

Building Customer Loyalty in the Digital Economy Era: The Role of CRM Innovation and Promotional Strategies at Smarco Superstore Ring Road City Walks Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and sales promotion on customer loyalty at Smarco Superstore Ring Road City Walks Medan. The research is crucially driven by the intensifying challenges of modern retail competition, the rise of e-commerce, and the pervasive shift in consumer behavior toward digitalization, which together necessitate effective CRM and promotional strategies. A quantitative survey method was applied, collecting primary data from a set of purposively selected respondents via a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. Data analysis was performed using multiple linear regression, and included preliminary steps such as validity and reliability testing, along with classical assumption testing. The results show that CRM has a positive but statistically insignificant partial effect on loyalty, whereas sales promotion demonstrates a positive and significant partial effect. Collectively, CRM and sales promotion significantly influence customer loyalty, contributing substantially to the overall variance. The findings highlight the importance of consistent sales promotion and the urgent need for optimized CRM implementation to enhance sustainable customer loyalty.

Keywords: Customer Relationship Management; Sales Promotion; Customer Loyalty; E-Commerce; Digital Economy; Modern Retail.

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Communication and Information (2019) noted that the digital economy began in the 1980s with the development of e-commerce to improve business efficiency and reduce intermediaries. Don Tapscott (2015) defined this era by economic activities driven by digital technology and a paradigm shift in IT (Information Technology) (Asnawi, 2022). The rise of IT has greatly influenced individuals and businesses through the use of information systems to improve performance and competitiveness. This shift has also changed consumer behavior and purchasing patterns, leading to disruptive innovation in shopping centers across Indonesian cities (Santoso et al., 2020). Data from Susenas (2023) reveal that 17% of 181.9 million active internet users engage in online shopping. This growth, driven by lower prices and easy access, shows that e-commerce has become an integral component of consumption patterns and the broader digital economy in Indonesia (Huda et al., 2024).

Fatihudin and Firmansyah (2019) emphasized that customer loyalty is crucial for business organizations, demonstrated through behaviors like repeat purchases, increased volume, recommending the company, and continued product use over time (Srisusilawati et al., 2023). To build this loyalty, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is implemented through need-based relationships, skilled human resources, and quality services. Successful CRM relies on aligning professionals, processes, and

technologies to create innovative, customer-aligned products and strengthen global competitiveness (Harmadi et al., 2023). Kotler (2017) noted that promotional strategies, especially sales promotion, strongly influence customer loyalty. Tjiptono (2010) defines it as direct persuasion with incentives to drive immediate or larger purchases. This strategy attracts new consumers, encourages bulk buying, and adds value within a limited time to boost sales and marketing performance (Roni et al., 2022).

Previous studies, both national and international, show that CRM and sales promotion significantly influence customer loyalty. Research conducted by Sy et al. (2023) revealed that CRM had a significant effect on customer loyalty, both partially and simultaneously, at Matahari Department Store Lippo Plaza Jambi. Similarly, Hikmawati et al. (2020) found that CRM positively influenced customer loyalty among supermarket consumers in Bandung. Alimin & Marco (2023) reported that both CRM and sales promotion exerted significant partial and simultaneous effects on customer loyalty at PT Sri Intan Karplas Industry.

Furthermore, Khan's (2018) study in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, India, demonstrated that sales promotion positively affected customer loyalty at retail outlets. Roni et al. (2022) found that sales promotion had a significant effect on customer loyalty at PT Arta Boga Cemerlang in Pekanbaru. More recently, Anwar et al. (2024) confirmed that sales promotion had a significant and positive effect on customer loyalty in the case of Angkringan Repeatfoods Tasikmalaya.

