Quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at The Bhagia cafe and restaurant customers in Bontang City.

H2a. Perceived Quality berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap customer loyalitas melalui customer trust dan customer satisfaction pada pelanggan cafe dan resto The Bahagia di Kota Bontang.

The Influence of Customer Trust on Customer Satisfaction

Trust is a key factor in travelers' travel intentions, making it a hot issue in tourism. Trust helps build long-term customer connections. To establish, manage, maintain, support, and strengthen customer relationships, a firm must understand trust-building aspects (Nadarajah & Ramalu, 2017; Sayed Soliman, 2011). To build client trust, a corporation must demonstrate honesty, integrity, competency, consistency, and other qualities. Company trust is customer confidence in product and service excellence (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999).

H3. Customer trust has a positive and significant effect on revisit intention for customers of The Bahagia cafe and restaurant in Bontang City.

H3a. Customer trust has a positive and significant effect on revisit intention through customer satisfaction and customer loyalty for customers of The Bahagia cafe and restaurant in Bontang City.

The Effect of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is buying a product or service again despite marketing incentives that might boost sales (Suariedewi & Suprpti, 2020). References a customer's inclination or tendency to buy from the same firm, with loyal customers wanting a long-term connection (Rezeki et al., 2023). Customer pleasure and emotional connection to a café or restaurant keep customers coming back. Cafes and restaurants need customer loyalty since customers might switch to competitors who provide similar services. Cafes and restaurants may compete by exceeding customer expectations.

H4. Customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at The Bahagia cafe and restaurant in Bontang City.

The Influence of Brand Equity on Customer Satisfaction

Jeon et al. (2004) provide an integrated strategy to brand creation and satisfaction with brand experience in mind. A good client experience should validate brand image and satisfaction. Thus, brand equity and satisfaction are analyzed when customers interact with the brand (Brakus et al., 2009). There is no study on the link between customer pleasure and brand equity and brand loyalty in the hotel and restaurant business, despite earlier research suggesting that brand equity directly affects satisfaction.

H5. Brand equity has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction at The Bahagia cafe and restaurant customers in Bontang City.

The Influence of Perceived Quality on Customer Satisfaction

According to the developing literature, marketing scholars agree that customer happiness and quality of service are distinct yet related (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994; Patterson & Johnson, 1993). Indeed, contentment and perceived quality are strongly associated (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994). Most marketing academics agree with Cronin et al. (2000) theoretical and empirical reasons that quality perceived leads to satisfaction, and most marketing researchers accept the theoretical framework within which the perception of quality leads to satisfaction. Oliver (1999), states that service quality affects customer satisfaction cognitively and emotionally. Consumers rate the service's overall reliability. Parasuraman et al. (1985) say better service increases customer satisfaction. Consumers also think a customer's service quality rating hinges on the difference between expectations and actual execution. Parasuraman et al. (1985) show that buyers evaluate quality based on actual evidence.

H6. Perceived quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction among customers of The Bahagia cafe and restaurant in Bontang City.

The Influence of Brand Equity on Customer Trust

Customer trust mediates the link between service quality and loyalty, impacting satisfaction and loyalty. Granada et al. (2025) found that trust affects Airbnb return intent more than risk perception. The regression model showed that trust and risk perception explained 67.2% of revisit intent, with trust being the main driver. These results support the hypothesis that trust decreases uncertainty and promotes a feeling of security that encourages loyalty and a propensity to return to experience-based services.

H7. Brand Equity has a positive and significant effect on customer trust in customers of The Bahagia cafe and restaurant in Bontang City.

The Effect of Perceived Quality on Customer Trust

Consumers' subjective assessments of a product or service's superiority over alternatives are called perceived quality. This assessment is not solely based on technical specifications, but also on user experience, brand reputation, consistency of performance, and the fit between expectations and realities that consumers receive. From a consumer behavior perspective, perceived quality serves as a risk reduction mechanism that helps consumers make more confident decisions. High product or service quality is perceived by customers, they tend to develop a belief that the company has the competence and commitment to fulfill the promise of value offered. This belief is the foundation for the formation of customer trust, because Trust grows from the perception of the reliability, integrity, and consistency of the performance of product or service providers (Aaker, 1991; Zeithaml, 1988).

H8. Perceived Equity has a positive and significant effect on customer trust in customers of The Bahagia cafe and restaurant in Bontang City.

