

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY, BRAND IMAGE, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY OF UC MAKASSAR FROM STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Economic development in recent years has been driven among others by the service industry. The fierce competitive situation has driven competing businesses to continually develop themselves to provide superior quality services and an excellent brand image to gain customer satisfaction and loyalty. This study aims to examine the relationships between service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty of UC Makassar. We collect research data from 68 students using a convenient sampling technique. We adopted the conceptual model from prior studies. PLS-SEM was conducted to test the relationships in the conceptual models. The outcomes indicate that customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer loyalty. The findings also found that service quality positively affects brand image and customer satisfaction but not loyalty. Likewise, brand image has a positive effect on customer satisfaction but not on loyalty. The implications of this research, limitations, and directions for further research can be found below.

Keywords: service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, educational service, UC Makassar, students

INTRODUCTION

Economic development in recent years has been driven among others by the service industry. The fierce competitive situation has driven competing businesses to continually develop themselves for providing superior quality services and an excellent brand image to gain customer satisfaction and loyalty. The service industry is becoming even more significant in recent years, so practitioners and scholars should understand how service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty are perceived by clients (Srivastava & Sharma, 2013). According to Dick and Basu (1994), the central drive of a company's marketing activities was by having a perspective in terms of

development, maintenance, and enhancement of client loyalty toward its products or services.

Some studies have demonstrated the significant positive effect of service quality on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Dimyati & Subagio, 2016; Shpetim, 2012; Dam & Dam, 2021). Related studies have revealed that service quality positively affected the catering services industries (Hsieh et al., 2018; Zhang, 2015) and the hotel industry (Malik et al., 2011; Handayani et al. 2021). Besides, prior studies also indicated the positive impact of brand image on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in medical insurance (Wu et al., 2011) and the banking industry (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Farida & Ardyan, 2018). Furthermore, scholars in the re-

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tail field also showed that service quality and perceived value were crucial to customer satisfaction. Likewise, service quality, trust, perceived value, and customer satisfaction affected behavioral intention or store loyalty (Shpetim, 2012; Veloso et al., 2017).

As competition among educational institutions intensifies worldwide, attracting and retaining new students has become an urgent agenda item for many higher education institutions (Angell, Heffernan, & Megicks, 2008). Therefore, providing top-quality educational services has become a high priority for many of these institutions. To provide top-quality services to students, institutions must fully understand the needs of students and identify how cognitive aspects lead to student satisfaction and behavioral intention. Existing students' positive perceptions of service quality may lead to positive images of institutions, and to overall satisfaction and positive behavioral intentions (Hwang & Choi, 2019). This study aims to examine the relationships between service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty at UC Makassar. The insights from these findings can help researchers and higher education policymakers improve the quality of educational services and strengthen student satisfaction and the image of UC Makassar.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Service Quality

Service quality is regarded as an essential and important dimension in the field of higher education. However, education service quality is a vague and controversial concept (Becket & Brookes, 2006). The main controversy stems from various conceptualizations and little agreement on a universally accepted measure of education service quality. Sharif and Kassim

(2012) analyzed this controversy by stating that education service quality is driven by consumers (students), which makes it difficult for service providers (institutions) to understand and apply to practice.

Scholars in service marketing literature have increasingly focused on service quality. Service quality was initially defined as meeting clients' demands when providing a service (Chakrabarty, Whitten, & Green, 2007). Another perspective described service quality as the overall evaluation made by clients about a service provider, comparing their expectations to the perceived quality received (Parasuraman et al., 1988). To measure service quality, Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced five dimensions known as SERVQUAL: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions have been successfully applied in various fields like banking, credit cards, long-distance telephone, repair, and maintenance, and the SERVQUAL scale has demonstrated reliability and validity. However, some scholars have raised questions about the conceptual framework and measurement method of the SERVQUAL model. For instance, Cronin and Taylor (1992) found that using the service quality performance (SERVPERF), which is the perceived service in SERVQUAL, resulted in better outcomes in terms of reliability, validity, and predictive power compared to using SERVQUAL. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) also supported the idea that SERVPERF is more reliable than the SERVQUAL scale for measuring service quality and provides better diagnostic information. Therefore, this paper adopts the SERVPERF scale to measure the service quality of UC Makassar.

