

The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty with Customer Satisfaction as an Intervening Variable at The Gade Coffee Balikpapan

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Abstract: This study examines the effect of service quality on customer loyalty with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable at The Gade Coffee Balikpapan. The research addresses inconsistent findings in prior studies regarding the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between service quality and loyalty, particularly within local coffee shop contexts in developing cities. A quantitative explanatory design was employed using purposive sampling of 170 customers who had made at least two purchases. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using SMART PLS. The findings reveal that service quality has a positive and significant direct effect on customer loyalty and a strong positive effect on customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction significantly influences customer loyalty and partially mediates the relationship between service quality and loyalty. The strongest relationship was observed between service quality and customer satisfaction, highlighting service performance as the primary determinant of customer evaluation. The study concludes that enhancing service quality is a strategic approach to fostering long-term customer loyalty, particularly when it effectively generates customer satisfaction in competitive service environments.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, Indonesia's coffee industry has experienced rapid growth alongside changes in urban lifestyles. Coffee is no longer perceived merely as a beverage, but has evolved into a component of modern lifestyle associated with social interaction, work activities, and leisure (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Solomon, 2018). The increase in domestic coffee consumption reflects a shift toward experience-oriented consumption patterns (Santino Coffee, 2025). This development has stimulated the expansion of modern coffee shops, both national chains and local brands. Coffee shops now function as social spaces carrying symbolic and emotional value for consumers (Wijaya, 2022). In service marketing, customer experience plays a critical role in shaping perceived value and satisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 2018). In Balikpapan, the proliferation

of coffee shops indicates intensifying competition within the industry.

Competition in the coffee shop sector extends beyond product offerings to include service quality, atmosphere, pricing, and brand image (Afyani et al., 2023; Tjiptono, 2019). In service industries, service quality is a key determinant of customer retention (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2016). The servqual model identifies five primary dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Zeithaml et al., 2018). Since coffee products are relatively easy to imitate, service quality represents a more sustainable competitive advantage. In highly competitive environments, customer loyalty becomes a crucial asset for business sustainability. Loyal customers are more likely to repurchase and engage in positive word of mouth communication (Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, coffee shop customers tend to switch brands in pursuit of novel experiences (Solomon, 2018). Therefore, identifying factors that foster loyalty is essential. Theoretically, high service quality enhances customer satisfaction, which subsequently leads to loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 2018). Empirical studies confirm that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty (Regata, 2019; Taqdirul Alim et al., 2025; Rahmadi & Elsandra, 2025).

Nevertheless, findings in the coffee shop sector remain inconsistent. Dhisasmito and Kumar (2020) reported that service quality influences satisfaction and loyalty, yet store atmosphere did not significantly affect loyalty. Conversely, Rahayu (2018) found that customer satisfaction did not significantly influence loyalty despite high service quality. These inconsistencies suggest that the mediating role of customer satisfaction is context-dependent. Furthermore, prior studies largely focus on restaurants, digital services, and e-commerce sectors (Regata, 2019; Taqdirul Alim et al., 2025), while empirical investigations on local coffee shops in developing cities such as Balikpapan remain limited. Consumer characteristics in developing cities may differ in terms of purchasing power, preferences, and consumption behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Thus, a research gap exists in the form of inconsistent findings and limited contextual evidence within local coffee shop settings. As a local brand competing with national chains and independent roasters, The Gade Coffee Balikpapan faces challenges in maintaining customer loyalty. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effect of service quality on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction serving as a mediating variable at The Gade Coffee Balikpapan.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Marketing Management

Marketing management refers to the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy customers and organizational goals (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Contemporary marketing emphasizes value creation and long-term customer relationships (Lamb et al., 2020; Tjiptono, 2019). Marketing strategy involves segmentation, targeting, and positioning (Armstrong & Kotler, 2019). In service industries, the servqual model identifies five dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Within the coffee shop industry, service quality becomes a primary differentiating factor because products are easily replicated (Dhisasmito & Kumar, 2020). Empirical evidence demonstrates that service quality positively influences customer satisfaction and loyalty (Subaebasni et al., 2019; Dewi et al., 2021; Taufik et al., 2022).

