

Local Coffee Shop Use of Sensory Marketing to Maintain Customer Loyalty: The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia boasts the world's fourth-highest coffee consumption, with demand steadily rising. Interestingly, nearly 25% of coffee drinkers are social drinkers, which means they enjoy coffee primarily when catching up with friends at cafes. However, the coffee shop market is saturated, leading to fierce competition among coffee shops struggling to retain customers. Loyalty is scarce, with most customers flitting between cafes. This study explores whether customer satisfaction mediates the impact between sensory marketing and loyalty. This study aims to analyze and test this connection within the Indonesian coffee shop landscape. This research focuses on loyal customers of the chosen cafes, targeting those who have visited more than once. The method used in this study is quantitative with the technique of distributing questionnaires, then the results will be calculated using SMART PLS ver. 3.9 accompanied by descriptive analysis for explanation. The study indicates that sensory marketing strategies can boost customer satisfaction, which in turn contributes to loyalty. The research recommends that businesses focus on sensory marketing as it is vital for building lasting connections with customers and retaining their loyalty.

Keywords: Coffee Shop; Customer Loyalty; Customer Satisfaction; Marketing; Sensory Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Holding the title of the world's second most traded commodity behind oil, coffee significantly impacts the socio-economic well-being of numerous developing nations within the tropics. Research by Pham et al (2019) highlights this impact, demonstrating that coffee cultivation and trade support the livelihoods of over 120 million people globally. Indonesia ranks 4th among the world's highest coffee-consuming countries, with coffee consumption increasing annually (International Coffee Organization [ICO], 2021). Based on data from Statista (Nurhayati-Wolff, 2023), social drinkers account for 24.84% of coffee drinkers in Indonesia indicating that they consume coffee only when socializing with friends, leading them to gather at coffee shops that primarily offer coffee products. The landscape of the coffee shop industry is now characterized by a high degree of saturation, where the supply of products or services in the market exceeds demand. The coffee industry, noteworthy for its extensive global presence and substantial economic impact, contends with a multitude of challenges that threaten its ongoing stability and long-term sustainability (Cheng et al., 2024). The coffee shop sector is experiencing a surge in competition due to the proliferation of establishments, encompassing both established global chains and independent local brands (Jang & Lee, 2019).

The fierce competition among coffee shops also makes it difficult to acquire loyal customers. The majority of "switcher" customers, also known as roamers, within the coffee shop industry underscores the challenge of cultivating customer loyalty in this sector. It is evident that consumers faced with a multitude of store choices are becoming less loyal to brands than before (Russo, 2014). Sulibhavi and Shivashankar (2017) highlight the critical role of fostering customer loyalty in achieving sustained sales growth. They emphasize that retaining customers who make repeat purchases is essential for remaining competitive within the industry. Therefore, loyal customers are considered a valuable asset for store sustainability (Jin et al., 2016). As a result, the intense competition within the coffee industry has elevated customer loyalty to a critical factor for success. Loyal customers provide significant advantages. They tend to be repeat buyers, open to trying new offerings within the company (increasing cross-buying), and can even act as brand ambassadors by attracting new customers and fostering a positive public image for the company (Tu & Chang, 2012).

Today's consumers expect more variety in their diverse experiences throughout their entire customer journey (Kuczamer-Kłopotowska, 2017). Kim and Jung (2018) posit that today's consumers prioritize distinctive experiences that engage multiple senses (sensory experiences). This growing focus on sensory engagement aligns with the recent emphasis on sensory marketing, a strategy that leverages human senses to enhance the customer experience. Aljumah et al. (2022) prove that sensory marketing (sight, touch, sound) holds great importance for enhancing customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. This means that it can be applied as a marketing strategy to help businesses retain important customers (customer retention) for their business survival. Data from Statista (Marcomm & Toffin, 2019) identified several key motivators for consumers frequenting coffee shops. The most prominent factor, endorsed by nearly 80%, was the availability of high-quality, delicious coffee. Convenience also played a significant role, with over 60% of respondents citing it as a draw. Furthermore, menu variety emerged as an important consideration, with over half of those surveyed valuing a diverse selection of offerings. Brand loyalty also factored in, with nearly 45% frequenting shops that served their preferred coffee. Finally, the report noted a growing trend of "Instagrammable" aesthetics, influencing over a third of consumers. From these reasons, it can be seen that consumers' visits to coffee shops are influenced by several sensory marketing factors.