Some scholars stated a link between service quality and brand image. Previous studies declared that service quality was an antecedent of brand image and positively affected the brand

image (Hsieh et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2011). Some research confirmed the link between service quality and customer satisfaction (Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000). Prior investigations said that service quality was a predictor of customer satisfaction and positively impacted customer satisfaction (Putro & Rachmat, 2019; Santouridis & Trivellas, 2010).

A link between service quality and customer loyalty was also revealed. Some authors demonstrated that service quality was a precursor of customer loyalty and positively affected customer loyalty (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Setiawan & Sayuti, 2017). Therefore, we formulate the following hypotheses:

- H1: Service quality has a direct and significant effect on brand image.
- H2: Service quality has a significantly positive effect on customer satisfaction.
- H3: Service quality has a significantly positive effect on customer loyalty.

Brand Image

Brand image has been a fascinating topic of discussion in marketing literature. Additionally, brand image has been a key factor in differentiating organizations from one another and is a potent marketing tool (Park & Park, 2019). Research on brand image has also been acknowledged as being at the core of marketing and advertising studies. In addition to serving as a general guideline for tactical marketing mix issues, it has been crucial in creating long-term brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). According to Keller (1993), the brand image may be summed up as consumer impressions of the brand as shown by the associations, they have with it.

Moreover, a sharp brand image has supported clients to realize the brand's requirements and to differentiate the brand from its rivals.

Hence, it has improved the likelihood that clients will buy the brand (Hsieh et al., 2004). A company or its products/services that regularly retain a positive image by the public would indeed receive a more favorable position in the market, sustainable competitive advantage, and increase market share and performance (Park et al., 1986; Sondoh Jr. et al., 2007).

Linking between brand image and customer satisfaction was admitted in some previous research. Prior studies also showed that brand image was a predictor of customer satisfaction and positively impacted customer satisfaction (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Wu et al., 2011). Linking brand image and customer loyalty was also revealed in some prior studies. Besides, some previous empirical outcomes have explained that a favorable image (i.e., brand, shop/retail) will direct to loyalty (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Hsieh et al., 2018; Tu et al., 2012). According to research by Erwin et al. (2021), brand image formed from exposure through social media might enhance marketing performance desired by company owners, particularly in improving consumer loyalty. Customers can get as much information as possible about the products being offered thanks to the brand image that has been created through social media (Erwin et al., 2023). Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

- H4: Brand image has a significantly positive effect on customer satisfaction.
- H5: Brand image has a significantly positive effect on customer loyalty.

Linking between Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

One of the key traits that managers need to concentrate on is customer satisfaction. The company's competitive edge consisted of ex-

ceeding clients' demands and wishes better than its rivals (Minta, 2018) and providing superior customer service. According to subjective assessments that the selected alternative meets or surpasses expectations, customers are satisfied (Bloemer & de Ruyter, 1998). According to Fornell et al. (1996), determining whether a product or service meets or exceeds a customer's expectations is a measure of customer satisfaction.. Customer satisfaction served as a link between the many steps of a customer's purchasing behavior, making it a crucial outcome of marketing activity (Jamal & Naser, 2002). According to Kotler and Keller (2016), customer satisfaction is defined as the customers' feelings of enjoyment or frustration because of a comparison between a product or service's performance and the client's expectations. In today's very competitive corporate environment, customer happiness could be seen as the key to success (Jamal & Naser, 2002). Oliver (1980) added that customer satisfaction was the result of a subjective assessment of the client's expectations in relation to the perceived effectiveness of the goods or services (Oliver, 1980). The client was satisfied if the performance met or exceeded expectations. The client was then unsatisfied if the outcome fell short of expectations.