Previous studies in modern retail by Hikmawati et al. (2020) and Roni et al. (2022) have provided valuable contributions, but these studies still exhibit significant limitations in the scope of independent variables analyzed. This creates a relevant research gap, specifically the scarcity of integrated research examining the influence of CRM implementation through digital platforms, such as mobile applications and social media, combined with sales promotion to enhance customer loyalty in the modern retail context. This gap specifically directs this research to Smarco Superstore Medan, an entity strategically located at Ring Road City Walks Medan (Jl. Gagak Hitam No. 28), which provides daily necessities, fresh food, beverages, and household supplies. In order to face fierce competition from both offline retail and e-commerce, as well as shifting consumer behavior, Smarco Superstore has proactively optimized its CRM through various membership programs (Smarcard, Smarpriority) and actively implements sales promotions (Newspaper Promo, Catalogue Promo). These efforts are fully supported by their digital platforms, including mobile applications, social media (@smarcosuperstore), and WhatsApp services (Smarco Superstore, 2025). Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively analyze the influence of CRM and sales promotion on customer loyalty at Smarco Superstore in Medan, thereby addressing the research void that has been identified.



Figure 1. Customer Visit Trends at Smarco Superstore, 2020–2024

The customer trend at Smarco Superstore from 2020 to 2024 showed a fluctuating pattern of consumer visits. Despite membership programs and promotions, the decline in visits in 2023 indicates that CRM and promotional strategies were suboptimal. Shifts in consumer behavior and intense modern retail competition necessitate the strengthening of CRM and promotional efforts to maintain customer loyalty.

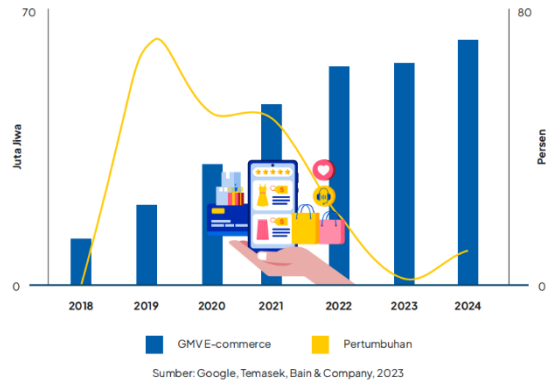


Figure 2. Google, Temasek, Bain & Company (2023): Growth of GMV in E-Commerce

Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) reflects the total value of goods sold via e-commerce, covering both first- and third-party sellers. In Indonesia, e-commerce enhances access, information, and convenience, shaping consumer decisions. GMV rose before the pandemic, surged in 2020, dipped in 2021 but stayed high, and grew again from 2022–2024. In 2024, Indonesia led ASEAN with US\$65 billion GMV, accounting for about 70% of the digital economy (Huda et al., 2024).



Figure 3. Populix Survey: Consumer Preferences in Grocery Shopping

A Populix survey reported by Goodstats shows that 77% of Indonesians bought daily necessities at minimarkets in the past six months, driven by accessibility, convenience, and product variety. Other outlets like supermarkets, grocery stores, traditional markets, hypermarkets, and e-groceries also remain important (Sugiarti, 2024).

This study is focused on analyzing the role of CRM and Sales Promotion in relation to customer loyalty at Smarco Superstore. The research objectives are: (1) to examine and analyze the influence of CRM on Customer Loyalty among Smarco Superstore consumers located at Ring Road City Walks, Medan; and (2) to examine and analyze the influence of Sales Promotion on Customer Loyalty among Smarco Superstore consumers located at Ring Road City Walks, Medan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Loyalty

According to Kotler and Keller (2017), customer loyalty occurs when consumers consistently maintain their purchasing behavior with a single seller, allocating their entire budget to the products or services offered. Kotler and Keller (2017) further identify five indicators for measuring customer loyalty, namely: (1) remaining loyal over time; (2) a tendency to purchase more; (3) a tendency to increase purchase volume; (4) reduced price sensitivity; and (5) engaging in positive word-of-mouth. Similarly, Oliver (2017) defines customer loyalty as a strong commitment to consistently repurchase or subscribe to a product or service in the future, despite situational influences or marketing strategies that may affect consumer behavior (Roni et al., 2022). Tjiptono (2004) defines customer loyalty as long-term repeat purchasing based on satisfaction, trust, and quality, making it a strategic asset for company sustainability and growth through both purchases and recommendations (Hutabarat & Prabawani, 2020).

