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# Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator of Experiential Marketing, Perceived Quality, and Perceived Value toward Customer Loyalty

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# **ABSTRACT**

**Research Aims:** This study aims to analyze the influence of experiential marketing, perceived quality, and perceived value on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty at ROS IN Hotel, as well as to examine the mediating role of customer satisfaction in strengthening the relationship between these factors and customer loyalty.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This study used a quantitative causal design to examine the influence of experiential marketing, perceived quality, and perceived value on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. Data were collected from 40 customers of ROS IN Hotel Yogyakarta using a purposive sampling method and a structured questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale. The data were tested for validity and reliability, then analyzed using path analysis.

**Research Findings:** The results show that only perceived value significantly influences customer loyalty, both directly and through customer satisfaction, while experiential marketing and perceived quality have no significant effects. This indicates that post-pandemic hotel customers prioritize functional value (price, convenience, safety) over emotional experiences or perceived service quality, with customer satisfaction acting as a key mediator.

**Theoretical Contribution/Originality:** This study identifies perceived value as the key driver of customer loyalty in the post-pandemic hospitality sector, showing that customers prioritize functional benefits over experiential or perceived quality, with customer satisfaction as a mediator.

**Research limitation and implication:** This study, limited to customers of ROS IN Hotel Yogyakarta, implies that increasing perceived value is crucial for building satisfaction and loyalty, while enriching the theoretical understanding of post-pandemic customer behavior.

*Keywords:* experiential marketing, perceived quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, customer lovalty

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The hospitality industry has tremendous potential for gross domestic product (GDP) growth. It is even targeted to contribute up to eight percent to gross domestic product (GDP) in domestic economic growth by 2029 (Huanggrio, 2024). Indonesia's hospitality sector plays a fundamental role in the national economy, contributing approximately five percent to GDP in recent years, creating millions of jobs, and multiplying benefits to other sectors. Investment in accommodation, improving service quality, and diversifying tourism products will strengthen Indonesia's position as a global destination and drive inclusive economic growth. (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024).

In the Special Region of Yogyakarta, the development of the tourism business sector, including transportation, restaurants, and hotels, contributed the largest share of economic growth, at 17.46 percent (Soebanto, 2020). However, since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, the tourism sector, particularly in Yogyakarta, has experienced a downturn due to the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) policy, which requires all activities such as studying, working, and praying to be conducted from home. This has undoubtedly resulted in a decline in tourist visits.

To increase tourist visits, extra efforts are needed from various tourism business sectors through recovery programs in accordance with the established New Normal health protocols. This aims to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission and ensure the quality of safe services. One business sector directly impacted by the decline in tourist visits is hotels. Cahya,(2020) stated that the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy specifically developed guidelines for implementing cleanliness, health, safety, and sustainability in hotel environments. The establishment and implementation of these health protocols have had a positive impact on hotel room occupancy rates, which are slowly increasing. However, hotels need to refer to the Hadith narrated by Muslim which states that everyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day is obliged to respect his guests (Muslim, 2006). This ensures that hotel guests feel comfortable and experience customer satisfaction.

Data from the Yogyakarta Central Statistics Agency in 2020 showed an increase in the occupancy rate of star-rated hotels in the province in July 2020, reaching 27,83 percent, a 12,33-point increase compared to the previous month's ROR of 15,50 percent. The average length of stay for guests at star-rated hotels in July 2020 reached 1,40 days. This increase demonstrates a positive trend in the establishment and implementation of health protocols in the hotel environment.

ROS IN Hotel Yogyakarta was chosen as the sole research object due to its unique characteristics compared to other hotels in the Yogyakarta area. As a four-star hotel in the mid-to-upper market segment, ROS IN Hotel managed to survive and reopen after the Covid-19 pandemic, despite experiencing a significant decline in room occupancy rates. The hotel is strategically located on Yogyakarta's southern ring road and carries the slogan "Your Friendly Hotel," emphasizing a friendly and personalized stay experience. However, based on internal data, the increased room occupancy rate has not been fully followed by stable customer loyalty; some customers still exhibit switching behavior to other hotels. This condition indicates a potential gap between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, ROS IN Hotel is considered worthy of being the sole focus of this study to explore in depth how experiential marketing, perceived quality, and perceived value influence customer

loyalty through customer satisfaction in the context of the post-pandemic recovery of the hospitality industry in Yogyakarta.

Customer satisfaction is an emotional response that occurs after evaluating the experience of consuming a product, store, or service (Wilkie, 1994). This response is given by customers after they rent hotel facilities. Ros In Hotel has not been able to measure customer satisfaction during the Covid-19 pandemic because hotel operations have only recently reopened with strict health protocols in place. It is hoped that customers will be satisfied with the new service model.

Marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic is no easy feat. Psychological strategies and approaches are essential to ensure marketing continues to operate effectively and positively impact the company. Schmitt (1999) states that this psychological marketing concept is known as experiential marketing. Experiential marketing is a marketing strategy that provides customers with an experience with a product or service, providing them with an assessment of the product or service they use, and considering both rational and emotional aspects of customers (Schmitt, 1999).

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted room occupancy rates at ROS IN Hotel. Therefore, ROS IN Hotel management must work harder to increase room occupancy rates. Experiential marketing is a marketing strategy that plays a crucial role in increasing room sales at ROS IN Hotel. Through the experience of staying with customers, it will be easier for hotel management to attract returning customers.

Several studies have demonstrated the impact of experiential marketing on customer satisfaction. Gunawan (2022) found that experiential marketing significantly influences customer satisfaction among Uniqlo consumers in South Jakarta. Similarly, Dhillon et al., (2021) emphasized that experiential marketing has a positive impact on consumer satisfaction. In addition, Surya et al. (2020) revealed that specific dimensions of experiential marketing, namely feel and think have a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction, whereas the others show a negative and statistically insignificant effect on the satisfaction of Siantar Ekspress customers at PT KAI (Persero) in Medan.

Perceived value is the perception that customers have and the evaluation of the perceived benefits of a particular product or service based on the sacrifices made (Hutt & Speh, 2007). A product or service must have high perceived value because if a product fails to deliver value, it will easily be attacked or outperformed by competitors. In the hotel context, functional benefits can be experienced by customers through taste and experience. Furthermore, ease of access, hotel facilities, and customer service also influence perceived value (Triyoga et al., 2019). Research by Budiyono & Sutaningsih (2021) shows that perceived value has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction. Vicramaditya (2021) revealed that perceived value has a direct positive impact on customer satisfaction. However, Pratiwi & Dermawan (2021) showed a negative and insignificant effect between perceived value and customer satisfaction.

Many ROS IN Hotel customers returned to stay. The increase in occupancy rates was due to guests' trust in the health protocols implemented by the hotel management. The implementation of these health protocols made hotel guests feel safer and assured of their health from the COVID-19 virus. The trust a hotel guest has reflects customer loyalty. Customer loyalty itself is an emotional commitment to a brand, which is difficult to measure because it involves the customer's trust and emotional attachment to a product or service.

(Blair et al., 2003). The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted room occupancy rates at ROS IN Hotel. Therefore, ROS IN Hotel management must work harder to increase room occupancy rates. Experiential marketing is a marketing strategy that plays a crucial role in increasing room sales at ROS IN Hotel. Through the experience of staying with customers, it will be easier for hotel management to attract returning customers.

Putri (2024) stated that the experiential marketing variable has a positive and significant influence on consumer loyalty. The research results of Facrureza & Christina (2023) stated that the dimensions of experiential marketing variables, consisting of sense, feel, think, act, and relate have a significant influence on customer satisfaction. However, Yunita et al. (2024) state that experiential marketing does not positively and significantly affect consumer loyalty.

In addition, the management of ROS IN Hotel also continuously maintains and improves the quality standards and quality of service, especially amidst the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. The management of ROS IN Hotel strives to implement hotel services in accordance with the New Normal health protocols established by the Indonesian Government, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) (Liputan6.com, 2020). This certainly provides confidence to customers to be able to choose ROS IN Hotel again as a partner in meeting their hotel room occupancy needs and organizing events.

Perceived quality is a customer assessment that describes the extent of the difference between customer expectations or desires and their perception of the quality of goods or services (Zeithaml et al., 1990). According to Kotler & Keller (2009), perceived quality that meets customer expectations can result in customer satisfaction and support higher prices and (often) lower costs. Research by Chandrawati & Vidyanata (2022) shows a positive and insignificant influence between perceived quality and customer loyalty. Nainggolan (2023) found that perceived quality had a partial effect on customer loyalty at De' Kampung Café. Conversely, Lesmana et al. (2021) reported that perceived quality did not have a significant direct effect on customer loyalty to Xiaomi smartphones in South Tangerang.