Additionally, customer satisfaction has had a substantial impact on behavior, repeat business, and word-of-mouth marketing for the organization (Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000). However, some researchers asserted that customer satisfaction should be viewed as an evaluation based on cumulative satisfaction (Anderson et al., 1994; Brunner, Stöcklin, & Opwis, 2008). That is based on clients' experiences with the university's products and services in the past and present rather than the result of an

evaluation made after the fact in a specific transaction (Filipe et al., 2017).

With various meanings, the idea of customer loyalty has been discussed extensively in the literature. Customer loyalty was defined by Jacoby and Kyner (1973) as the persistent (i.e., non-random), behavioral response (i.e., buying), displayed over time, by some decision-making unit, regarding one or more alternative brands out of a collection of such brands, and was a function of psychological (i.e., decision-making, evaluation) processes. According to Dick & Basu (1994), the degree of correlation between a client's general attitude and repeat business is known as customer loyalty. Customer loyalty was also defined as a strong on-going commitment to regularly repurchase or use a preferred product or service in the future, resulting in recurrent purchases of the same goods or brands (Oliver, 1997). Customers' positive views and repurchase behavior were combined to explain customer loyalty (Kim et al., 2004). According to Yap et al. (2012), the main element contributing to a commercial firm's success is customer loyalty. According to Kim et al. (2004), maintaining client loyalty is crucial for a company's survival and potential future growth.

Some studies have confirmed the connection between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction was an antecedent of customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction was an important variable that pointed to customer loyalty (Minta, 2018). Prior studies declared that customer satisfaction positively influenced customer loyalty (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Santouridis & Trivellas, 2010; Yap et al., 2012). Thus, we suggested the following hypothesis:

H6: Customer satisfaction has a significantly positive effect on customer loyalty.