For businesses to flourish, ensuring customer satisfaction is an essential element. Customer satisfaction is crucial to ensure customer loyalty and provide valuable recommendations to other potential customers. Moreover, in a contemporary environment defined by increasingly demanding customers who leverage the power of digital platforms, achieving that has become the cornerstone of business prosperity (Cheng et al., 2024). Customer loyalty hinges upon a customer's interpretation of a business's value proposition offered in contrast to competitors. As the significance of consumer experiences continues to rise, a deeper understanding of the emotional drivers behind purchasing decisions becomes paramount for forging lasting brand relationships (Shukla et al., 2024). The incorporation of aesthetic elements within restaurant service is posited to heighten emotional connection and elevate customer satisfaction. The visual and physical environment of the restaurant will create a positive sense of value, ultimately leading to customer satisfaction (Silaban et al., 2023). Raab et al. (2013) argue that ambient soundscapes beyond music can significantly impact a diner's experience. Furthermore, they highlight the influence of olfactory cues on memory and emotional response during dining. Finally, the study emphasizes the interplay between a dish's textural characteristics and visual presentation, both of which contribute to shaping customer perception and satisfaction. By utilizing sensory marketing, a marketer can be appealed to consumers' emotions rather than solely relying on logic, and they can cultivate trust, capture attention, and ultimately enhance customer satisfaction. This can form the strongest bond between brand and consumer, creating customer loyalty.

The rapid growth of coffee shops in Indonesia, especially in Bandung has correspondingly intensified competition within the cafe industry. This surge in Bandung's cafe scene undoubtedly caters to a wider range of consumer preferences, encompassing both thematic ambiance and culinary desires (Erlina & Hermawan, 2021). This study discusses 5 coffee shops in Bandung that were selected based on their establishment year, namely the period of 2015-2019. The selected coffee shop data are coffee shops that were established before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, where at that time there were various challenges for coffee shop businesses that experienced a decline in sales. The emergence of COVID-19 lockdowns forced the closure of many businesses, with coffee shops and their baristas being among the first affected. Unfortunately, some coffee shops never recovered from these closures (Park, 2020). Therefore, coffee shops that were established before and during the pandemic and still exist among the public are sustainable coffee shops, which can be interpreted that the business has its own advantages so that it has loyal consumers who guarantee the success of their business. Based on the explanation above, this study aims to break down and test the potential influence of sensory marketing on customer loyalty, exploring customer satisfaction as a mediating variable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sensory Marketing

Sensory marketing, as outlined by Hulten (2020) represents a holistic approach to marketing that integrates the five senses into a business's strategies. This approach focuses on how customers develop perceptions and emotional connections with brands, products, environments, and services through multi-sensory experiences. Sensory marketing leverages the power of human senses – taste, smell, sight, hearing, and touch – to create immersive experiences for consumers. By strategically manipulating these elements within a specific environment, marketers can cultivate a favorable brand image in the minds of customers. Sensory marketing goes beyond simply transmitting information; it aims to evoke emotional responses and shape customer expectations. Through carefully crafted sensory cues, marketers can create a sense of tangibility for

potential customers, allowing them to forge a stronger emotional connection with the brand and fostering a more positive perception (Petit et al., 2019).

