
THE EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY ON LOYALTY THROUGH CONSUMER TRUST AND SATISFACTION IN CLASSIC INTERIOR CREATIVE BUSINESSES IN MAKASSAR CITY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of service quality on consumer loyalty through trust and satisfaction in Classic Interior's creative business in Makassar City. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method of 122 respondents who are consumers of Classic Interior. The data analysis technique used is path analysis to test the direct and indirect influences between variables. The results of the study show that service quality has a positive and significant effect on consumer trust and satisfaction. Consumer trust and satisfaction have also been shown to have a significant effect on consumer loyalty. In addition, service quality has an indirect influence on loyalty through trust and satisfaction, where consumer satisfaction is the most powerful mediator in the relationship. This research emphasizes the importance of service quality improvement strategies that focus on creating consumer trust and satisfaction as a foundation in building long-term customer loyalty.

Keywords: Service quality, trust, satisfaction, consumer loyalty, Classic Interior.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern business world, the success of a business is not only determined by the quality of the products offered, but also by the quality of services provided to consumers. Service quality is one of the key factors that influence consumers' decisions in choosing and maintaining a relationship with a brand or company. Excellent service is able to create a positive experience for customers, which in turn can build trust, satisfaction, and long-term loyalty (Ansar et al., 2024). Consumer loyalty is a vital element in maintaining business continuity because loyal customers not only provide benefits in the form of repurchases, but also participate in promoting the business through positive word-of-mouth (Abbas et al., 2024; Indriasari et al., 2024).

Human resource management also plays an important role in supporting the service process to customers. By forming a competent, professional, and responsive work team, the quality of service provided will be able to meet consumer expectations. This is in line with the opinion of Armstrong & Taylor (2020) who stated that employee empowerment and the creation of a customer-oriented work culture can encourage improved service quality and customer satisfaction. Therefore, the synergy between the company's marketing strategy and internal management is key in creating added value for customers and maintaining their loyalty.

Service quality is often measured based on five main dimensions, namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible evidence as developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1988). These dimensions are the basis for evaluating whether the services provided have met or even exceeded customer expectations. When the service is considered good, consumers will feel satisfied and have a tendency to return to using products or services from the company. Instead, poor service can create dissatisfaction and encourage consumers to switch to competitors (Hardiyono et al., 2023).

Trust is another important factor in building long-term relationships with consumers. According to Morgan & Hunt (1994), trust is a strong belief that the other party will act in a reliable, honest, and responsible manner. In the context of services, consumers will feel more comfortable and secure when they believe that the company is able and willing to meet their needs consistently. This trust not only acts as a binder in business relationships, but also as a mediator that strengthens the impact of service quality on customer loyalty (Qalby et al., 2025).

Customer satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure or disappointment that arises from the comparison between consumer expectations and the actual performance of a product or service (Amstrong & Kotler, 2007). If the service received meets or exceeds expectations, then consumers will feel satisfied. This satisfaction will motivate them to buy again and even recommend the service to others. Thus, consumer satisfaction has a close relationship with consumer loyalty, as has been proven in many previous studies (Oliver, 1999; Kimura, 2015).

However, various studies show that the relationship between service quality, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty is not always consistent. Several studies have found that service quality has a strong direct influence on loyalty (Fatmawaty et al., 2024), while other studies have shown that the effect is not significant without being mediated by trust and satisfaction (Isir et al., 2023). This shows that there is a research gap that still needs to be explained through

further research, especially in the context of creative businesses that have different service characteristics compared to the service industry in general.

One example of a relevant case is the Classic Interior business in Makassar City. Classic Interior is a creative business engaged in interior design with a modern classic style. This business has advantages in terms of aesthetics and uniqueness of design that is able to attract the attention of the market, but on the other hand faces challenges in maintaining consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Based on initial observations, several consumer complaints were found related to the quality of service, such as lack of effective communication, delays in project completion, and lack of response to consumer criticism and suggestions. This shows that even though the products offered are of high quality, consumer dissatisfaction with the service can lower their loyalty.

This situation is exacerbated by the high turnover of staff within the company, which leads to a decrease in service consistency. Employee turnover has an impact on the loss of the personal relationship between customers and staff that has been previously built, causing discomfort and lowering customer trust levels. In this context, service and trust management is a strategic issue that needs serious attention. When consumers do not get responsive and personalized services, they are likely to look for other alternatives that are considered to better understand their needs (Indriasari et al., 2023).

Weaknesses in communication between service providers and customers are also a key factor that leads to dissatisfaction. According to Zeithaml et al. (2013), clear and responsive communication is part of good service quality. Consumers feel valued when they are given the opportunity to express their needs and complaints, as well as get a quick and solution-oriented response from the company. Therefore, building effective two-way communication is the first step in building trust and improving customer satisfaction (Latiep et al., 2024).