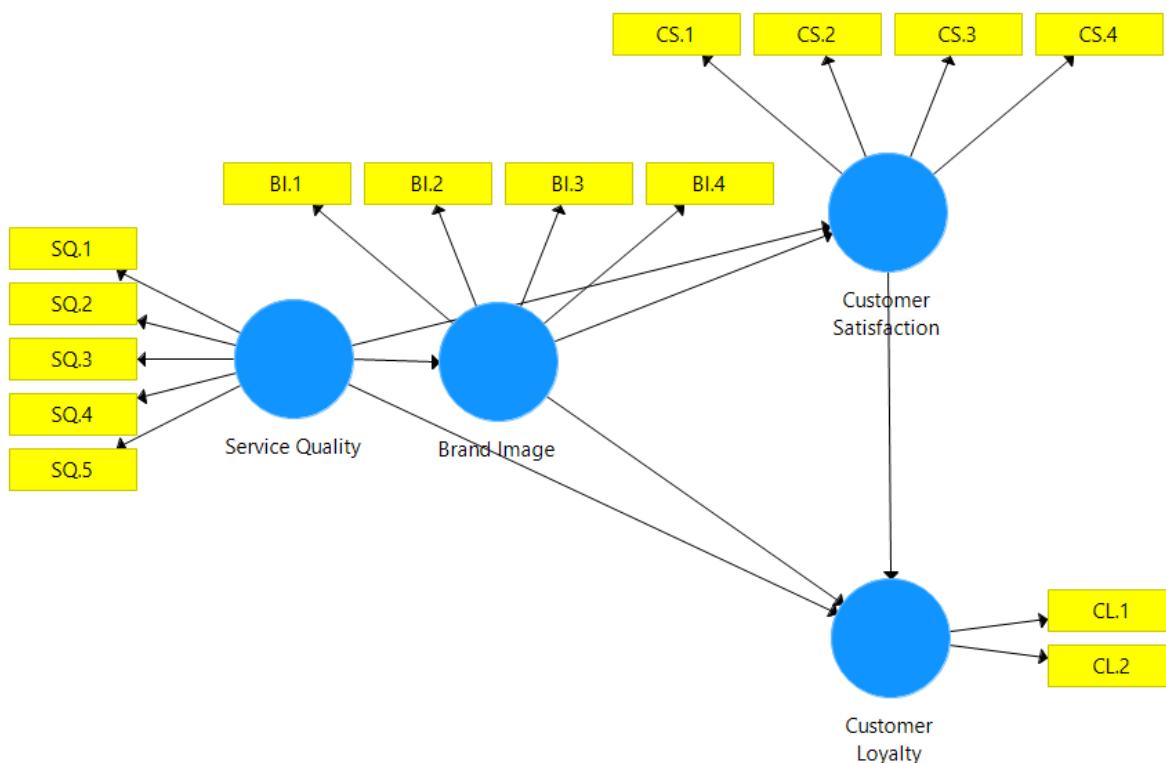


Figure 1 Proposed Conceptual Model

Based on the study's purpose, literature review, and hypothesis development, Figure 1 described the proposed conceptual model.

METHOD

Sample and Data Collection

Investigation data came from a survey of customers who study at UC Makassar. The study sample was conducted by applying a convenience sampling method with different students regarding gender, class, and major. We open the online questionnaire to be filled out by all the students. Out of these, 68 responses have been documented. All questionnaires were accepted to be processed for final analysis. The sample consisted of 28 male students (41.2%) and 40 female students (58.8%). Of the class, 25% (17 students) are from the class of 2021 and 75% (51 students) are from the class of 2022. The major distribution of respondents

is 3% (2 students) from Informatics-Application Development (IMT-AD); 4.4% (3 students) from Informatics-Artificial Intelligence (IMT-AI); 29.4% (20 students) from Management-Culinary Business Management (MAN-CBM); 4.4% (3 students) from Management-Communication (MAN-COM); 20.6% (14 students) from Management-Digital Business Management (MAN-DBM); 1.4% (1 student) from Visual Communication Design-Graphic Design (VCD-GD); and 36.8% (25 students) from Management-International Business Management (MAN-IBM).

Measurements

The measurement items of the variables prior to investigations were assessed and adapted to accommodate the research context. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "completely disagree" to 5 "completely agree" was carried out. In this present study, we adjusted five

indicators of service quality from Shpetim (2012); four indicators of brand image from Lien et al. (2015); four indicators of customer satisfaction from Orel and Kara (2014), Shpetim (2012); and two indicators of customer loyalty from Orel and Kara (2014).

Analytical Approach

The partial Least Square (PLS) technique was implemented in this research because the method can process non-normal data, small sample sizes, and formatively measured constructs. The PLS approach was applied to analyze the suggested research model and hypotheses. Examination processes were made through two parts: appraisal of the measurement model and appraisal of the structural model (PLS-SEM) (Hair et al., 2014).

RESULTS

Assessment of the Measurement Model

Data in Table 1 shows the measurement scale of the construct's research results. Researchers applied Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) for evaluating the reliability of the research model. Cronbach's alpha (α) values of the notions should be greater than 0.70, and the CR values were bigger than 0.70, expressing enough internal consistency of the constructs (Hair et al. 2017).

Table 1 depicted that Cronbach's alpha values and the CR values of the independent variables were above 0.70. Accordingly, these notions had internal consistency reliability.

I performed the factor loading of all item values and the average variance extracted (AVE) to estimate the converging validity. The factor

Table 1 Measurement Items of the Construct's Analysis Results

Constructs and Measurement Items	Factor Loading	α	CR	AVE
Service Quality		0.869	0.905	0.656
This university's facilities are modern	0.743			
The university is fulfilled its commitment to customers	0.836			
The interaction between the staff and the client is positive	0.806			
The staff is always ready to customers' concerns	0.831			
The staff is always ready to solve customers' problem	0.831			
Brand Image		0.956	0.968	0.883
This university brand is reliable	0.961			
This university brand is attractive	0.955			
This university brand is pleasing	0.911			
This university brand has a good reputation	0.931			
Customer Satisfaction		0.885	0.921	0.744
Compared to other universities, I am happy with this university	0.829			
The overall feeling I received from the university was satisfied	0.857			
My purchase choice at this university is the right one	0.904			
This university meets my expectations	0.858			
Customer Loyalty		0.883	0.945	0.895
I would recommend this university to any of my friends	0.946			
I would speak positively about this university to others	0.946			

Table 2 Model Fit Results

Saturated Model	
SRMR	0.071
d_ULS	0.608
d_G	0.602
Chi-square	228.492
NFI	0.792

loading and the AVE should be higher than 0.50 (Bagozzi, Yi, & Nassen, 1998; Hair et al., 2017). In this present research, the factor loading of all items and the AVE values were above 0.50. Therefore, the converging validity of the notions was suitable.