Based on the definitions above, the author concludes that customer loyalty can therefore be understood as a deep commitment to consistently select and repurchase products or services over the long term, grounded in satisfaction, trust, and positive experiences with product or service quality, while persisting even under the influence of situational factors or competing marketing strategies.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

CRM is a strategic approach to managing customer interactions across the lifecycle to enhance relationships, profitability, revenue, and satisfaction through superior value and efficiency (Sinaga et al., 2024). Alma (2011) defines CRM as the process of establishing long-term, mutually advantageous relationships with customers through strategies of acquisition, retention, and relationship enhancement, by delivering valuable services and quality products to ensure satisfaction, maximize profitability, and create competitive advantage (Siregar et al., 2020). Gordon (2000) defines CRM as a strategy and process for creating mutual value by prioritizing customer preferences and strengthening business outcomes through sustained relationships. Gordon (2000) identifies four indicators for measuring CRM: (1) technology, (2) people, (3) processes, and (4) knowledge and understanding (Sriwendiah & Nusa, 2021).

Based on the definitions above, the author concludes that CRM can be viewed as a strategic and operational approach focused on building long-term, reciprocal customer relationships through coordinated strategies and practices. Its main goals are to create value, optimize interactions, and align services and products to improve satisfaction, loyalty, revenue, and profitability.

Sales Promotion

According to Tjiptono (2008:229), sales promotion is defined as a form of direct persuasion using various specifically designed incentives to encourage consumers to make immediate product purchases or to increase the volume of purchases (Sumawidjaya & Garini, 2016). Tjiptono (2008) further identifies three indicators for measuring sales promotion: (1) communication that captures attention and directs focus toward the product, (2) promotion that provides valuable contributions to both the company and consumers, and (3) promotion that stimulates immediate transactions. Similarly, Hermawan (2012) defines sales promotion as a marketing activity that adds value to a product within a specific period to stimulate purchases, enhance sales effectiveness, or support the sales force (Roni et al., 2022). Utami (2008) states that sales promotion is a short-term incentive to boost sales and strengthen relationships with consumers and partners through effective marketing communication (Hutabarat & Prabawani, 2020).

Based on the definitions above, the author concludes that sales promotion is a short-term marketing effort that offers added value or incentives to drive purchases, boost sales, raise awareness, attract interest, influence decisions, and strengthen relationships with customers and partners.