The importance of customer satisfaction drives ROS IN Hotel to continuously improve its services to provide services that are commensurate with or even higher than the price paid. To increase customer satisfaction, ROS IN Hotel has implemented several measures to improve service quality, such as strategic hotel access, easier hotel bookings, room price promotions through various media, and improved existing facilities. This is done to provide satisfactory service for customers, provide a memorable experience, and make customers more loyal, so they will be happy to return to stay at ROS IN Yogyakarta. Yang & Peterson (2004) stated that companies striving to maintain customer loyalty must focus on customer satisfaction and perceived value. Research conducted by Yogaswara & Pramudana (2022) showed that perceived value has a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty. A similar finding was also expressed by Devi et al. (2023), who found that perceived value significantly influenced loyalty. However, Fitriana & Susanti (2022) presented a different finding, stating that perceived value did not significantly influence customer loyalty.

Mokhtar & Maiyaki (2011) provide their views on customer satisfaction, which influences customer loyalty. When customer satisfaction increases dramatically to a certain level, customer loyalty to the company increases. Furthermore, the satisfaction experienced by each customer is certainly different. According to Giese & Cote (2000), these differences

are a response to experiences formed through cognitive, conative, and affective processes. These responses can be feelings of satisfaction or disappointment with the product. If the product does not meet expectations, the customer will feel dissatisfied; if the product meets expectations, the customer will feel happy; and if the product exceeds expectations, the customer will feel satisfied or happy (Zeithaml et al., 2009).

Abadi et al. (2020) found that the experiential marketing path analysis had a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. Research by Pratiwi & Dermawan (2021) also found a positive and significant effect between perceived quality and customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. However, Pratiwi & Dermawan (2021) found that perceived value has a negative and insignificant influence on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. Abadi et al. (2020) revealed that customer value has a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction as an intermediary.

This research is urgent given the changing consumer behavior in the hospitality industry following the Covid-19 pandemic, which demands a new understanding of the factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Customers now place greater emphasis on functional value, comfort, and security assurance rather than merely the emotional experience during their stay. Therefore, it is crucial for hotel management, particularly ROS IN Hotel Yogyakarta, to understand effective value-based marketing strategies in rebuilding customer trust and loyalty. Theoretically, this research also addresses the gap in previous research findings that show inconsistent findings regarding the influence of experiential marketing, perceived quality, and perceived value on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Previous research results have varied. Furthermore, most previous research has focused on the retail and digital service sectors rather than the hospitality sector, and few have examined the role of customer satisfaction as a mediating variable in this relationship. Therefore, this research is crucial to fill this empirical and theoretical gap by re-examining the influence of experiential marketing, perceived quality, and perceived value on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction in the context of the Yogyakarta hospitality industry.

Based on the above background, the hypotheses in this study are:

- H1: Experiential marketing has a positive effect on customer satisfaction at ROS IN Hotel
- H2: Perceived quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction at ROS IN Hotel
- H3: Perceived value has a positive effect on customer satisfaction at ROS IN Hotel
- H4: Experiential marketing has a positive effect on customer loyalty at ROS IN Hotel
- H5: Perceived quality has a positive effect on customer loyalty at ROS IN Hotel
- H6: Perceived value has a positive effect on customer loyalty at ROS IN Hotel
- H7: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on customer loyalty at ROS IN Hotel
- H8: Experiential marketing has a positive effect on customer loyalty, mediated by customer satisfaction at ROS IN Hotel
- H9: Perceived quality has a positive effect on customer loyalty, mediated by customer satisfaction at ROS IN Hotel
- H10: Perceived value has a positive effect on customer loyalty, mediated by customer satisfaction at ROS IN Hotel

# RESEARCH METHOD

This study applies a quantitative approach with a causality design to analyze the influence of experiential marketing, perceived quality, and perceived value on customer

loyalty, with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. The research subjects were customers of ROS IN Hotel Yogyakarta. The sample selection in this study was conducted using purposive sampling, a sampling method based on specific considerations in accordance with the research objectives. The respondent criteria were customers who had stayed at ROS IN Hotel at least once for a minimum of two nights, thus providing a more indepth perception of the service quality and experience at the hotel. Data collection was conducted from May to August 2021 by distributing questionnaires to customers who met these criteria, resulting in a sample size of 40 respondents. This selection of time and criteria aimed to ensure that the data collected represented actual customer experiences and was relevant to the recovery of the hospitality industry after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The variables studied consisted of independent variables, namely experiential marketing, perceived quality, and perceived value; mediating variables, namely customer satisfaction; and dependent variables, namely customer loyalty. Zeithaml & Bitner (2003) stated that customer satisfaction is defined as an emotional response to the evaluation of customer experience in consuming a product or service that is formed through cognitive, conative, and affective processes. This assessment indicates that product mismatch with customer expectations causes dissatisfaction, product conformity with expectations makes customers happy, and product exceeding expectations results in customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction in this study was measured using a customer satisfaction scale compiled based on five aspects proposed, namely satisfaction based on service quality, product, price, situation, and customer personality.