This model provides the foundation for later empirical testing and validation of the given hypotheses. Figure 1 illustrates the comprehensive readiness of the research framework:

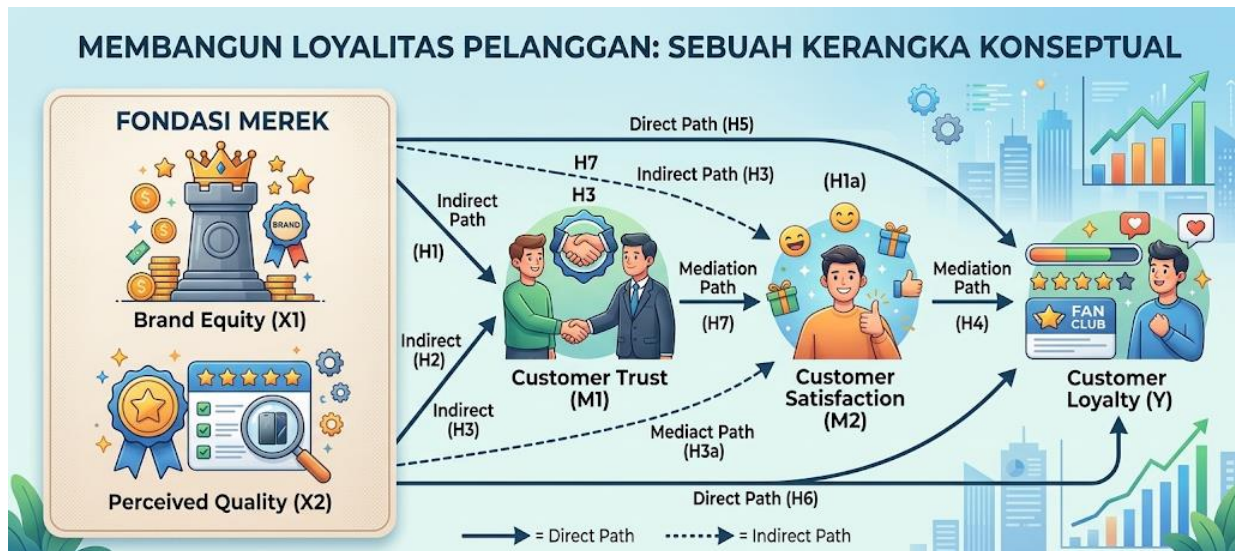


Figure 1. Research Framework (Source: Own Research)

METHOD

Research Location

The research took place at The Bahagia Cafe & Resto, one of the cafes located on Jalan Awang Long Api-API, North Bontang District, Bontang City, East Kalimantan, from January to February 2026.

Population and Sample

A researcher's focus throughout an investigation is on the larger set of individuals, events, or objects that make up the population. The determination of the sample from the population that has been determined was based on the Krejcie and Morgan table with $N = 15,508$, so that $n = 375$ respondents were obtained. As a probability sampling technique, proportional random sampling was used for this study's sample extraction. In this method, every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected, and the sample taken from each stratum is determined by the proportion of the subgroup's size to the total population. This method is used when the population is heterogeneous and divided into several strata of different sizes, to ensure that the sample taken is representative (Uma Sekaran, 2016).

Variable Operations and Their Measurement

Anything about a person or thing that may be changed from one instance to the next is called a variable in research (Uma Sekaran, 2016). The variables of this research are derived from the literature review and hypothesis development and they are:

a. Independent Variables

This research uses Brand Equity (X1) and Perceived Quality (X2) as independent variables.

b. Dependent Variables

Study dependent variable is customer loyalty (Y).

c. Mediation Variables

In this research, Customer Trust (M1) and Customer Satisfaction (M2) are intermediary variables that potentially affect the independent variable on the dependent variable, making X's influence on Y indirect. The operational definition of variables presented in Table 1 is a clue to how a research variable is measured or operationalized.

Table 1. Operational Definition

Variabel	Definition	Indicator	Scale
Brand Equity (X1)	Brand, name, and symbol assets and liabilities that add or detract value to a product or service for a firm or client (Aaker, 1996)	1. Brand loyalty 2. Awareness 3. Quality 4. Trust 5. Emotional attachment	Likert
Perceived Quality (X2)	Consumers' perceptions of a product or service's quality or superiority over other options that satisfy a certain need are called perceived quality (Kotler, 2017)	1. Performance 2. Reliability 3. Durability 4. Feature alignment with needs 5. Quality consistency 6. Quality compared to competitors	Likert
Customer Trust (M1)	Customer trust is a customer's belief that a company will consistently meet its needs, deliver the promised value, and act with a long-term orientation towards customer satisfaction and interests (Levitt, 1960)	1. Consistency of values. 2. Reality service 3. Long-term commitment 4. Honest communication	Likert
Customer Satisfaction (M2)	Customers are satisfied when their wants and expectations are fulfilled (Tciptono, 2016)	1. Percentage of customers who made a repeat purchase. 2. Proportion of customers willing to recommend a product/service 3. Customer complaints per period 4. Customer assessment of service/product quality 5. Customer rating of the price/value received 6. Average service response time	Likert
Customer Loyalty (Y)	Customer loyalty is a strong commitment to purchasing again or subscribe to a product/service and withstand situational pressures and marketing efforts that may induce customers to switch (Oliver, 1999)	1. Cognitive Loyalty. 2. Affective Loyalty 3. Contive loyalty/intent 4. Action loyalty	Likert