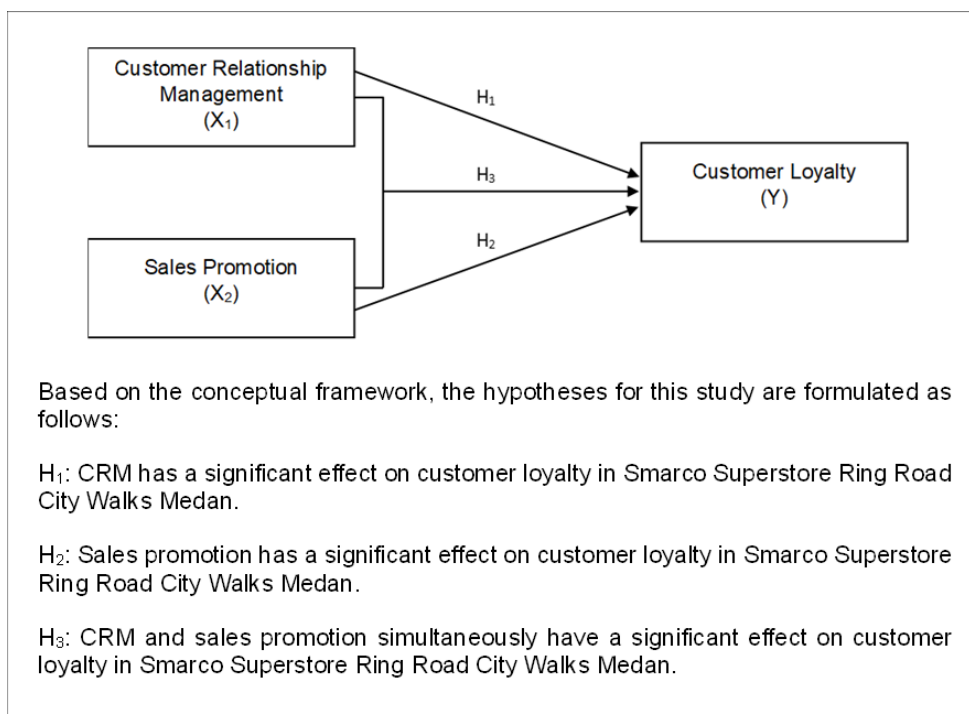


Figure 4. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

RESEARCH METHOD

Types and Sources of Data

This study employs quantitative data. Quantitative research is a type of study characterized by a systematic, planned, and well-structured approach from the outset to the research design stage (Sinaga et al., 2023).

The data sources of this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire (1–5), supplemented by interviews and direct observation. Secondary data were obtained from journals, industry reports, and other relevant documents (Sulung & Muspawi, 2024).

Research Population and Sample

The research was conducted at Smarco Superstore, located in Ring Road City Walks Medan, beginning in September 2025. The population of this study includes all customers of Smarco Superstore Ring Road City Walks Medan (PT. Smarco Mandiri Sukses). According to Sugiyono (2016), a sample is a subset of the population determined using statistical or estimation methods (Sinaga et al., 2023).

The sample size was determined using Hair et al. (2017), where the number of indicators is multiplied by 5–10, since the population is unknown. Based on the calculation, the sample size was set at 96 respondents ($8 \times 12 = 96$). The sampling technique employed purposive sampling, with criteria that respondents must be at least 18 years old, have prior shopping experience at Smarco Superstore Medan, and be willing to complete the questionnaire fully and honestly (Anjali et al., 2025).

Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

Data collection techniques refer to the methods employed to obtain research information. According to Hamdi and Bahruddin (2012), common techniques in quantitative research include questionnaires, structured interviews, tests, planned observations, inventories, rating scales, and various standardized measurements (Sinaga et al., 2023).

In this study, data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires to respondents using Google Forms. The measurement technique used utilized a Likert scale to capture and assess respondents' perceptions of CRM, sales promotion, and customer loyalty. Each item was presented with five response options: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; and 5 = Strongly Agree (Siregar et al., 2020).

Quantitative data analysis was conducted in several stages: commencing with validity and reliability tests, followed by classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity). The hypotheses were then tested using multiple linear regression to examine simultaneous (F-test) and partial (t-test) effects, concluding with the calculation of the coefficient of determination (R^2) to measure the variables' contribution to customer loyalty (Sinaga et al., 2023).