Vision

The sense of vision plays a critical role in human perception, ranking as one of our most dominant senses in terms of how they perceive and understand brands, products, and services. For companies, this means trying to attract the attention of individuals by using sight and visuals as a means of conveying brand identity, emotions, and values (Hulten, 2020). A restaurant's visual appearance plays a significant role in shaping customer perception (Han & Ryu, 2009). Elements such as decor, lighting, layout, and overall cleanliness can significantly impact customer satisfaction and enjoyment (Ryu & Jang, 2007). Restaurants that prioritize a clean and aesthetically pleasing environment are more likely to cultivate positive customer experiences.

Auditory

First, ambient sounds are sounds that come from animals, birds, or sound-making machines. These sounds are not related to humans or musical instruments. Second, sounds (vocal) are sounds that come from people, identified as sounds like a baby crying or a song by Shakira. Third, music is sound that comes from instruments, songs, or a combination of both, creating beauty, harmony, and emotional expression (Hulten, 2020). Auditory stimuli also influence customer experience in restaurants. Music and other soundscapes that complement the dining experience can enhance satisfaction and enjoyment (Lindborg, 2015). Conversely, unpleasant noises, such as traffic or excessive restaurant noise, can detract from the meal (Steffens et al., 2021).

Taste

Individuals rely on their personal tastes when making decisions about which brands and products to choose and which service environments to select. The sense of taste is twofold, in that it considers internal taste - through the tongue - and external taste - through the eyes. It is clear that both gastronomic taste and aesthetic taste are equally important in individual product evaluation, purchasing decisions, and consumption (Hulten, 2020).

Olfaction

It is generally assumed that different aromas or smells, whether artificial or natural, affect individuals' cognition, emotions, and behavior (Spence et al., 2014). According to (Hulten, 2020) smell (olfaction) is crucial for a person's gastronomic or physical taste. It is believed that aroma affects taste perception and experience. Olfaction, the sense of smell, plays a surprising role in shaping memories and emotions associated with dining (Chang, 2020). Pleasant aromas activate specific areas of the brain, triggering positive emotions like relaxation, satisfaction, and the creation of lasting positive memories (Krishna et al., 2014). The ability to anticipate the aroma of a dish further enhances the dining experience.

Haptic

There is no doubt that the sense of touch is very important for humans to get an impression of brands and products through touch. Interactions within service settings, encompassing both physical and mental engagement with brands and products, demonstrably influence consumer thought processes, emotions, and ultimately, purchasing decisions (Spence et al., 2014). The tactile experience, or haptics, also factors into customer satisfaction in restaurants (Chang, 2020). Biggs et al. (2016) emphasizes the significant influence of both a dish's textural characteristics and visual presentation on customer perception and enjoyment of the food. Even the tableware and

utensils used can subtly shape customer perception of both the taste and quality of the food.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction, as defined by Oliver (1997), reflects a customer's reaction to the perceived fulfillment of their expectations. This assessment arises when they recognize the benefits a product or service delivers in relation to their own criteria for value. Customer satisfaction can directly and indirectly affect business sustainability, competitiveness, and profitability. Satisfied customers tend to be less price-sensitive and less easily influenced by competitor strategies. This will ultimately result in a large customer base for the brand (Kataria & Saini, 2020). Building on this concept, Mensah and Mensah (2018) posit that customer satisfaction hinges on a customer's enjoyment during the consumption process itself. In essence, satisfaction is gauged by the discrepancy between a customer's initial expectations and the product or service's actual delivery. Additionally, Hanaysha (2016) highlights that products and services that effectively enhance satisfaction and prevent dissatisfaction ultimately contribute to a positive customer experience.

Customer satisfaction, a cornerstone of marketing research, hinges on the connection between the purchase experience and its influence on brand loyalty (Hammoud et al., 2018). Customers are satisfied when a product or service meets their expectations, and this satisfaction, arising from the entire purchase journey, significantly impacts their future behavior (Rita et al., 2019). According to Mansouri et al. (2022), customers assess satisfaction by determining the alignment between a customer's initial hopes and the actual benefits delivered by a product or service. When a product or service exceeds these expectations, it leads to customer satisfaction. Oliver's (1997) theory of expectation disconfirmation proposes that customer satisfaction hinges on whether the product or service surpasses their initial expectations. Customers feel satisfied when reality exceeds their expectations, but dissatisfied when their expectations are higher than the actual experience.