Data Analysis

Inferential analysis uses SmartPLS Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis and second-order model (HSOM) hierarchies to identify correlations between major constructs, sub-constructs, and indicators. The use of SmartPLS is considered for: 1) SEM-PLS is the right

research method that seeks to develop theories, 2) SEM-PLS relies on network relationships between constructs as well as between constructs and their measurements, 3). SEM-PLS has broad consistency, 4). High level of statistical strength, 5). Evaluation criteria with both reflective and formative model measurements, with reliability and validity assessment with various criteria, 6) structural model evaluation with model predictability, 7). Efficiency level, 8). Analyze the effects of mediation and others (Hair et al., 2022; Haji, 2021). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis includes confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and regression or path analysis to verify research instrument validity and reliability.

1. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Description of Respondents

By gender

The respondent data presented in this study is gender, show in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Respondent Gender Characteristics

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	150	40
Women	225	60
Total	375	100

Source: primary data processed 2025

From Table 2. It can be noticed that majority of the respondents are male, namely 150 respondents or 40% of the total respondents, and 225 respondents are female or 60%.

By Age

Age is one of the considerations people consider when choosing a job. Age can also be used as a measure of a person's emotional maturity. To see the state of the respondents by age group, see the following Table 3:

Table 3. Respondent Criteria by Age Group

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Under 25 years old	155	41.4
26-34	70	18.6
35-44	90	24
45 and above	60	16
Total	375	100

Source: primary data processed, 2025

From Table 3. Most respondents (155, or 41.4% of all responses) are aged <25 years old. 70 responses (18.6%) were 26–34 years old. The smallest age group was 45 years old and older, with just 60 responses (16% of the total number of respondents).

By Occupation

The length of the working period can affect a person's maturity at work. For more details of the work of the respondents, see Table 4. The following:

Table 4. Respondent Criteria by Occupation

Jobs	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Student	225	60
PNS	30	8

TNI/POLRI	16	4.3
Private Employees	86	22.9
Lecturer/Teacher	18	4.8
Total	375	100

Source: primary data processed, 2025

Table 4 shows that 60% of respondents, 225, are students. Civil servants make about 30% or 8% of responses. TNI/PORI respondents are 16 (4.3%), whereas private employee responses are 86 (22.9%). Lecturers/teachers made up 18 replies (4.8% of the total).

Analisis Sattistik

a. Outer Model Test Results

SEM-PLS outer model evaluation employs Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity, and Reliability. For all indicators, AVE > 0.5 and outer loading > 0.5 determine reflecting indicator convergence validity (Hair et al., 2011).

Table 5. Outer Loading Validity Testing

Indicator	M1.	M2.	X1.	X2.	Y.
M1.1	0,835				
M1.2	0,795				
M1.3	0,773				
M1.4	0,566				
M2.1		0,841			
M2.2		0,781			
M2.3		0,720			
M2.5		0,693			
X1.1			0,881		
X1.3			0,751		
X1.4			0,715		
X1.5			0,853		
X2.1				0,603	
X2.2				0,799	
X2.3				0,624	
X2.4				0,796	
X2.5				0,735	
X2.6				0,793	
Y.1					0,828
Y.2					0,787
Y.3					0,780
Y.4					0,579

Source: Data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

As shown in Table 5, all outer loading values have met the validity criteria because their values exceed the threshold of 0.5.

Tabel 6. Average Variance Extracted

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
M1.	0,734	0,765	0,562
M2.	0,763	0,798	0,579
X1.	0,813	0,810	0,645
X2.	0,824	0,841	0,532
Y.	0,734	0,757	0,562

Source: Data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

Table 6 shows that all constructions have AVE values over 0.5, indicating good measurement. Composite dependability and Cronbach's Alpha assessed construct dependability. Composite Reliability estimates build reliability more accurately and reflect indication internal consistency. However, Cronbach's Alpha sets the build dependability lower limit. Construction is reliable if its Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7 and 0.6, respectively. M1, M2, X1, X2, and Y had high Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.734, 0.763, 0.813, and 0.824. These values peaked at 0.7, showing strong internal dependability and consistency of respondents' construct replies.

Construction reliability study utilizing Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha was good. The Composite Reliability scores for each construct are M1=0.765, M2=0.798, X1=0.810, X2=0.841, and Y=0.757. These values all surpass 0.7. Thus, all study model designs are reliable. To distinguish latent variables, discriminant validity is examined. Having the greatest loading factor of each indicator on the latent variable gives the model strong discriminant validity. Test outcomes for discriminant validity:

Table 7. Cross *Loading Analysis*

Indikator	M1.	M2.	X1.	X2.	Y.
M1.1	0,835	0,820	0,779	0,769	0,828
M1.2	0,795	0,784	0,712	0,722	0,787
M1.3	0,773	0,564	0,870	0,788	0,780
M1.4	0,566	0,396	0,323	0,617	0,579
M2.1	0,832	0,841	0,773	0,779	0,825
M2.2	0,760	0,781	0,691	0,702	0,752
M2.3	0,495	0,720	0,425	0,464	0,493
M2.5	0,483	0,693	0,453	0,445	0,480
X1.1	0,750	0,547	0,881	0,769	0,756
X1.3	0,705	0,707	0,751	0,682	0,698
X1.4	0,774	0,765	0,715	0,735	0,765
X1.5	0,716	0,527	0,853	0,748	0,722
X2.1	0,537	0,379	0,315	0,603	0,549
X2.2	0,748	0,542	0,867	0,799	0,755
X2.3	0,551	0,397	0,317	0,624	0,563
X2.4	0,823	0,809	0,796	0,796	0,817
X2.5	0,777	0,773	0,714	0,735	0,768
X2.6	0,717	0,549	0,845	0,793	0,724
Y.1	0,835	0,820	0,779	0,769	0,828
Y.2	0,795	0,784	0,712	0,722	0,787
Y.3	0,773	0,564	0,870	0,788	0,780
Y.4	0,566	0,396	0,323	0,617	0,579

Source: Data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

The cross-loading analysis in Table 7 reveals that each indicator has the maximum loading factor on its latent variable, supporting discriminant validity. Thus, the study model has strong discriminant validity.

b. Results of Inner Model or Structural Model Test

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing in structural models evaluates construct influence. To examine the effect between constructs, t-statistics ($\alpha = 5\%$) were compared with a t-table value of 1.966 and a p-value < 0.05 . The hypothesis is accepted if the t-statistic > 1.966 and p-value < 0.05 . Path Coefficient provides test data. The following table provides structural model testing results:

R-Square Results

PLS goodness-of-fit model appropriateness is assessed by assessing R-square values for each dependent latent variable. This R-square is calculated using SmartPLS.

Table 8. R-Square Results

Variables	R-square	R-square adjusted
M1.	0,941	0,940
M2.	0,791	0,789
Y.	0,960	0,960

Source: Data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

Table 8 shows the structural model's R-square value for predictive strength. The R-square score of 0.941 for the M1 variable suggests that this research model explains 94.1% of its variation. The research model can explain the M2 variable of 0.791 or 79.1% and the Y variable of 0.960 or 96.0%. Non-study variables explain the remaining 0.40% of variation.

Path coefficients

The hypothesis of path coefficients testing findings in Table 9 are interpreted as follows:

Table 9. Path Coefficient Results

Variables	Original sample (O)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
X1. -> Y.	0,141	0,071	2,000	0,046
X2. -> Y.	0,656	0,087	7,561	0,000
M1. -> M2.	1,313	0,201	6,537	0,000
M2. -> Y.	0,223	0,049	4,536	0,000
X1. -> M2.	0,017	0,089	0,195	0,845
X2. -> M2.	-0,464	0,206	2,253	0,024
X1. -> M1.	0,241	0,070	3,456	0,001
X2. -> M1.	0,743	0,072	10,326	0,000

Source: Data processed with SmartPLS 4, 2025

Discussion

The Influence of Brand Equity on Customer Loyalty

The coefficient value of 0.141, t-statistics of 2,000, and p-value of 0.046 suggest that Brand Equity affects customer loyalty. The research found that Brand Equity affects consumer loyalty. These statistics show that Cafe & Resto the Bahagia has a strong brand identity, which obviously encourages client loyalty. Customers in the culinary business value direct experiences including meal quality, quickness, comfort, and staff friendliness. If these characteristics don't satisfy expectations, even a powerful brand can't retain consumers.

Previous research showed brand equity always influences behavioral intent. Brand equity may affect consumer behavior via customer satisfaction or loyalty. This research suggests brand equity influences initial views, not return intent. These studies show that Cafe & Resto the Bahagia's brand equity may directly inspire consumers to return. It is significant to Gil et al. (2007) that brand equity typically generates visitors or repurchase behavior via other psychological characteristics like satisfaction or loyalty. Since consumers value experience in decision-making, Kim & Kim (2004) also found that brand equity in restaurants indirectly affects behavioral intent.

Strategic assets like brand equity may impact customer behavior, although not always revisit intention. Empirical research reveals that brand equity factors include brand awareness, brand association, and perceived quality shape initial impressions and reduce purchase risk more than drive repeat visit behavior. Experience drives service industry return more than brand image. Pham et al. (2016) revealed that brand loyalty, a sub-dimension of brand equity, strongly influences revisiting intention when paired with a sense of value and a positive experience. This indicates that brand equity indirectly generates repeat visits via consumer happiness and loyalty.