RESULTS

Respondent Data Analysis

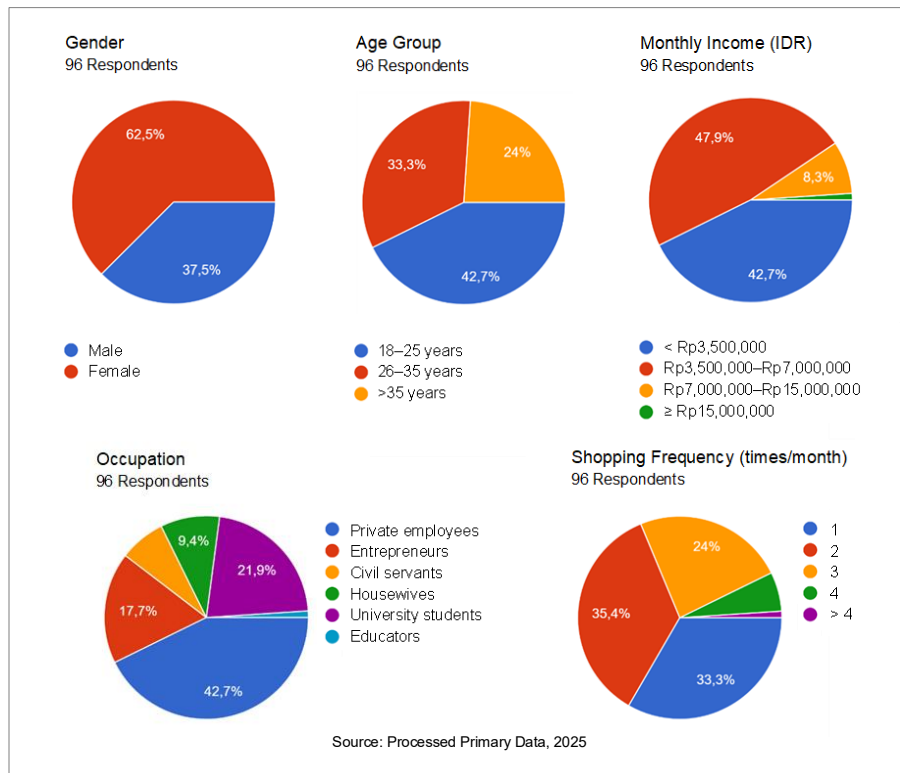


Figure 5. Demographic and Consumer Behavior Statistics of Respondents

Based on the data obtained through research questionnaires distributed via Google Form, a total of 96 respondents participated in this study. Among them, 73 respondents (76%) were identified as holding membership at Smarco Superstore. In contrast, 23 respondents (24%) reported not possessing membership.

Statistical Analysis

Validity and Reliability Test

Table 1. Validity Test Results for CRM Variable (X_1)

Statement	$r_{\text{calculated}}$	r_{table}	Criteria	Conclusion
1	0.835	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid
2	0.834	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid
3	0.718	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid
4	0.817	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

Table 2. Validity Test Results for Sales Promotion Variable (X_2)

Statement	$r_{\text{calculated}}$	r_{table}	Criteria	Conclusion
1	0.821	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid
2	0.801	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid
3	0.786	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

Table 3. Validity Test Results for Customer Loyalty Variable (Y)

Statement	$r_{\text{calculated}}$	r_{table}	Criteria	Conclusion
1	0.706	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid
2	0.596	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid
3	0.641	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid
4	0.712	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid
5	0.719	0.361	$r_{\text{calculated}} > r_{\text{table}}$	Valid

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

The validity test was conducted using $n=30$ respondents, resulting in a degree of freedom (df) of 28. At a 5% (0.05) level of significance, the critical r-table value was 0.361. All statement items for the variables CRM (X_1), Sales Promotion (X_2), and Customer Loyalty (Y) demonstrated calculated r-values greater than the critical r-table value (0.361). Therefore, all items in the questionnaire were confirmed to be valid.

Table 4. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Criteria	Conclusion
X_1	0.801	4	Cronbach's Alpha 0.8	Good
X_2	0.712	3	Cronbach's Alpha 0.6–0.79	Accepted
Y	0.697	5	Cronbach's Alpha 0.6–0.79	Accepted

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

Based on the reliability test results in Table 4, CRM (X_1) showed good reliability, while Sales Promotion (X_2) and Customer Loyalty (Y) were accepted. Thus, all variables are deemed reliable for further analysis.