Assessment of the Structural Model

Evaluation of the Model Fit

Table 2 showed the structural model outcomes. The results in Table 2 illustrate the Chi-square = 228.492 was valid at a 0.05 significance level. Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was the estimated model fit

of the recommended research model. The model had an excellent model match when the SRMR was smaller than 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The outcome in Table 2 showed that the model had SRMR indices = 0.071 < 0.08. Consequently, the proposed conceptual model was suited well for analyzing data.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 3 illustrates the hypotheses testing results. Bootstrapping outcome (with 500 resamplings) for the link between the notion in this proposed study model indicated that the *t*-value of the H1, H2, H4, and H6 are more

Table 3 Hypotheses Testing Results

Linking	Hypotheses	Path Coefficients	t-value	p-value	Results
SQ→BI	H1	0.767	6.813	0.000	Accepted
SQ→CS	H2	0.265	3.032	0.003	Accepted
SQ→CL	H3	0.195	1.806	0.071	Rejected
BI→CS	H4	0.665	7.505	0.000	Accepted
BI→CL	H5	0.234	1.929	0.054	Rejected
CS→CL	H6	0.500	3.946	0.000	Accepted

SQ: Service Quality; BI: Brand Image; CS: Customer Satisfaction; CL: Customer Loyalty

Table 4 *R*² Findings

Linking	Path Coefficients	<i>R</i> ²	Constructs	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Q</i> ²
SQ→BI	0.767	1.432	Brand Image	0.589	0.488
SQ→CS	0.265	0.133			
SQ→CL	0.195	0.060	Customer Satisfaction	0.783	0.559
BI→CS	0.665	0.838			
BI→CL	0.234	0.053	Customer Loyalty	0.768	0.655
CS→CL	0.500	0.235			

SQ: Service Quality; BI: Brand Image; CS: Customer Satisfaction; CL: Customer Loyalty

than 1.96 with significance level at 5%, but H3 and H5 are less than 1.96. The results showed that H1, H2, H4, and H6 were supported but H3 and H5 were rejected.

R² (Explained Variance), f² (Effect Extent), Q² (Predictive Relevance)

The structural model includes the primary assessment criterion R^2 (explained variance), f^2 (effect size), and Q^2 (predictive relevance) (Hair et al. 2017). The coefficient of determination R^2 was the general effect extent measure for the structural model (Garson, 2016). The R^2 index is between 0 and 1, with the higher levels indicating more predictive accuracy. The R^2 estimate of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 could be presented as weak, moderate, and substantial (Chin, 1998). The (f^2) effect size enabled estimating the independent factor contributing to the dependent variable the f^2 estimate 0.02 was small, 0.15 was medium, and 0.35 was high (Cohen, 1988). The Q^2 value estimated the structural model's predictive relevance for each endogenous construct. The Q^2 value should be over zero (Hair et al., 2017).

As the data in Table 4 shows, the R^2 value for the overall model here was 0.768 higher than 0.67, considered as a substantial impact; we remarked that customer satisfaction had a most substantial influence (0.500) on customer loyalty, followed by brand image (0.234) and service quality (0.195). Next service quality and brand image influenced customer satisfaction with the brand image having a more powerful effect (0.665) than service quality (0.265). Furthermore, service quality also had a powerful effect on the brand image (0.767). Table 4 revealed the f^2 effect sizes. The high f^2 effect size happened for the link of SQ'!BI (1.432) and BI'!CS (0.838). The medium

f^2 effect size occurred in CS'!CL (0.235). The small f^2 effect size appeared in the connections of SQ'!CS (0.133), SQ'!CL (0.060), and BI'!CL (0.053). Table 4 also indicated that the Q^2 values of these endogenous variables are over zero. The results showed that customer loyalty had a Q^2 value (0.655), customer satisfaction had Q^2 index (0.559), and brand image had a Q^2 coefficient (0.488). These findings verified the model's predictive suited for the endogenous latent variables.