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty has evolved into a crucial factor in achieving a sustainable competitive edge in the market (Pérez-Morón et al., 2022). Dick and Basu (1994) conceptualized customer loyalty as "the strength of the relationship between an individual's relative attitude and repeat purchase." Eid (2015) distinguishes two key customer loyalty concepts: stochastic loyalty (behavior-based) and deterministic loyalty (attitude-based). Stochastic loyalty refers to observable actions, such as repeat purchases or high purchase frequency. Deterministic loyalty, on the other hand, reflects a customer's inner state, encompassing a preference for the brand and spreading positive word-of-mouth. Dick and Basu (1994) proposed four loyalty typologies based on the interplay between behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. When both aspects are low, there is simply no loyalty. Spurious loyalty describes a situation where customers frequently buy but lack a strong attachment to the brand. Conversely, latent loyalty indicates a strong brand preference with infrequent purchases. Finally, true loyalty represents the ideal scenario, where customers consistently buy and hold the brand in high regard.

The Relations Between Sensory Marketing and Customer Satisfaction

Sensory marketing emerges as a novel tool in the marketing landscape, offering a promising approach to enhancing customer satisfaction (Satti et al., 2021). Currently, sensory marketing is employed to cultivate customer satisfaction by forging emotional connections (Shahid et al., 2022). Notably, sensory marketing outperforms traditional marketing strategies in fostering customer satisfaction and encouraging patrons to extend their dining experiences. Furthermore, Haase and Wiedmann (2018) assert that

all sensory cues play a pivotal role in determining whether customer satisfaction is high or low. They argue that the specific combination of these elements within a sensory marketing strategy can have a substantial impact, with some configurations leading to higher satisfaction than others. While prior research by Silaban et al. (2023) highlights the significant influence of olfactory and haptic elements (smell and touch) on customer satisfaction, the study did not find an impact from visual, taste, or auditory aspects of sensory marketing.

The current era is dominated by visual stimuli, with sight being the most persuasive human sense, heavily influencing decision-making (Zaw, 2021). Sensory marketing leverages this by manipulating light patterns to enhance customer perception of distance, movement, dimension, and color (Zaw, 2021). These perceptions significantly impact product and service selection, ultimately leading to customer satisfaction and enjoyment. Furthermore, visual elements aid customer decision-making, contributing to a positive customer experience, a primary goal for service providers. Scholars emphasize that customer needs are fulfilled through intricate experiences filtered as visual stimuli (Ali et al., 2020).

H1: Visual factors are positively related to customer satisfaction

Previous research has explored the influence of sound (auditory) on customer behavior, focusing on factors such as music volume, genre, and tempo in various service environments (Raab et al., 2013). These auditory elements have been shown to impact customer satisfaction, product evaluation, purchasing behavior, and even the amount of time spent at a particular location (Raab et al., 2013). Recognizing this influence, retailers strategically utilize music to create positive customer moods and foster satisfaction (Zeeshan & Obaid, 2013). In-store music, therefore, plays a significant role in shaping customer experience and ultimately satisfaction levels.

H2: Auditory factors are positively related to customer satisfaction

Undoubtedly, food quality and taste are of primary importance in restaurants. However, as research by Liu and Jang (2009) suggests, various other factors can also significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Horng and Hsu (2021) highlight the role of emotional connection and memorable experiences in driving positive customer behavior. Beyond just taste, factors like freshness and temperature significantly impact overall satisfaction (Liu & Jang, 2009). Furthermore, the presentation of food plays a crucial role, with discrepancies between expectation and reality impacting customer perception (Ferreira, 2019).