Normality Test Using P–P Plot

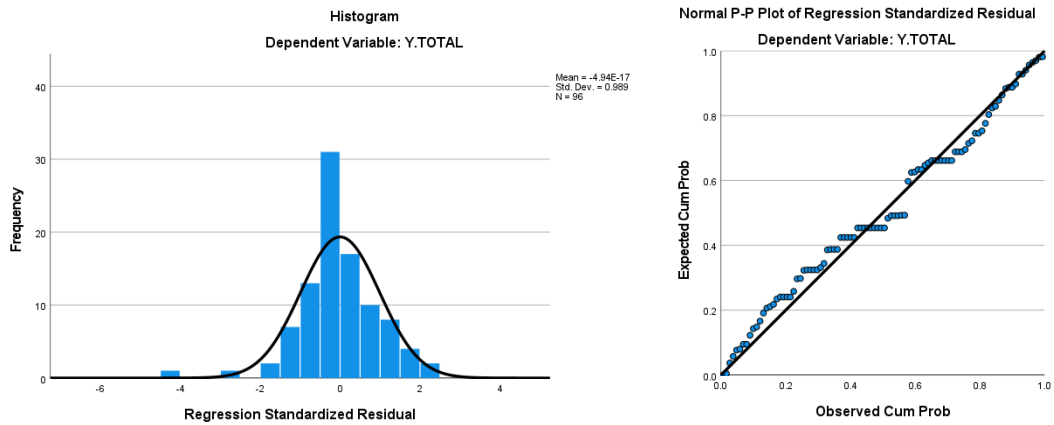


Figure 6. Histogram and Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

The histogram and Normal P-P Plot indicate that the data are symmetrically distributed and closely follow the diagonal line, confirming that the regression model meets the normality assumption.

Normality Test

Based on the results of the normality test, it was found that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov value was 0.149, which is greater than 0.05 ($0.149 > 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the data under examination are normally distributed.

Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test results show a tolerance value for the variable is 0.662, exceeding the threshold of 0.10, while the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is 1.510, well below the critical value of 10. These results suggest that multicollinearity is not present among the independent variables.

Heteroscedasticity Test

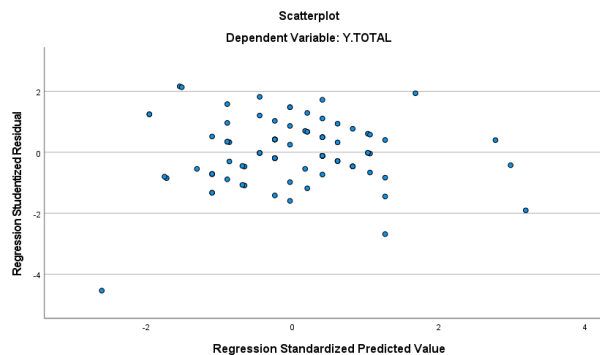


Figure 7. Scatterplots

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

Based on the results presented in Figure 7, the data points are scattered above and below, or around, the zero line, without clustering on one side and without forming a wave-like pattern. Therefore, it can be concluded that heteroscedasticity is not present, indicating that the regression model is appropriate.

Multiple Linear Regression Model

Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Test Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients
		B
1	(Constant)	4.201
	CRM	0.279
	Sales Promotion	0.877

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

Based on the results of the Multiple Linear Regression analysis above, the regression equation can be interpreted as follows:

1. The constant (α) = 4.201 indicates that if the values of the CRM variable (X_1) and the Sales Promotion variable (X_2) are equal to zero, Customer Loyalty (Y) remains at 4.201.
2. The coefficient of X_1 (b_1) = 0.279 indicates that each one-unit increase in CRM (X_1) is associated with a 0.279 increase in Customer Loyalty (Y).
3. The coefficient of X_2 (b_2) = 0.877 indicates that each one-unit increase sales promotion (X_2) is associated with a 0.877 increase in customer loyalty (Y).

t-Test

Table 6. t-Test Results

Model		t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.109	.038
	CRM	1.919	.058
	Sales Promotion	5.192	<.001