DISCUSSION

This current research's contribution was to measure and test the link between service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty in different circumstances compared with previous research. Most of the earlier studies focus on these impacts for the various industries, and this current study demonstrated these effects in UC Makassar. The present study findings declared that four of the six hypotheses in the conceptual research model were supported.

The study results revealed that service quality had a positive impact on brand image. Service quality was a predictor of brand image. The f^2 impact size of the link between service quality and brand image was large (1.432). The early empirical studies confirmed this study's results (Dam & Dam, 2021; Hsieh et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2011). This research also found that service quality had a small effect on customer satisfaction. The f^2 effect size of the link between service quality and customer satisfaction was small (0.133). These findings were contradictory to the previous empirical studies (Putro & Rachmat, 2019; Santouridis and Trivellas, 2010; Dam & Dam, 2021). Also, the results also stated that service quality had a small

influence on customer loyalty. The f^2 effect size of the link between service quality and customer loyalty was very small (0.060). Added to that, the t -value of a link between service quality and customer loyalty was below 1.96 (1.806) which contributes to the rejection of H3 (Service quality has significantly positive effects on customer loyalty). These findings were contradictory to the previous empirical studies (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Setiawan & Sayuti, 2017).

The research results also found that brand image had a significant impact on customer satisfaction. The brand image was an antecedent of customer satisfaction and the f^2 effect size is high (0.838). The previous empirical studies supported this research's results (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Wu et al., 2011). However, this research outcome showed that brand image had an insignificant impact on customer loyalty. The f^2 effect size between brand image and customer loyalty is tiny (0.053) and the t -value is below 1.96 (1.929) which contributes to the rejection of H5 (Brand image has a significantly positive effect on customer loyalty). This finding was contradictory to the previous empirical studies (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Hsieh et al., 2018; Tu et al., 2012; Dam & Dam, 2021).

Furthermore, the research consequences also unveiled that customer satisfaction has significant effects on customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction was an antecedent of customer loyalty, although the f^2 effect size was medium (0.235). Prior studies verified these outcomes (Anwar, Min, & Dastagir, 2019; Santouridis & Trivellas, 2010; Yap et al., 2012).

Current research demonstrated the link between service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty according to

the guidelines of previous studies. Therefore, practitioners should focus and strategize on improving customers' perception of service quality, brand image, and customer satisfaction to increase customer loyalty. The research should help university directors to realize the significant impact of service quality on brand image and customer satisfaction and conduct further studies on why service quality doesn't have a significant impact on customer loyalty. The directors should improve service quality from the client's point of view (add new facilities, better interaction between staff and students, etc.). If customer experience of the university's service quality has increased, then the client has tendencies to increase satisfaction and loyalty. The research will help practitioners to recognize the significance of customer satisfaction in the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Therefore, managers should pay attention to customer satisfaction. Higher customer satisfaction will enhance higher customer loyalty.

Although this present study makes essential contributions to literature and practice, it has some limitations. First, this present study only focuses on UC Makassar, Indonesia. Therefore, this study may not be generalizable to all other sectors and other universities. Second, this research only analyzed and examined the link between service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty; hence, future investigations should focus on other factors such as trust, perceived value, relationship marketing, brand experience, etc.

The outcomes indicate that customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer loyalty. The findings also found that service quality positively affects brand image and customer satisfaction but not loyalty. Likewise, brand

image has a positive effect on customer satisfaction but not on loyalty. The research will help practitioners to recognize the significance of customer satisfaction in the relationship be-

tween customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Therefore, managers should pay attention to customer satisfaction. Higher customer satisfaction will enhance higher customer loyalty.

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