Hypothesis Development

Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

Service quality refers to a firm's ability to deliver services that meet or exceed customer expectations, thereby encouraging repeat patronage (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Fast, friendly, and consistent service has been shown to enhance customer loyalty (Wahyudi & Putri, 2021). Thus, higher service quality is expected to increase customer loyalty at The Gade Coffee Balikpapan.

H1: Service Quality positively affects Customer Loyalty.

Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Numerous studies indicate that service quality positively affects customer satisfaction. Dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy significantly enhance satisfaction levels (Pratiwi et al., 2016). Other findings suggest that while service quality significantly contributes to satisfaction, additional factors such as price and brand image may also play roles (Purba et al., 2016). In the culinary sector, responsive and friendly service significantly improves customer satisfaction (Zahara et al., 2021). Assurance and reliability have been identified as dominant dimensions influencing satisfaction (Afandi & Agustina, 2016). Therefore, improved service quality leads to higher customer satisfaction.

H2: Service Quality positively and significantly affects Customer Satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Customer satisfaction has been widely recognized as a significant predictor of customer loyalty across industries. In e-commerce services, satisfaction enhances loyalty despite intense competition (Mointi & Sauw, 2023). Similarly, increased satisfaction significantly improves loyalty (Oktavia et al., 2022). In the banking sector, satisfaction directly influences loyalty and strengthens the relationship between customer relationship management and loyalty (Saputra, 2022). Consistent satisfaction experiences also foster brand loyalty (Sapitri et al., 2020). Accordingly, higher customer satisfaction leads to stronger customer loyalty.

H3: Customer Satisfaction positively affects Customer Loyalty.

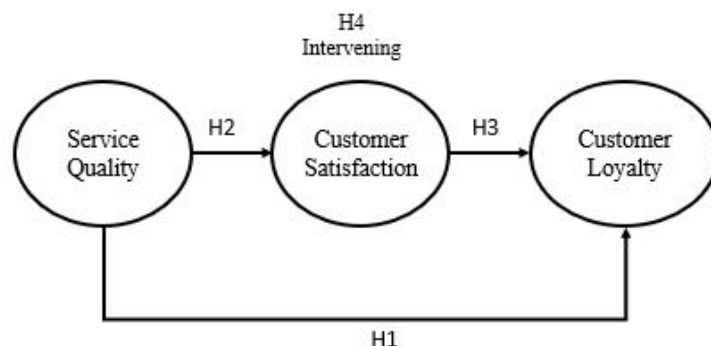
Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, and Customer Loyalty

Several studies demonstrate that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and loyalty. Service quality affects loyalty both directly and indirectly through satisfaction (Rusdiyanto & Suranti, 2021). Similar findings confirm satisfaction as an intervening variable strengthening this relationship (Ramadhan & Games, 2023). Other research shows partial mediation effects (Larasati & Suryoko, 2020; Yunida, 2016). Therefore, high service quality enhances satisfaction, which subsequently strengthens customer loyalty.

H4: Customer Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical foundations and prior empirical findings, the conceptual framework of this study proposes that Service Quality influences Customer Loyalty both directly and indirectly through Customer Satisfaction as a mediating variable.



RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative explanatory design to examine the effect of service quality on customer loyalty with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. The research was conducted at The Gade Coffee Balikpapan from 10 January to 17 February 2026. Service quality was measured using the servqual dimensions tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy developed. Customer satisfaction was conceptualized as the comparison between expectations and perceived performance (Philip Kotler & Keller, 2016; Tjiptono, 2019). Customer loyalty was measured through repeat purchase, retention, and positive word of mouth (Griffin, 2005; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The population consisted of all customers who had purchased at The Gade Coffee Balikpapan. A purposive sampling technique was applied, with criteria including customers aged at least 17 years and having made at least two purchases. The sample size of 170 respondents followed the recommendation of Hair et al. (2014), suggesting 5–10 times the number of indicators. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using SMART PLS, which is suitable for testing complex relationships and mediation effects (Hair et al., 2014). The analysis included validity and reliability testing, structural model evaluation, and bootstrapping to examine the mediating role of customer satisfaction.

Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables

Construct	Statement	Indicator	References
Service Quality (X)	5 Items	Customer perception of the level of service excellence provided by the company, Timeliness of service Speed of response to complaints Employee competence and courtesy Individual attention to customers	Tjiptono, 2019;
Customer Satisfaction (Z)	5 Items	Conformity to expectations Intention to revisit Willingness to recommend Overall satisfaction level Post-purchase evaluation	Kotler & Keller, 2016; Lupiyoadi, 2018; Tjiptono, 2019

Customer Loyalty (Y)	5 Items	Repeat purchase Retention Referral Resistance to competitor offers Positive word of mouth	Kotler & Keller, 2016; Tjiptono, 2019
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Source: Processed data, 2026

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are based on frequency statistics to show the demographic structure. Table 1 describes the characteristics of the sample. This study involved 170 samples and it was considered sufficient for the PLS-SEM analysis (Jr., Sarstedt, Hopkins, & G. Kuppelwieser, 2014; Kock & Hadaya, 2016). Respondents visit to The Gade Coffee Balikpapan Male (48.8%) and female customers (51.2%).

Table 2. Demographic information of Respondents

Description	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	83	48.8%
	Female	87	51.2%
Education	Senior High School	93	54.7%
	Bachelor's Degree	36	21.2%
	Master's Degree	17	10.0%
	Others	24	14.1%
Age	< 20 years	26	15.3%
	20–25 years	51	30.0%
	26–30 years	60	35.3%
	> 30 years	33	19.4%
Total		170	100%

Source: Processed data, 2026

The results of the measurement model are presented in Table 3 consisting of report item reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity. Estimates of the factor loading, composite reliability, and average variance extracted. The Outer Loading was carried out twice. In the first test, the indicator item was less than 0.7. The researcher removed the item indicators and then retested them with fulfilling outer loadings. This shows good reliability and validity of the model (Hair et al., 2017). Overall, the measurement model meets the recommended criteria for reliability and convergent validity. All constructs have CR values above 0.70 and AVE values above 0.50. One indicator (CSN.4) was removed due to an extremely low loading value. After its removal, all constructs demonstrate satisfactory psychometric properties and are suitable for structural model analysis.

Table 3. Outer Loadings, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted

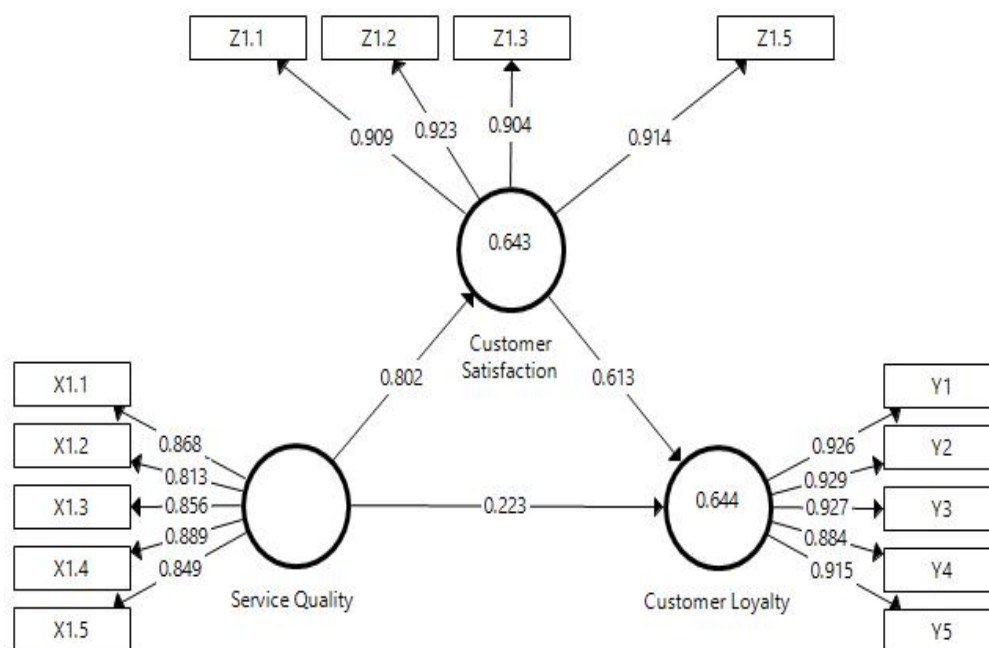
Construct	Item	Outer Loadings 1	Outer Loadings 2	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Service Quality	SQ.1	0,867	0,868	0.932	0.732