Since brand equity directly affects loyalty, revisiting intention has significant managerial implications. Restaurants invest in service and customer experience, not just brand image. When service meets or surpasses customer expectations. Liu et al. (2024) found that perceived quality and trust affect return visit intent more than brand equity. Investments in staff training, food quality control, and a friendly setting will increase Loyalty and revisit Intent more than branding initiatives. Restaurant customers also rate their trips differently. Even excellent brands suffer from varying experience functionality, lowering brand equity and revisit intent. Without strengthening the customer experience to build loyalty, Cafe & Resto the Bahagia cannot raise revisit intention from brand equity alone.

The Effect of Perceived Quality on Customer Loyalty

In accordance with Brand Equity, Perceived Quality in this research indicated a positive and substantial effect on Revisit Intention. The findings indicated that Perceived Quality had a positive and substantial effect on Customer Loyalty (coefficient 0.656; t-statistic 7.561; p-value 0.000). These data demonstrate that consumer perceptions of Loyalty are essential in driving customer propensity to return for a visit. Perceived Quality includes aspects such as the taste of the food, the appearance of the dishes, the cleanliness of the dining room, the professionalism of the staff, and the overall atmosphere of the restaurant.

These results are consistent with a number of studies that show that restaurant customers are very sensitive to the quality of service. Customers who feel they are being served at or above expectations tend to build positive perceptions that encourage them to return. In the service business, such as restaurants, quality is viewed as a manifestation of management's dedication to offering the best experience. These findings demonstrate that consumer judgments of meal quality, service, environment, and consistency of service are major determinants in influencing their propensity to return. Research by Carranza et al. (2018) indicated that the quality perceived by consumers has a crucial impact in promoting satisfaction and loyal behavior, which eventually improves repeat visit intention. In addition, Oude Ophuis & Van Trijp (1995) emphasize that perceived quality is a construct that impacts the entire consumer rating of a product or service.

Perceived Quality not only represents a rational assessment of the features of a product or service but also contains psychological variables that impact the sense of value. According to the Expectancy-Disconfirmation hypothesis, consumer contentment is established when perceived quality surpasses original expectations. In the context of a restaurant, this means that consistency of taste, cleanliness, and a comfortable atmosphere can create an experience that exceeds expectations, thus reinforcing repeat intent. Research by Kusuma et al. (2023) affirms that perceived quality is a key determinant in the formation of value perceptions, which then influences Loyalty and repurchase behavior.

These findings indicate that restaurant managers should prioritize holistic management of service quality. Efforts such as staff training to improve response, food quality control, and

building an atmosphere that supports customer comfort will have a direct effect on the impression of quality. Additionally, implementing a customer feedback system can help identify areas that need to be improved on an ongoing basis. This strategy is in line with research by Oude Ophuis & Van Trijp (1995), which emphasizes that perceived quality is a multidimensional construct that affects the overall evaluation of services. Cafe & Resto Bahagia must focus on the quality factors consumers most often rate: meal consistency, dining room cleanliness, staff response, and setting comfort. These results imply that improving customer perception will directly and significantly affect consumer willingness to return since loyalty has been formed.

The Effect of Customer Trust on Customer Satisfaction

The findings of the research reveal that Customer Trust has a substantial effect on Customer satisfaction. The model demonstrates that Customer Trust has a considerable effect on customer satisfaction (coefficient of 1.313; t-statistic 6.537; p-value 0.000). This demonstrates that consumers have trusted the quality of the product or the integrity of the service. This Trust may be a powerful motivation in making selections to return to visit.

This study is in accordance with earlier research that suggests that Trust is not a direct predictor of repeat behavior but operates via other dimensions such as satisfaction and loyalty. In the restaurant industry, customers prioritize actual experiences over psychological factors such as Trust. This means that customer trust in the restaurant's commitment, integrity, or long-term orientation is not enough to make customers decide to return to visit. These results are in keeping with the research that suggests that trust normally does not function directly on behavior but rather influences other factors such as contentment and loyalty (Cronin et al., 2000).

Customer Trust is generally considered a vital ingredient in developing long-term connections between consumers and service providers. However, research shows that Trust is rarely a direct predictor of revisit intention. On the other hand, trust plays a role through mediating variables such as satisfaction and Loyalty. A study by Ahn & Kwon (2020) emphasizes that customers' impression of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) does not impact the intention of return visits directly, but via enhanced Trust and commitment. This supports the hypothesis of cognitive consistency, which claims that customer behavior is driven more by emotional ties and genuine experiences than merely a belief in brand integrity.

Building trust requires an approach that focuses on service consistency, transparency, and effective communication. A study by Isikwei & Amadi (2024) found that relationship marketing strategies such as personalizing experiences, rewarding loyalty, and reacting swiftly to consumer concerns may improve trust and drive repeat intent. This is in line with the concept of relational value, where customers who feel valued and treated fairly will be more likely to return. Therefore, restaurant and hotel managers should view Trust as part of the customer experience ecosystem, not as a single variable. Cafe & Resto Bahagia must prioritize food uniformity, dining room cleanliness, personnel reaction, and setting comfort. These findings suggest that increasing customer perception will considerably impact consumer inclination to return because loyalty has been created.