From the perspective of relationship marketing strategies, building loyalty is not enough just to provide quality products or services, but also to be able to build emotional relationships with customers. Loyalty is not only a rational matter, but also an emotional one. Customers who feel emotionally connected to a brand will be more resistant to temptation from competitors and tend to last longer. This is in line with Reichheld's (2003) approach in customer relationship theory which states that loyalty is the result of a continuous, mutually beneficial, and trust-based interaction.

In today's digital era, consumer expectations for services are getting higher. Consumers not only want a good product, but also fast, transparent, and technology-based service. When a company fails to meet these expectations, the risk of losing customers is even greater. Therefore, the integration between digital-based service systems and staff interpersonal skills is a new challenge for companies in creating a positive customer experience.

With these aspects in mind, it is important for companies like Classic Interior to re-evaluate their service strategy thoroughly. Efforts to improve service quality are not only limited to technical aspects, but also to relational aspects such as building trust and creating customer satisfaction. This can be done through staff training, development of service

operational standards, strengthening internal communication, and an effective feedback system from customers.

Through this background, research on the influence of service quality on consumer loyalty through trust and satisfaction becomes very relevant and significant. This research will not only make a theoretical contribution in the development of the science of service management and marketing, but also a practical contribution in helping creative ventures such as Classic Interior to increase their competitiveness. By empirically proving how service quality plays a role in shaping trust, satisfaction, and loyalty, it is hoped that companies can design more effective strategies to retain customers in the long term.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey design to test the influence of service quality on consumer loyalty through the mediation variables of trust and satisfaction in Classic Interior's creative business in Makassar City. The goal of this approach is to objectively and quantify the relationships between variables through standardized instruments. The population in this study is all Classic Interior consumers who have used the service in the past year. The sampling technique used the purposive sampling method with a total of 122 respondents who met the inclusion criteria.

Data collection was carried out through the distribution of a structured questionnaire that measured four main variables, namely service quality, consumer trust, consumer satisfaction, and consumer loyalty. Each variable is measured using a five-point Likert scale. The validity and reliability of the instrument are tested first before the main analysis is performed (Sahabuddin & Herison, 2023).

To analyze the direct and indirect relationships between variables, a path analysis technique is used that allows researchers to evaluate a causality model between variables. The Sobel test is also used to measure the mediating influence of consumer trust and satisfaction. The data analysis was carried out with the help of the latest version of SPSS software. The results of the analysis were interpreted statistically by paying attention to the significance value at the 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted with the aim of finding out how much the influence of service quality on consumer loyalty in the Classic Interior business in Makassar City, both directly and through mediation variables, namely consumer trust and satisfaction. Through the collection of data from 122 respondents who are Classic Interior customers, path analysis was carried out to test the causal relationship between variables in the research model. These findings not only provide an empirical understanding of the relationship between these variables, but also confirm and develop pre-existing theories.

Quality of Service to Consumer Trust

The results of the study show that service quality has a significant and positive influence on consumer trust. Service dimensions such as punctuality, staff professionalism, clear communication, and attention to customer needs are key elements that shape a positive perception of the business. Classic Interior

consumers who get good quality services show a higher level of trust in service providers. This is in line with the opinion of Morgan & Hunt (1994) which affirms that trust arises when consumers feel safe and confident that service providers will fulfill their promises and commitments.

In addition, the good quality of service reflects the company's responsibility and integrity in serving customers. In this context, factors such as compliance with project completion times, information openness, and humanistic communication contribute greatly to forming consumer trust. This trust is important because it is the foundation of the long-term relationship between the customer and the company.

Quality of Service to Consumer Satisfaction

The second finding shows that service quality also has a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction. Consumers are satisfied when the services provided not only meet expectations, but also provide added value in the form of comfort, convenience, and a sense of appreciation. The dimensions of empathy and responsiveness are the dominant aspects that affect the level of customer satisfaction. This supports the theory of disconfirmation of expectations from Oliver (1997), which states that satisfaction occurs when the reality of service exceeds the expectations of consumers.

Classic Interior consumers who are served in a friendly manner, quick to respond to questions or complaints, and get quality work results will feel satisfied and tend to perceive the brand positively. This satisfaction is the result of continuous interaction that is consistent in providing a pleasant service experience.

Consumer Trust in Consumer Loyalty

Trust has been proven to have a significant effect on consumer loyalty. This shows that consumers who believe in the integrity, competence, and goodwill of service providers, will tend to be loyal, make repeat purchases, and recommend these services to others. Loyalty born from trust is more stable and resistant to price changes and competitor promotions.