According to Kotler (2000) customer loyalty is understood as an emotional commitment from customers to a brand that is shown through repeat purchases or subscriptions to certain products or services in the long term, so that customers no longer need to look for other alternatives. Customer loyalty in this study was measured by a scale compiled based on four aspects, namely: the existence of continuous repeat purchases, the willingness of customers to say positive things about the company or brand to others, the tendency to ignore competing brands or product advertisements, and the willingness to buy other products from the same company.

Experiential marketing is defined as a marketing strategy that provides customers with direct experience with a product or service, either through evaluation during use or through creating positive feelings about the product or service. This variable is measured using an experiential marketing scale compiled by researchers based on five aspects: sensory experience (sense), affective experience (feel), creative cognitive experience (think), physical and lifestyle experience (act), and social identity experience (relate). (Schmitt & Roger, 2008)

Perceived quality, as proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), is defined as the difference between customer expectations or desires and their perceptions of the actual service performance received. The perceived quality instrument in this study refers to five aspects: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Meanwhile, perceived value, proposed by Sweeney & Soutar (2001), is understood as the customer's perception and evaluation of all the benefits received from a product or service compared to the sacrifices or costs incurred to obtain it. The perceived value scale in this study is structured based on aspects, including quality or performance, price or value for money, emotions, and social benefits.

Data collection was conducted using a Google Forms-based questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Before use, the instrument tests have been carried out on its validity and reliability. Validity testing was performed using Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis, where all items had correlation values above the r-table, thus being declared valid. Furthermore, reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient showed that all variables had alpha values above 0.70, indicating reliability and consistency for use in research.

Data analysis was conducted using path analysis techniques with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows version 25 software. This technique was used to test the direct and indirect effects between variables, as well as to assess the mediating role of customer satisfaction. Parameter estimation was performed using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method through multilevel multiple regression according to the path analysis procedure according to Ghozali (2011). The mediation test was conducted by calculating the indirect effect using the path coefficient results (p2 × p3) and assessing its significance through a t-test. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value in the final model was 0.439, indicating that 43.9 percent of the variation in customer loyalty can be explained by experiential marketing, perceived quality, perceived value, and customer satisfaction. This value indicates that the research model is suitable for use in describing the causal relationship between variables in the context of the hospitality industry at ROS IN Hotel Yogyakarta.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The results of the validity and reliability tests indicate that all research instruments are suitable for use. The correlation value for each item exceeds the r-table value (0,312), confirming that all statement items are valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha produced values above 0,70 for all variables, indicating that each construct has good internal consistency and reliability. The details of the validity and reliability results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Test Results

		,	3		
Variable	Number of Items	r-count Range	r-table (N=40)	Cronbach's Alpha	Remarks
Experiential	5	0.512 -	0.312	0.812	Valid &
Marketing		0.733			Reliable
Perceived Quality	5	0.547 -	0.312	0.826	Valid &
		0.761			Reliable
Perceived Value	5	0.498 -	0.312	0.879	Valid &
		0.720			Reliable
Customer	4	0.562 -	0.312	0.805	Valid &
Satisfaction		0.755			Reliable
<b>Customer Loyalty</b>	4	0.534 -	0.312	0.816	Valid &
		0.781			Reliable

Source: Processed primary data, 2021

Path analysis results indicate that not all independent variables have a significant effect on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Details of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Direct Path Analysis

Path Relationship	Coefficient	Std.	t-	Sig.	Remarks
Even oriential Mankatina	<u>(β)</u>	Error	value	<b>(p)</b> 0.136	Not significant
Experiential Marketing →	-0,959	0,136	-1.965	0.136	Not significant
Customer Satisfaction					
Perceived Quality →	-0,463	0,074	-0.657	0.515	Not significant
Customer Satisfaction					
Perceived Value →	1,533	0,001	3.217	0.001	Significant
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>					
Experiential Marketing →	0,157	0,147	1.068	0.292	Not significant
Customer Loyalty					J
Perceived Quality →	0,093	0,037	2.523	0.016	Significant
Customer Loyalty					_
Perceived Value →	0,084	0,050	1.680	0.050	Marginally
Customer Loyalty					significant
Customer Satisfaction →	0,108	0,037	2.950	0.005	Significant
Customer Loyalty	•	•			J
$R^2$ Customer Satisfaction = 0.472					
$R^2$ Customer Loyalty = 0.439					