The Effect of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

This research reveals that Customer Satisfaction has a considerable and powerful influence on Customer Loyalty. Customer Satisfaction has a strong effect on Customer Loyalty, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.223, a t-statistic of 4.536, and a p-value of 0.000. This suggests that the amount of customer pleasure is a crucial role in establishing Loyalty. Customers who feel happy with their experience are more likely to build emotional ties, make re-decisions, and promote the café to others.

The results of the research on Cafe & Resto the Bahagia show that customer satisfaction can be formed from various aspects: consistent food taste, friendly service, maintained cleanliness, comfortable atmosphere, reasonable prices, and a dining experience that meets expectations. When these aspects are met, customers tend to form strong Loyalty. These findings prove that the

level of customer satisfaction with the service, products, and dining experience at Cafe & Resto the Bahagia directly increases their Loyalty. This is in line with the loyalty model, which states that satisfaction is the foundation that forms affective, conative, and actionable Loyalty (Iglesias et al., 2020).

Customer satisfaction is the main foundation for building sustainable Loyalty. According to the Expectancy-Disconfirmation theory, satisfaction occurs when the experience exceeds initial expectations, thus creating a strong emotional bond. In the context of a restaurant, consistent satisfaction with the taste of the food, service, and atmosphere will strengthen affective and cognitive Loyalty. Research by Iglesias et al. (2020) asserts that satisfaction not only affects behavioral Loyalty but also forms psychological commitments that make customers more tolerant of minor shortcomings.

Customer loyalty has two main dimensions: attitudinal Loyalty (attitude-based) and behavioral Loyalty (action-based). A study by Clottey et al. (2008) reveals that consumers who have high Loyalty are more likely to make a repeat purchase and offer good referrals. This Loyalty is developed by a gratifying cumulative experience, not simply an initial opinion of the brand. In the service sector, Loyalty works as a barrier to competitive influence, hence enhancing revisit intention.

The Influence of Brand Equity on Customer Trust

The outcomes of the research demonstrated that Brand Equity did not improve Customer Trust, even if it was a strong predictor of Customer Loyalty that caused Revisit Intent. Brand Equity is not the most powerful construct that influences Customer Trust so that Loyalty occurs, as evidenced by a coefficient of 0.017, t-statistic 0.195, and p-value of 0.845. This means that Brand Equity has no direct impact on customer trust, so it has a very high probability of coming back. Loyalty reflects a customer's commitment to the cafe, not only based on momentary satisfaction but also on a positive cumulative experience.

Loyal customers tend to see cafes as the top choice in the dining out category, feel emotionally connected, and are more forgiving when there are minor shortcomings. In addition, loyal customers tend to be a source of free promotions through positive word of mouth. This has big implications for the sustainability of the cafe business. These results confirm that loyal customers both emotionally and behaviorally have a strong tendency to return. It supports the findings Clottey et al. (2008) yang menyatakan bahwa loyalitas tidak hanya meningkatkan retensi tetapi juga memperbesar peluang rekomendasi dan pembelian ulang.

Customer loyalty not only effects repurchase behavior but also inspires good word-of-mouth that becomes a type of free promotion. Cetin & Dincer (2014) emphasize that in the hospitality industry, recommendations from loyal customers have greater influence than traditional advertising because they are considered more credible. Satisfied and loyal consumers are more inclined to share their experiences with others, therefore extending the client base at no extra cost. Strategies that focus on improving customer experience and effective communication can amplify this effect. For Cafe & Resto the Bahagia, maintaining and increasing customer *trust* must be the main focus to encourage revisit intention. Loyalty has been shown to have a much stronger effect than other variables, so customer retention strategies should be a priority in service management.

The Effect of Perceived Quality on Customer Satisfaction

The outcomes of the research demonstrated that Perceived Quality has a substantial influence on Customer Satisfaction since it is a strong predictor of Customer Loyalty that produces Revisit Intent. Perceived Quality is the construct that greatly impacts customer satisfaction such that Loyalty happens, as indicated by a coefficient of -0.464, t-statistic of 2.253, and p-value of 0.024. This indicates that Perceived Quality has a direct influence on consumer satisfaction, hence it has a very high chance of repeat visits. Satisfaction represents a customer's loyalty to the café, not just based on a single choice but also on a favorable cumulative experience of perceived quality.

The high-perceived quality of Cafe & Resto the Bahagia measures the amount to which customers regard the quality of food, drinks, cleanliness, and dependability of service as reaching or surpassing their expectations. In the context of restaurant services, the sense of quality is generally derived from a mix of physical evidence, customer contact with personnel, and consistency in taste and presentation of food. Previous study has demonstrated that the perception of quality is one of the most effective factors of customer happiness since it affects a customer's cognitive and emotional judgment of the services, they get (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This is especially relevant for The Bahagia customers, where the quality of the dishes and the atmosphere of the cafe are the main factors that are often mentioned when customers consider returning.