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

The following results were obtained from the t-test presented in Table 6. The critical t-table value (1.9858, obtained from the t-distribution table with $df=93$ and $\alpha=0.05$ two-tailed) is used as the rejection threshold:

1. For the CRM variable (X_1), the calculated t-value (1.919) is less than the critical t-table value (1.9858), and the significance level (Sig. = 0.058) is greater than $\alpha = 0.05$. This indicates that CRM has a positive but not significant effect on Customer Loyalty.
2. The calculated t-value for the Sales Promotion variable (X_2) is 5.192. Since this value is greater than the critical t-table value (1.9858), and the significance level (Sig. = 0.001) is less than $\alpha = 0.05$. Therefore, Sales Promotion has a positive and significant partial effect on Customer Loyalty.

F-Test

The calculated F-value is 31.886. The critical F-table value (3.09, obtained from the F-distribution table with $df_1=2$ and $df_2=93$) is compared to the calculated value. Given that the calculated F-value (31.886) is greater than the critical F-table value (3.09), and the significance level (Sig. = 0.001) is less than $\alpha = 0.05$, the criterion indicates that H_1

is accepted and H_0 is rejected. This demonstrates that CRM and Sales Promotion simultaneously exert a positive and significant effect on Customer Loyalty.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2) Test

The R^2 value is 0.407, indicating that Customer Loyalty can be explained by the variables of CRM and Sales Promotion by 40.7%, while the remaining 59.3% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study or factors external to the research model.

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Customer Relationship Management on Customer Loyalty

The calculated t-value for CRM (X_1) is 1.919, which is less than the critical t-table value (1.9858) and has a significance level (Sig.=0.058) greater than $\alpha=0.05$. This indicates that CRM has a positive but not significant effect on Customer Loyalty at Smarco. The coefficient $X_1(b_1) = 0.279$ shows that a one-unit increase in CRM is associated with a 0.279 increase in Customer Loyalty. This finding contradicts the study by Hikmawati et al. (2020), which reported a significant positive effect. This discrepancy is attributed to the suboptimal implementation of CRM at Smarco (via Smarcard and Smarpriority), which has yet to fully establish long-term customer relationships.

The Influence of Sales Promotion on Customer Loyalty

For the Sales Promotion variable (X_2), the calculated t-value (5.192) is greater than the critical t-table value (1.9858), with a significance level of $0.001 < 0.05$. This indicates a significant positive partial effect on customer loyalty at Smarco. The coefficient $X_2(b_2) = 0.877$ indicates that each one-unit increase in sales promotion is associated with 0.877 increase in customer loyalty. This finding is consistent with the study by Roni et al. (2022), which confirmed the significant influence of sales promotion on customer loyalty.

The Influence of Customer Relationship Management and Sales Promotion on Customer Loyalty

The F-test results indicate that the calculated F-value (31.886) is greater than the critical F-table value (3.09), with a significance level of $0.001 < 0.05$, demonstrating that CRM and Sales Promotion simultaneously exert a significant positive effect on customer loyalty at Smarco. The R^2 value of 0.407 indicates that 40.7% of the variation in customer loyalty is explained by the two variables, while the remaining 59.3% is influenced by other factors beyond the model. These findings are consistent with the study by Alimin & Marco (2023), which confirmed the significant impact of CRM and Sales Promotion on customer loyalty, both partially and simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

The analysis concludes that Sales Promotion has a statistically significant positive partial effect on customer loyalty, while CRM shows a positive but insignificant partial effect. Nevertheless, the simultaneous application of both variables significantly influences loyalty, collectively explaining 40.7% of the total variance. Based on these findings, Smarco Superstore must urgently revitalize and optimize its current CRM implementation (Smarcard/Smarpriority), shifting focus to personalized digital interactions to overcome the current suboptimal execution and build stronger long-term relationships. Furthermore, future research is recommended to investigate the remaining 59.3% of loyalty variation by exploring external factors not included in this model.

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