The Influence Of Customer Engagement On Brand Loyalty With Brand Attachment And Customer Trust As Intervening Variables: A Case Study At Starbucks Ijen, Malang City

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Abstract

Keywords:

Brand Attachment; Brand Loyalty; Customer Engagement; Customer Trust; premium coffee

This study aims to examine the influence of Customer Engagement on Brand Loyalty with Brand Attachment and Customer Trust as intervening variables in the context of Starbucks Ijen Malang. A quantitative descriptive and causal approach was employed, with data collected from 100 respondents using questionnaires and analyzed through SEM-PLS. The findings reveal that Customer Engagement has a strong and significant impact on Brand Loyalty, both directly and indirectly. Brand Attachment demonstrates the highest mediating effect, indicating that emotional bonds play a dominant role in fostering loyalty, while Customer Trust also significantly contributes as a mediator, although to a lesser extent. The results confirm that high engagement enhances both emotional attachment and trust, which in turn strengthen customer loyalty. The study contributes theoretically by enriching the understanding of the interrelationship between engagement, attachment, and trust in loyalty formation, and practically by providing insights for Starbucks to strengthen relationship marketing strategies. The research is limited to a single location with non-probability sampling, suggesting future studies should broaden scope, adopt mixed methods, and incorporate additional variables such as satisfaction or brand experience. Overall, this study highlights that sustainable Brand Loyalty in premium coffee shops can be achieved through active engagement, emotional attachment, and consistent trust.

Introduction

In recent years, the coffee industry has experienced rapid growth accompanied by increasingly intense competition. Starbucks, as one of the market leaders, seeks to enhance customer engagement to maintain brand loyalty. Customer loyalty has been proven to make a significant contribution to long-term revenue while also improving overall brand image (Polat & Cetinsoz, 2021).

Customer engagement plays a crucial role in creating an emotional connection with a brand. Customers who feel engaged tend to develop strong emotional attachment, leading them not only to purchase products but also to feel a sense of connection with the brand. In the context of Starbucks, studies have shown that customers with emotional attachment demonstrate higher loyalty compared to those who only consider price or product quality (Prihatiningrum & Al Khadafi, 2024).

In addition, customer trust is an important factor that strengthens brand loyalty. This trust is built through product quality, customer experience, and service consistency. In the coffee industry, customers' trust in beverage quality and store comfort significantly influences their loyalty to Starbucks (Mansur, 2024). Other studies also confirm that customer satisfaction and trust in Starbucks' services directly affect increased loyalty (Saulina & Syah, 2018).

Previous studies have shown that Brand Attachment and Customer Trust can act as mediators in the relationship between Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty. Research by Bidayah & Rakhmawati (2024), Herman & Hardilawati (2025), and Rini & Hasbi (2024) found that customers with strong emotional connections and high trust in a brand are more likely to remain loyal (Pratama et al., 2019). Similar findings are supported by research proving the positive influence of Customer Engagement on Brand Loyalty through the mediation of emotional attachment and trust (Nur et al., 2024). Meanwhile, other studies emphasize that Customer Trust is the most dominant mediator in this relationship (Widodo & Alivia Febrianti, 2021).

However, most previous research still focuses on digital platforms, fashion, and cosmetics, or highlights aspects of social media and brand image (Bidayah & Rakhmawati, 2024; Rini & Hasbi, 2024; Herman et al., 2025). Therefore, a research gap remains in examining the relationships among Customer Engagement, Brand Attachment, and Customer Trust in the food and beverage industry, particularly premium coffee shops. This study offers novelty by exploring the context of Starbucks Ijen customers in Malang City, using a dual-mediation model with Brand Attachment and Customer Trust as intervening variables to empirically explain the dynamics of customer loyalty formation amid intense competition.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Customer Engagement

According to Putri & Suci (2022), customer engagement is a strategy that can enhance a company's competitive advantage. Technological developments and their use as a medium to create customer engagement—through interaction and shopping experiences—are considered highly effective and efficient for companies. Customer engagement is defined as a close relationship between customers and a company, demonstrated through interactions and the emotional experiences customers have with the company's products and services.

Brand Loyalty

According to David (2017), brand loyalty refers to a customer's attachment to a particular brand. This measure indicates the likelihood of a customer switching to another brand offered by competitors, especially if differences in price or other attributes exist. Meanwhile, Schiffman et al. (2013) define brand loyalty as a consumer preference characterized by consistently purchasing the same brand for a specific product within a particular service category..