In addition, positive perceived quality can increase customers' perceived value towards the dining experience, resulting in more stable satisfaction. In food service studies, customers tend to evaluate quality based on actual experiences such as speed of service, staff-friendliness, cleanliness of the dining room, and consistency of food flavor on each visit (Carranza et al., 2018; Konuk, 2019). At Cafe & Resto the Bahagia, these aspects have been proven to affect the level of comfort and confidence of customers in choosing this cafe compared to other places in Bontang City. When these elements are perceived positively consistently, customers not only feel satisfied but also form an emotional connection to the cafe.

The Influence of Brand Equity on Customer Trust

The outcomes of the research demonstrated that Brand Equity has a substantial influence on Customer Trust since it is a strong predictor of Customer Loyalty that produces Revisit Intention. Brand Equity is the most powerful construct that impacts Customer Trust so that Loyalty develops, as proven by a coefficient of 0.241, t-statistic of 3.456, and p-value of 0.001. This indicates that Brand Equity has a direct effect on consumer trust, hence it has a very high possibility of coming back. Trust represents a customer's loyalty to the café, not just based on the brand but also on a favorable cumulative experience of perceived brand quality.

An established brand equity at Cafe & Resto the Bahagia plays a vital role in developing consumer trust since characteristics such as brand recognition, brand association, and perceived quality generate a steady perception of the restaurant's legitimacy and dependability. When customers know the brand well and rate the brand as consistent in providing a positive experience, they tend to develop higher Trust. Research by Ryu et al. (2011) shows that brand equity in the restaurant industry significantly shapes customer perception of service reliability, which in turn increases Trust in brands. Similar findings were put forward by Yoo & Donthu (2001), which affirms that brand equity is a strong foundation for the formation of customer trust because the perception of the brand has a direct effect on the assessment of the integrity and competence of service providers.

In addition, increasing brand equity also encourages customers of The Bahagia Cafe & Resto to believe that the cafe has a long-term commitment to customer satisfaction. This is supported by research by Khoi & Cuong (2019), which states that customer trust arises when brands are able to demonstrate reliability, transparency, and convenience in service delivery. In the case of The Happy, the stronger the brand position in the minds of customers is supported by positive word-of-mouth promotions, a clean image of the place, and consistent service, the higher the level of Trust formed. Thus, brand equity acts as an initial trigger that allows customers to form Trust and ultimately create loyal behaviors such as recommendations, repeat visits, and ongoing preferences.

The Influence of Perceived Quality on Customer Trust

The outcomes of the research demonstrated that Perceived Quality has a substantial influence on Customer Trust since it is a strong predictor of Customer Loyalty that produces Revisit Intention. Brand Equity is the most powerful construct that impacts Customer Trust such that Loyalty develops, as proven by a coefficient of 0.743, t-statistic of 10.326, and p-value of 0.000. This suggests that Perceived Quality has a direct effect on consumer trust, hence it has a

very high possibility of coming back. Trust represents the customer's loyalty to the café, not only based on immediate quality but also a favorable cumulative experience of the quality of service and the perceived brand.

High perceived quality at Cafe & Resto the Bahagia has a vital part in creating customer trust since quality perception is the first signal utilized by customers in judging the dependability and consistency of a service. In the culinary sector, particularly in cafes and restaurants, the quality perceived by consumers comprises not only the flavor of the meal, but also cleanliness, speed of service, and ambient comfort. Research by Carranza et al. (2018) found that the quality perceived by consumers has a direct and strong relationship with Trust because customers tend to trust services that are able to provide positive experience repeatedly. This is in line with the conditions at The Bahagia, where the consistency of menu quality and the friendliness of the staff are the main reasons why customers feel confident and believe in the cafe's commitment to providing the best experience.

In addition, perceived quality contributes to the formation of the perception of competence and integrity of service providers, two important elements in the framework of trust formation according to Han & Hyun (2015). Cafe & Resto, the Bahagia customers, especially regular customers, judge the quality of the cafe not only from the attributes of the product but also from the cafe's ability to maintain service standards even if the number of visitors increases on weekends or holiday seasons. When customers feel that the cafe is able to maintain quality even in busy conditions, the level of Trust increases because customers see operational reliability. This phenomenon is affirmed by Cuong & Khoi (2019), who stated that Trust grows when customers are confident that service providers are able to deliver on value promises through consistent and transparent service.

The Influence of Brand Equity, Perceived Quality Mediated by Customer Trust, Brand, and Customer Satisfaction with Customer Loyalty

All factors of Brand Equity, Perceived Quality in the mediation of Customer Trust, and Customer Satisfaction have a positive and substantial influence on Customer Loyalty. The results of this study show that all exogenous variables have a significant effect on Customer Loyalty, which indicates that customer satisfaction is not formed by their initial perception of the brand, perceived quality, or level of Trust, but is more influenced by the direct experience when visiting.