H3: Taste factors are positively related to customer satisfaction

Research by Chang (2020) suggests that smell (olfaction) plays a significant role in shaping memories and emotions associated with dining experiences. Pleasant aromas activate specific areas of the brain, triggering positive feelings like relaxation, satisfaction, and the creation of lasting positive memories (Krishna et al., 2014). Beyond simply anticipating a dish's aroma, olfaction can also influence how people respond to their surroundings. A clean, well-maintained restaurant environment with pleasant air quality and controlled crowds can ultimately contribute to tourist satisfaction (Cicerali et al., 2017).

H4: Olfaction factors are positively related to customer satisfaction

The presence of touch (haptics) cues allows customers to assess product or service functionality, evaluate performance, and perceive quality, ultimately forming associations with the product (Ridwan et al., 2021). Positive touch experiences, such as the feel of food in the hand or mouth, can foster feelings of comfort and enjoyment (Ridwan et al., 2021). This, in turn, can lead to increased satisfaction and purchase intention. Touch, therefore, is increasingly recognized as a valuable marketing tool.

H5: Haptics factors are positively related to customer satisfaction

The Relations Between Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

A well-established correlation exists between a customer's level of satisfaction and their likelihood to be loyal. Satisfied customers typically exhibit loyal behaviors, characterized by purchasing more than one time and positive endorsements (Ali et al., 2018). Customer satisfaction demonstrably translates into positive brand behaviors. This includes repeat patronage, enthusiastic recommendations, and unwavering loyalty. Furthermore, elevated levels of customer satisfaction cultivate increased trust and confidence in the brand, ultimately fortifying customer relationships and nurturing long-term allegiance (Cheng et al., 2024). Extensive research by Han et al. (2018) and Nam et al. (2011) has explored this connection, demonstrating that satisfaction serves as a critical predictor of loyalty. According to Carranza et al. (2018), customers experiencing satisfaction tend to exhibit extended patronage with the existing business, devoting increased time and financial resources, while also promoting the brand positively through word-of-mouth communication. Researchers have demonstrated that organizational profitability aligns with higher retention rates when customers are satisfied with the organization's performance. Satisfied customers consistently transform into loyal patrons. Consequently, organizations diligently strive to foster customer satisfaction daily, as these satisfied customers exhibit brand loyalty. Customers tend to gravitate towards brands that hold a positive image in their minds. The cultivation of a positive brand image is imperative for organizations seeking to foster enduring customer loyalty (Aljumah et al., 2022). Another study by Chiguvu and Guruwo (2017) examining the banking sector in Botswana, posits that achieving customer loyalty without customer satisfaction is an impossibility. Thus, as satisfaction increases, so does the loyalty.

H6: Customer satisfaction is positively related to customer loyalty

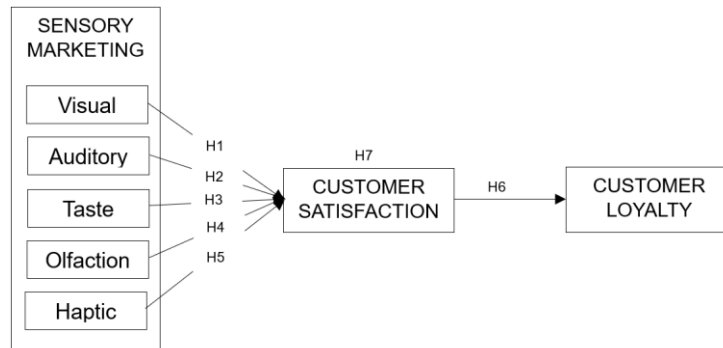
The Relations Between Sensory Marketing and Customer Loyalty Through Customer Satisfaction

Aljumah et al. (2022) define that sensory marketing can influence customer perception by creating a favorable brand image through multi-sensory experiences. This strategic use of sensory cues can potentially impact customer expectations and satisfaction. Several studies highlight the positive correlation between customer satisfaction and organizational profitability. This link is particularly strong when customer satisfaction translates into customer retention. Satisfied customers exhibit a greater propensity to become loyal, consistently choosing brands that evoke positive associations. Consequently, organizations strive to cultivate customer satisfaction through various means, fostering brand loyalty.