Brand Attachment

Attachment is an emotional and affective bond built by consumers toward a particular brand. Customers tend to personify the brands they like and thus develop a strong affiliation with them. Brand attachment is an important construct that reflects the strength of the bond connecting consumers to a brand, which in turn influences behaviors that support brand profitability and customer lifetime value. Conceptually, brand attachment resembles ownership attachment, considering brands as sources of emotion, self-identity, and personal historical value (Santoso & Brahmana, 2019).

Customer Trust

According to Kotler & Keller (2021), trust is defined as a company's willingness to rely on business partners. Trust depends on several interpersonal and inter-organizational factors such as competence, integrity, honesty, and benevolence. According to Fajarini & Meria (2020), customer trust is the strength of a consumer's belief in a product possessing certain attributes. Consumers express trust based on various attributes of a brand and the evaluated product.

The Hypotheses in This Study Are as Follows:
H1: Customer Engagement significantly influences Brand Loyalty.
H2: Brand Attachment significantly influences Brand Loyalty.
H3: Customer Trust significantly influences Brand Loyalty.
H4: Customer Engagement significantly influences Brand Attachment.
H5: Customer Engagement significantly influences Customer Trust.
H6: Brand Attachment mediates the influence of Customer Engagement on Brand Loyalty.
H7: Customer Trust mediates the influence of Customer Engagement on Brand Loyalty.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative descriptive and causal approach analyzed with statistical techniques based on positivist philosophy. The descriptive method is used to describe the phenomena of Customer Engagement, Brand Attachment, Customer Trust, and Brand Loyalty, while the causal method aims to examine the influence and cause–effect relationships among the variables. The variables in this study consist of Customer Engagement (X) as the independent variable, Brand Loyalty (Y) as the dependent variable, and Brand Attachment (Z1) and Customer Trust (Z2) as the intervening variables.

The research was conducted at Starbucks Malang Ijen, located at Jl. Besar Ijen No.82, Malang City, during January–March 2025. The population includes all consumers of Starbucks Ijen, with an unknown total population size; therefore, the sample size was determined using Cochran's formula, resulting in 97 respondents, rounded to 100 people. The sample criteria include consumers who have made more than one purchase, are over 17 years old, and reside in Malang City.

Data were collected using a questionnaire with indicator scales adopted from previous theories, supported by both primary and secondary data. Data analysis was carried out using SEM-PLS 4, following the stages of evaluating the outer model (convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability) and the inner model (R-Square, Q-Square, and Goodness of Fit). Hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping method to examine path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Direct Effects

Hypothesis testing is used to determine the magnitude of the relationship or influence between latent constructs. In Smart PLS-SEM, hypothesis testing is carried out using the bootstrapping procedure. The results of hypothesis testing through bootstrapping can be seen in the Path Coefficients for direct effects and in Total Indirect Effects for indirect effects.

According to Hair (2014), the original sample value functions as an indicator of the direction of the relationship between variables in the overall research sample. This helps identify whether the influence is positive or negative. If the original sample value is greater than 0.0, it indicates a positive effect; if it is less than 0.0, it indicates a negative effect. Hypothesis testing is

performed by examining the t-statistic or p-value. With a 5% significance level, the critical t-value is 1.96. A p-value below 0.05 indicates a significant relationship between variables.

The results of the path coefficient testing are shown in the following table:

Table 1 Total Effect Values

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
X -> Y	0,718	0,725	0,051	14,115	0,000
X -> Z1	0,868	0,873	0,024	36,110	0,000
X -> Z2	0,778	0,786	0,046	16,746	0,000
Z1 -> Y	0,833	0,855	0,127	6,557	0,000
Z2 -> Y	0,373	0,366	0,092	4,054	0,000

Source: Processed data

Based on Table 1, all relationships between variables in this research model show positive and significant effects. The Total Effect value reflects the overall effect of one variable on another, both directly and indirectly.

The path from Customer Engagement (X) to Brand Loyalty (Y) has a total effect of 0.718, indicating a strong influence of customer engagement on brand loyalty, both directly and through mediating variables (Brand Attachment and Customer Trust). The influence of Customer Engagement (X) on Brand Attachment (Z1) shows the highest total effect, 0.868, indicating that customer engagement strongly contributes to emotional attachment to the brand.

Meanwhile, Customer Engagement (X) toward Customer Trust (Z2) has a total effect of 0.778, which also indicates a strong positive influence. Brand Attachment (Z1) on Brand Loyalty (Y) has a total effect of 0.833, showing that emotional attachment plays a very significant role in increasing loyalty. Customer Trust (Z2) on Brand Loyalty (Y) also shows a significant positive effect with a total effect of 0.373, meaning that trust is an important factor, although not as strong as emotional attachment.