The joint impact of Brand Equity, Perceived Quality, Customer Trust, and Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty in Cafe & Resto the Bahagia customers shows that customer loyalty behavior is formed through a thorough and cumulative psychological process. Loyalty is not only affected by a customer's original view of the brand or quality, but also through repeated experience ratings during their contact with the cafe's service. According to Oliver (1999), Loyalty develops through four stages: cognitive, affective, conative, and action, all of which require real experience to be processed emotionally and rationally. In the context of The Happy, consistent interactions such as staff responsiveness, atmosphere comfort, and consistency of food flavor are stimuli that strengthen Loyalty through direct experience paths, not just brand image.

In addition, the Bahagia customers tend to form loyalty assessments based on the service encounters they experience on each visit. This is reinforced by Cronin et al. (2000), who explain that customer behavior towards repeat purchases and Loyalty is more influenced by the perception of service quality and actual satisfaction than the initial perception of the brand. Food quality, cleanliness, and speed of service are critical factors that shape behavioral Loyalty. When customers feel that their dining experience is consistently satisfying, they not only make repeat visits but also make positive word-of-mouth, a tangible indicator of customer loyalty to the restaurant business.

The significant influence of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty at The Bahagia confirms the important role of satisfaction as a central construct in consumer behavior in the restaurant industry. Research by Carranza et al. (2018) shows that satisfaction is a major predictor of customer loyalty because satisfaction reflects a thorough evaluation of the consumption experience. At The Bahagia, customers assess satisfaction through various aspects such as food

quality, space comfort, staff friendliness, service speed, and prices that are considered worth it. When these elements are consistently met, customers will form a loyalty commitment that encourages them to return voluntarily, even when competitors offer cheaper or closer alternatives.

Managerial Implications

The study found that Cafe & Resto the Bahagia can improve perceived quality by standardizing food taste through stricter kitchen SOPs, regularly training service staff to be friendly, fast, and responsive, cleaning and sanitizing dining areas, kitchens, and public facilities, and improving the restaurant's atmosphere through lighting, music, and layout. Building brand equity entails presenting stories about Cafe & Resto the Bahagia's value, quality, and distinctiveness, improving digital presence with quality content, customer reviews, and interactive campaigns, and building loyalty programs like member cards, birthday coupons, and visit. Increasing Customer Trust provides clear food safety and ingredient quality information, rapid digital feedback responses to customer concerns, and consistent service, especially during peak hours, to ensure operational reliability. Customer Satisfaction Optimization refreshes the menu based on customer surveys, greets repeat customers with a personalized greeting, and adjusts price to value perceptions to provide customers value. Customer Retention Promotion To increase word-of-mouth, Intention offers a referral program, surprise treats for regulars, online booking, digital reservations, and delivery.

CONCLUSION

According to SEM-PLS investigation of Bontang City's The Bahagia Cafe & Resto customers, Brand Equity affects Customer Loyalty but not Trust. Brand equity contributes to initial impression and emotional loyalty, but it cannot build customer trust without service quality support. The strongest factor determining customer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty is perceived quality. This shows that quality, particularly food taste, cleanliness, and service, is the main factor in customers' willingness to return. Customer Satisfaction is heavily influenced by trust, but not loyalty or revisit intention. Trust mediates pleasure before developing loyalty. Long-term loyalty is most strongly predicted by customer satisfaction. Consumer satisfaction leads to recommendations and repeats visits. All exogenous factors Brand Equity, Perceived Quality, Customer Trust, and Customer Satisfaction impact Customer Loyalty directly and indirectly. Psychological processes and cumulative experiences build brand loyalty, not just initial impressions.

The results of the study show that Brand Equity has a positive and significant effect on Customer Loyalty, while the influence of Brand Equity on Customer Trust is not significant. Meanwhile, Perceived Quality has a positive and significant effect on Customer Loyalty and also has a significant effect on Customer Trust. These findings show that The Bahagia customer loyalty is stronger formed by the perceived quality experience than brand perception alone. Therefore, managers are advised to prioritize the consistency of food quality, cleanliness, service speed, employee friendliness, and atmosphere comfort as the main part of the customer retention strategy.

Furthermore, Customer Trust has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction, while Customer Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on Customer Loyalty. Thus, customer trust plays a role in shaping satisfaction, and satisfaction subsequently strengthens customer loyalty. The results of the study also show that Perceived Quality has a significant effect on Customers, even though the direction of the coefficient is negative, so these findings need to be interpreted carefully and become a concern for model evaluation and variable measurement. Overall, the study emphasizes that Customer Loyalty is the result of a combination of Brand Equity, Perceived Quality, Customer Trust, and Customer Satisfaction, with customer experience and service quality being important elements in the formation process. Therefore, managers are advised to conduct periodic satisfaction evaluations through customer feedback, strengthen

service transparency, and develop loyalty programs that encourage repeat visits and customer recommendations.

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