H7: Customer satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between sensory marketing and customer loyalty

In light of the research presented above, the following framework has been constructed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Framework



Source: Aljumah et al. (2022) & Silaban et al. (2023)

RESEARCH METHOD

Bandung's booming coffee shop scene has created a more competitive environment for cafe owners. This rapid growth caters to a wider range of customer preferences, offering them unique coffee shop concepts and diverse food options (Erlina & Hermawan, 2021). In light of the competitive cafe market in Bandung, as evidenced by the increasing number of establishments, this study chooses Bandung as its research area. This research focuses on loyal customers of the chosen cafes, targeting those who have visited more than once. This study investigates how one factor influences others, and potentially with additional factors. The study employs a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire, where 1 signifies strong disagreement and 4 indicates strong agreement, distributed via social media to gather new data. A statistical technique called Partial Least Squares (PLS version 3.9) will then be used to analyze the data and identify the most significant relationships between the variables.

RESULT

The coffee shop industry is facing intense competition as the number of coffee shops, both international chains and local establishments, continues to grow, making it difficult for individual businesses to thrive. Sulibhavi and Shivashankar (2017) state that to remain competitive among other businesses, it is necessary to have loyal customers who are inclined to make repeat purchases, which can lead to sustainable sales. Research conducted by Satti et al. (2021) highlights the potential for sensory marketing to enhance customer satisfaction. Aljumah, et al. (2022) prove that sensory marketing (sight, touch, sound) can be a powerful tool in increasing customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. This means that sensory marketing can be used as a marketing strategy that helps businesses retain important customers (customer retention) for their business survival. The purpose of sensory marketing is to send communication to the brain so that the brain can arouse curiosity, influence purchasing decisions, and create connections and lasting impressions. Also, studies conducted by Satti et al. (2023) has revealed that customer satisfaction acts as a significant mediator between sensory marketing and customer loyalty.

DISCUSSION

All organizations strive to attract more customers by fostering customer loyalty, as it is the key to their success. Therefore, consistent efforts to develop and enhance customer loyalty are crucial. For coffee shop business the increased in loyalty translates into several key benefits. Firstly, loyal customers exhibit a higher propensity for repeat purchases. Secondly, they demonstrate a willingness to explore the company's broader product and service offerings, thereby facilitating cross-buying opportunities. Furthermore, loyal customers often act as brand ambassadors, attracting new patrons through positive word-of-mouth. Finally, their continued patronage contributes to the establishment of a positive public image for the company (Tu & Chang, 2012). Customer satisfaction is the cornerstone of business prosperity. It cultivates customer loyalty and nurtures positive word-of-mouth. However, attaining customer satisfaction is a challenge, necessitating the delivery of exceptional services and the implementation of innovative solutions to address customer requirements (Sleimi et al., 2020). One of the marketing strategies used for increasing customer satisfaction is sensory marketing. Its ability to establish emotional bonds with customers surpasses traditional marketing methods, leading to increased customer contentment and prolonged patron engagement (Shahid et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

The goal of this study is to ascertain whether or not sensory marketing affects customer loyalty in local coffee shops in Bandung through customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. The model suggest that sensory marketing practices can lead to increased satisfaction and ultimately, customer loyalty. Building customer loyalty hinges on a delicate balance: crafting sensory marketing experiences that not only satisfy but exceed expectations, ultimately forging a deeper emotional connection with customers. The paper suggests that business should prioritize managing sensory marketing because it plays a crucial role in fostering long-term customer relationships and loyalty. By exceeding expectations and creating positive sensory experiences, businesses can elevate customer satisfaction, which is the cornerstone of loyalty. In essence, sensory marketing, satisfaction, and loyalty form a powerful interconnected loop driving business success.

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The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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