Classic Interior consumers show a tendency to continue using the company's services even if there are other providers at competitive prices, as long as they believe that quality, safety, and communication are maintained. This shows that trust has an emotional impact that strengthens business relationships.

Consumer Satisfaction with Consumer Loyalty

The results of the study also prove that consumer satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on consumer loyalty. Satisfied consumers not only show repurchase behavior, but are also more open to becoming brand advocates by disseminating their positive experiences. This is in accordance with the findings of Kotler & Keller (2016) who stated that satisfaction is an important prerequisite for forming loyalty.

In the context of Classic Interior, consumers who are satisfied with the results of the interior design and the pleasant service process, express their willingness to use the service again in the future and recommend it to friends or family. That is, satisfaction creates a chain effect in expanding the customer base through positive word-of-mouth.

Quality of Service to Consumer Loyalty (Directly)

Directly, the quality of service also has a positive influence on consumer loyalty, although this influence is not as strong as the indirect influence through trust and satisfaction. These findings suggest that loyalty is not solely shaped by perceptions of services, but also depends on how much the service is able to build trust and emotional satisfaction of customers.

In practice, even if customers get good service, they are not necessarily loyal if they do not have an emotional attachment and belief in the company. Therefore, loyalty promotion strategies should focus not only on improving service procedures, but also on building sustainable relationships.

Indirect Influence

Sobel's path analysis and tests prove that consumer trust and satisfaction play a significant role in the relationship between service quality and loyalty. This means that service quality can increase loyalty more effectively if the company is able to foster trust and create satisfaction first. This result is in line with the partial mediation model, in which direct influence remains but indirect influence through the mediator is more dominant.

Managerially, this shows that Classic Interior needs to pay attention to the relational aspect in providing services. Building a positive, transparent, and responsive customer experience can strengthen trust and satisfaction, leading to stronger, more sustainable loyalty.

Implikasi Manajerial

Berdasarkan hasil penelitian ini, Classic Interior perlu mengembangkan strategi pelayanan yang tidak hanya fokus pada aspek teknis, tetapi juga pada hubungan emosional dengan konsumen. Penguatan komunikasi interpersonal, pelatihan staf untuk pelayanan prima, serta sistem feedback yang melibatkan konsumen secara aktif akan membantu meningkatkan kepercayaan dan kepuasan.

Selain itu, mempertahankan kualitas kerja desain interior yang menjadi kekuatan utama perusahaan harus diiringi dengan peningkatan standar layanan. Pemanfaatan teknologi informasi untuk mempercepat proses komunikasi dan pelayanan juga menjadi langkah penting dalam memenuhi ekspektasi pelanggan masa kini.

Theoretical Discussion

The results of this study strengthen the SERVQUAL service quality theory, the customer satisfaction theory from Oliver (1997), and the trust theory from Morgan & Hunt (1994). In addition, the findings

also support a relationship marketing framework that emphasizes the importance of building long-term and mutually beneficial relationships with customers.

The compatibility between empirical and theoretical results shows that the model used in this study is valid and relevant in the context of creative endeavors. However, these results also open up opportunities for follow-up research that considers other variables such as price, value perception, or emotional engagement.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of research conducted on Classic Interior's creative business in Makassar City, it can be concluded that service quality has a significant influence on consumer loyalty, both directly and indirectly through consumer trust and satisfaction. This study found that service quality plays an important role in forming consumer trust, where responsive, honest, and professional service is able to foster customer confidence in the integrity of the company. In addition, service quality also has an impact on consumer satisfaction; Customers who feel their needs are met and treated well tend to have high satisfaction. The most prominent finding from the study is that consumer satisfaction has the strongest influence on loyalty, suggesting that positive experiences and meeting customer expectations are key to sustainably retaining consumers. Meanwhile, trust has also proven to be an important mediator that strengthens the relationship between service quality and loyalty. Thus, an effective loyalty enhancement strategy is not enough just to provide quality services, but must also be accompanied by building trust and creating consistent satisfaction in every service interaction.

However, this study has some limitations that need to be considered. First, the scope of research is only limited to one business unit, namely Classic Interior, so the generalization of results to other business contexts, especially in the creative and non-creative sectors, still needs to be done carefully. Second, the approach used is cross-sectional, so it cannot capture the dynamics of consumer loyalty behavior in the long term. Third, this research model does not include other external variables that may affect loyalty, such as price, promotion, market trends, and technical product quality. Fourth, the data used comes from consumer perception through questionnaires, so there is still a potential for subjectivity bias in filling. Therefore, further research is recommended to use the longitudinal method and expand the objects and variables studied to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the formation of consumer loyalty in the business world.

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