(X)	SQ.2	0,813	0,813		
	SQ.3	0,856	0,856		
	SQ.4	0,889	0,889		
	SQ.5	0,849	0,849		
Customer Satisfaction (Z)	CSN.1	0,910	0,909	0.952	0.833
	CSN.2	0,923	0,923		
	CSN.3	0,904	0,904		
	CSN.4	-0,042*			
	CSN.5	0,914	0,914		
Customer Loyalty (Y)	CL.1	0,926	0,926	0.963	0.840
	CL.2	0,929	0,929		
	CL.3	0,927	0,927		
	CL.4	0,884	0,884		
	CL.5	0,915	0,915		

Source: Processed data, 2026

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with the correlations between constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). A construct is considered to have adequate discriminant validity if the square root of its AVE is greater than its correlations with other constructs.

Based on the results, the square root of AVE for Customer Loyalty is 0.916, which is higher than its correlation with Service Quality (0.792) and Customer Satisfaction (0.714). This indicates that Customer Loyalty shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs. Similarly, the square root of AVE for Service Quality is 0.913, which exceeds its correlation with Customer Loyalty (0.792) and Customer Satisfaction (0.802). This confirms that the Service Quality construct is empirically distinct from the other variables in the model. For Customer Satisfaction, the square root of AVE is 0.855, which is higher than its correlations with Customer Loyalty (0.714) and Service Quality (0.802). This further supports adequate discriminant validity. Overall, all constructs meet the Fornell–Larcker criterion, indicating that each latent variable is distinct and captures phenomena not represented by other constructs in the model. Therefore, the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory discriminant validity and is suitable for structural model evaluation.



Full structural model of control. Figure 2.

Source: Processed data, 2026

Table 5. The results of hypothesis testing

Variable relationships	Sampel Asli (O)	Rata-rata Sampel (M)	Standar Deviasi (STDEV)	T Statistik (O/STDEV)	P Values
Customer Satisfaction (Z) → Customer Loyalty (Y)	0,613	0,606	0,073	8,426	0,000
Service Quality (X) → Customer Loyalty (Y)	0,223	0,230	0,077	2,891	0,004
Service Quality (X) → Customer Satisfaction (Z)	0,802	0,801	0,025	31,442	0,000
Service Quality (X) → Customer Satisfaction (Z) → Customer Loyalty (Y)	0,491	0,485	0,061	8,067	0,000

Source: Processed data, 2026

Me = Mediation effect; SQ= Service Quality; CSN = Customer Satisfaction; CL= Customer Loyalty

Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated using bootstrapping procedures to assess path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. A structural relationship is considered statistically significant when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05 (Hair et al., 2022).

Customer Satisfaction has a significant positive effect on Customer Loyalty ($\beta = 0.613$, $t = 8.426$, $p = 0.000$). This finding indicates that higher levels of satisfaction significantly increase customer loyalty. This result is consistent with contemporary relationship marketing theory, which emphasizes satisfaction as a key determinant of long-term relational outcomes (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Kotler et al., 2022). Recent empirical studies also confirm that customer satisfaction significantly enhances loyalty intentions and positive word-of-mouth behavior across service sectors (Sulistiowati et al., 2025; Saputra et al., 2024). Therefore, this finding supports H3 and reinforces the argument that satisfaction is a primary driver of loyalty in competitive service environments. Service Quality has a positive and significant direct effect on Customer Loyalty ($\beta = 0.223$, $t = 2.891$, $p = 0.004$). Although the magnitude of the coefficient is moderate, the relationship remains statistically significant. Conceptually, high service quality enhances customer perceived value and strengthens relational commitment (Zeithaml et al., 2020). In service-dominant logic, superior service performance creates value co-creation, which fosters stronger customer attachment and loyalty (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). Recent studies in the café and hospitality industries confirm that service quality directly influences customer loyalty (Saputra et al., 2024; Dini et al., 2025). Thus, H1 is supported. Service Quality demonstrates a very strong and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.802$, $t = 31.442$, $p = 0.000$). The high coefficient indicates that service quality is a dominant predictor of satisfaction.