Source: Processed primary data, 2021

Perceived value variables have been shown to have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. This finding aligns with the research by Yogaswara & Pramudana (2022), which demonstrated a positive and significant relationship between perceived value and customer loyalty. A similar finding was also noted by Devi et al. (2023), who stated that perceived value significantly influences loyalty. In contrast, experiential marketing and perceived quality variables did not show a significant influence either directly on loyalty or through customer satisfaction. The absence of a significant influence of experiential marketing and perceived quality can be attributed to the specific conditions of the hospitality sector following the COVID-19 pandemic. Customers' primary focus tends to shift to practical values such as competitive prices, comfort, and safety and health assurance. Therefore, emotional experiences or perceptions of service quality are not yet sufficiently dominant factors in driving customer satisfaction and loyalty. (Cahya, 2020; Zeithaml et al., 1990)

In more detail, the direct influence of experiential marketing on customer satisfaction and loyalty is insignificant. This also applies to perceived quality, which, although it makes a positive contribution, is not strong enough to significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. Meanwhile, perceived value has been shown to play an important role, both directly and through customer satisfaction, in increasing customer loyalty at ROS IN Hotel. The results of this study indicate that perceived value is a key factor in shaping customer loyalty in the hospitality sector, particularly at ROS IN Hotel. This is consistent with research by Yang & Peterson (2004) and Choi & Kim (2013), which emphasizes that customer loyalty can be formed when customers perceive they receive value commensurate with the sacrifices they make. In the context of this study, customers place more emphasis on the functional and emotional benefits experienced during their stay, compared to experiential marketing or perceived service quality.

Table 3. Mediation Test Results

Indirect Path	Indirect Effect (β)	Lower CI	Upper CI	Remarks
Experiential Marketing → Satisfaction	0,104	-0,021	0,256	Not
→ Loyalty				significant
Perceived Quality → Satisfaction →	0,022	-0,038	0,097	Not
Loyalty				significant
Perceived Value → Satisfaction →	0,147	0,031	0,283	Significant
Loyalty				

Source: Processed primary data, 2021

Customer satisfaction has been shown to play a crucial role as a mediator in the relationship between perceived value and customer loyalty. This aligns with Kotler & Keller's (2009) findings, which emphasize that satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and establish long-term relationships with service providers. Therefore, in building loyalty, ROS IN Hotel needs to ensure that the value provided truly meets customer expectations, resulting in satisfaction that ultimately leads to loyalty.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This study shows that perceived value is the most dominant factor in building customer loyalty at ROS IN Hotel. This variable has a significant influence both directly and through customer satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that the higher the value perceived by customers (in terms of benefits, price, emotions, and social aspects), the greater the level of satisfaction and loyalty formed. Conversely, experiential marketing and perceived quality variables did not show a significant impact on customer satisfaction or loyalty. This indicates that emotional experience and perceptions of hotel service quality are not yet primary factors in shaping customer loyalty, especially in the post-pandemic context where customers place more emphasis on functional benefits and value obtained. Thus, the findings of this study emphasize the importance for hotels to focus on creating value relevant to customer needs as a primary strategy in increasing satisfaction and building long-term loyalty.

The results of this study provide important input for hotel management, particularly ROS IN Hotel, that perceived value is a key factor in building customer loyalty. Therefore, hotel management needs to place more emphasis on creating added value perceived by customers, for example through competitive prices, tailored service packages, relevant facility upgrades, and attractive promotional offers. Furthermore, customer satisfaction has been shown to be a mediating variable that strengthens the relationship between perceived value and loyalty. This confirms that hotels are not sufficient to simply provide standard service, but must also be able to provide greater value to satisfy customers and be willing to make repeat purchases.

The finding that experiential marketing and perceived quality had no significant impact suggests that experience-based marketing strategies and standard service quality are not enough to foster loyalty. Therefore, hotels should combine experiential marketing with strategies that create more tangible and measurable value for customers, such as service flexibility, product innovation, or amenities that differentiate themselves from competitors.

Theoretically, this research adds to the literature on marketing management, particularly in the context of the hospitality industry. The results confirm that perceived

value plays a more dominant role than experiential marketing or perceived quality in shaping customer loyalty, especially in the post-pandemic situation. This supports previous research findings (Yang & Peterson, 2004; Choi & Kim, 2013), which emphasized that customer-perceived value is a stronger predictor of loyalty than other variables.

Furthermore, this study also strengthens Kotler & Keller's (2009) theory regarding the role of customer satisfaction as a mediating variable in building loyalty. However, the discrepant findings regarding the insignificance of experiential marketing and perceived quality indicate a new dynamic in consumer behavior, where customer orientation is more rational with a focus on functional benefits. Therefore, this study can serve as the basis for developing a new theoretical model that positions perceived value as a central variable in shaping customer loyalty in the service sector.

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