Overall, these total effects reinforce the finding that Customer Engagement influences Brand Loyalty not only directly but also indirectly through Brand Attachment and Customer Trust, both of which act as important mediators in building customer loyalty toward Starbucks at Ijen, Malang City.

Indirect Effects

The Total Indirect Effects values are used to determine mediation effects—relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables through intervening variables. The results are shown in the following table:

Table 2 Total Indirect Effect Values

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values

X -> Z1 -> Y	1,016	1,033	0,091	11,114	0,000
X -> Z2 -> Y	0,647	0,656	0,071	9,172	0,000

Source: Processed data

Based on Table 2, Customer Engagement (X) has significant indirect effects on Brand Loyalty (Y) through Brand Attachment (Z1) and Customer Trust (Z2).

The first mediation path, X → Z1 → Y, has an original sample value of 1.016, t-statistic 11.114, and p-value 0.000, indicating a highly significant mediation effect. This means that emotional attachment strongly mediates the relationship between engagement and loyalty.

The second mediation path, X → Z2 → Y, has an original sample value of 0.647, t-statistic 9.172, and p-value 0.000—also showing significant mediation. Customer Engagement influences brand loyalty through customer trust, although the effect size is lower compared to Brand Attachment.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that Customer Engagement plays a key role in building customer loyalty. Engagement created through in-store interaction and digital platforms fosters initial closeness between customers and the brand. This aligns with Putri & Suci (2022), who emphasize engagement as a strategic factor for competitive advantage. So et al. (2016) explain that engagement appears through enthusiasm, attention, deep involvement, interaction, and brand identification. These findings confirm that higher customer engagement increases the likelihood of loyalty, although engagement itself is not sufficient without emotional factors and trust.

The results also show that Brand Attachment has a very strong effect on brand loyalty. Emotional bonds make customers consider the brand part of their identity. Park et al. (2010) state that brand attachment is built through affection, connection, and passion. In Starbucks' context, customers with strong attachment tend to buy consistently, try new products, and stay loyal even when competitors offer lower prices. Prihatiningrum & Al Khadafi (2024) support this by noting that emotional attachment is a key determinant of loyalty in coffee industries that prioritize customer experience.

Customer Trust is also shown to significantly influence brand loyalty. Trust is formed when companies maintain consistent quality, integrity, and competence in fulfilling brand promises. Kotler & Keller (2021) explain that trust grows from consistent reputation and dependable service. Starbucks builds trust through product quality, friendly service, and transparent communication. Saulina & Syah (2018) also found that higher customer trust leads to stronger loyalty toward Starbucks.

Furthermore, Customer Engagement strengthens both Brand Attachment and Customer Trust. This supports Lestari et al. (2024), who state that customer involvement helps create deep emotional experiences, and Sopiah & Sangadji (2016), who argue that consistent positive interactions foster trust. Therefore, engagement acts as an initial driver shaping emotional bonds and trust, which then serve as bridges to loyalty. Park et al. (2010) highlight emotional connection as the foundation of attachment, while Kotler & Keller (2021) emphasize trust as the basis of long-term relationships.

Theoretically, this research enriches the literature by showing that engagement, attachment, and trust are interconnected dimensions in forming brand loyalty. Practically, the findings imply that Starbucks should strengthen relationship-based marketing strategies that focus not only on

interaction but also on emotional bonding and maintaining trust. Socially, the results show that loyalty can be built through positive experiences, emotional closeness, and consistent trust, ultimately fostering long-term and harmonious consumer–brand relationships

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Customer Engagement plays an important role in shaping Brand Loyalty, both directly and through the mediation of Brand Attachment and Customer Trust. The higher the customer engagement, the stronger the emotional bond and trust formed toward the brand, which in turn encourages sustainable loyalty. However, this study has limitations because it was conducted only at Starbucks Ijen in Malang City, so the results cannot yet be generalized. The use of closed-ended questionnaires also does not explore customers' emotional motivations in depth, and the variables used are limited to Customer Engagement, Brand Attachment, Customer Trust, and Brand Loyalty. The study was conducted cross-sectionally and used non-probability sampling, which does not fully represent the population or the long-term development of loyalty.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the study locations, use probability sampling, and combine quantitative and qualitative methods for more comprehensive results. Other variables such as customer satisfaction, perceived value, or brand experience can also be added, and the use of a longitudinal design will help examine the dynamics of customer loyalty over time.

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