Recent refinements of service quality theory highlight that dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, and assurance significantly shape customers' post-consumption evaluations (Zeithaml et al., 2020). When perceived service performance meets or exceeds expectations, customers experience higher satisfaction (Kotler et al., 2022). Empirical evidence from recent coffee shop and service-sector studies confirms that service quality significantly influences satisfaction (Sulistiowati et al., 2025; Zahara et al., 2021). Therefore, H2 is strongly supported. The indirect effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty through Customer Satisfaction is significant ($\beta = 0.491$, $t = 8.067$, $p = 0.000$). This finding indicates that Customer Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Service Recent service research suggests that satisfaction functions as a psychological mechanism that transforms service performance into loyalty outcomes (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Customers do not become loyal solely due to high service quality; rather, loyalty emerges when superior service generates positive emotional and cognitive evaluations (Kotler et al., 2022). Empirical studies conducted in café and service contexts confirm the mediating role of satisfaction between service quality and loyalty (Sulistiowati et al., 2025; Rusdiyanto & Suranti, 2021). Since both the direct effect ($\beta = 0.223$) and indirect effect ($\beta = 0.491$) are statistically significant, Customer Satisfaction functions as a partial mediator. This indicates that Service Quality influences Customer Loyalty both directly and indirectly through Customer Satisfaction. The findings demonstrate that Service Quality is a strategic determinant of Customer Loyalty, particularly when it effectively enhances Customer Satisfaction. Satisfaction serves as a central psychological mechanism translating service performance into sustained loyalty behavior. These results are theoretically grounded in contemporary service quality theory (Zeithaml et al., 2020), relationship marketing theory (Kotler et al., 2022), and customer experience frameworks (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty with Customer Satisfaction as a mediating variable at The Gade Coffee Balikpapan. The findings demonstrate that Service Quality has a positive and significant direct effect on Customer Loyalty. In addition, Service Quality strongly influences Customer Satisfaction, which in turn significantly enhances

Customer Loyalty. The results further confirm that Customer Satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty. This indicates that high service quality not only directly strengthens customer loyalty but also indirectly enhances loyalty by first increasing customer satisfaction. Among the tested relationships, the strongest effect was observed between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction, highlighting service performance as a critical determinant of customer evaluation. Overall, the study confirms that Service Quality is a strategic factor in fostering long-term customer loyalty in the coffee shop industry. Customer Satisfaction acts as a psychological mechanism that translates service performance into sustainable loyalty behavior. These findings reinforce the importance of maintaining consistent, reliable, and customer-oriented service in highly competitive service environments.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted only at one coffee shop in Balikpapan, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or service industries. Second, the study used a cross-sectional design, meaning that data were collected at a single point in time. Therefore, causal relationships should be interpreted cautiously. Third, this study focused solely on Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction as predictors of Customer Loyalty. Other potential factors such as price perception, brand image, store atmosphere, and customer experience were not included in the model.

Lastly, the use of self-reported questionnaires may introduce response bias. Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed. From a managerial perspective, coffee shop management should prioritize improving service quality dimensions, particularly responsiveness, reliability, and assurance, as these significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Employee training programs should be strengthened to ensure consistent and customer-oriented service delivery. From an academic perspective, future research is encouraged to expand the model by incorporating additional variables such as brand image, perceived value, customer experience, or store atmosphere to provide a more comprehensive understanding of loyalty formation. Future studies may also apply a longitudinal design to better capture changes in customer perceptions over time. Expanding the research to different cities or comparing local and national coffee brands would further enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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