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Creating Sustainable Customer Loyalty through Experiential Marketing and Digital Customer Relationship Management: The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction among Coffee Shop Customers in Medan Maimun

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Experiential Marketing and Digital Customer Relationship Management (Digital CRM) affect Customer Loyalty, with Customer Satisfaction as a mediator, among customers of several coffee shop brands in Medan Maimun District, Medan City. Questionnaire data from 200 respondents were analyzed in SPSS 27 with two multiple linear regression models and a 5,000-resample bootstrap for indirect effects. Experiential Marketing and Digital CRM have positive and significant effects on Customer Satisfaction, and together with satisfaction they also significantly increase Customer Loyalty, explaining 44.8% of its variance. Customer Satisfaction partially mediates the effects of Experiential Marketing (indirect effect = 0.060; 95% CI 0.020 to 0.108) and Digital CRM (indirect effect = 0.064; 95% CI 0.019 to 0.125). Digital CRM has the strongest direct effect on loyalty, whereas Experiential Marketing relies more on satisfaction. Coffee shops should therefore manage the in-store experience and digital touchpoints as one relationship strategy.

Keywords: *Customer Loyalty; Customer Satisfaction; Digital Customer Relationship Management; Experiential Marketing; Sustainable Loyalty*

INTRODUCTION

The coffee shop industry has moved from selling a product to selling an experience. Customers now judge a coffee shop not only by its coffee and prices but also by its atmosphere and service. Carmo et al. (2022), showed that the dimensions of experience shape satisfaction and loyalty, Molinillo et al. (2022) ,found that such experience can also arise in digital settings, and Arora and Banerji (2024) ,identified satisfaction as a strong predictor of loyalty.

Competition is also visible in customers' brand preferences. A preliminary survey of 35 coffee shop customers in Medan Maimun District showed that they visited several brands, led by Kopi Kenangan and followed by Starbucks, Point Coffee, Fore Coffee, and Tomoro Coffee (Figure 1). With so many alternatives, coffee shops need to differentiate themselves through experience and stronger relationships.

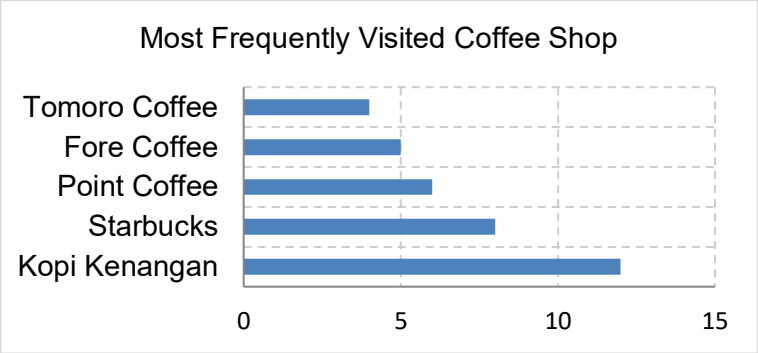


Figure 1. *Most Frequently Visited Coffee Shop by Respondents*
Source: Preliminary Research Survey (2026)

In the same survey, only 34.29% of respondents said they would keep choosing the same coffee shop, so loyalty is not yet well established. Coffee shops have also become places to work, study, and meet, which means that customers weigh comfort, atmosphere, and social interaction alongside product quality.

Medan Maimun covers 3.04 km² across six urban villages with intensive trade and service activity Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Medan (2025). Most respondents in the preliminary survey had visited coffee shops three to five times in the previous three months (Figure 2), yet frequent visits do not necessarily indicate loyalty when switching is easy.

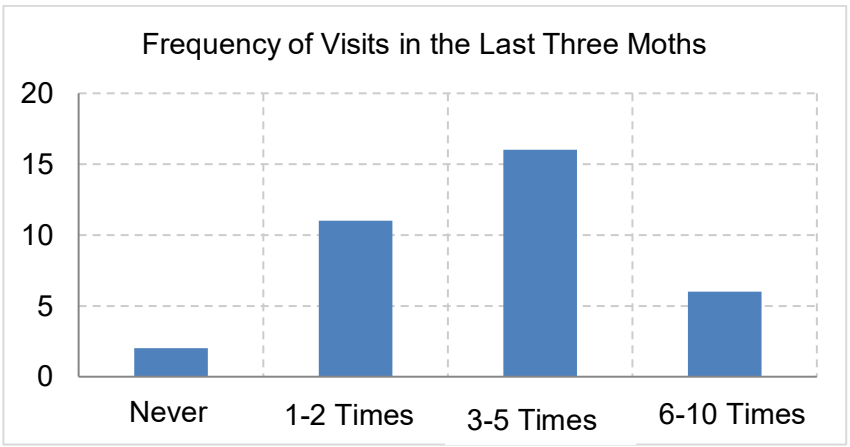


Figure 2. *Respondents' Frequency of Visits to Coffee Shops in the Last Three Months*
Source: Preliminary research survey (2026)

Coffee shops now also manage relationships through ordering applications, delivery platforms, social media, and digital loyalty programs. Chatbots can strengthen loyalty Jenneboer et al. (2022), and social CRM can raise satisfaction Malki et al. (2024). Neither experience nor Digital CRM is expected to create loyalty entirely on its own; both may work partly through satisfaction Gazi et al. (2024), which is shaped by service, atmosphere, convenience, value, and responsiveness Ahmed et al. (2023).

Most of the studies reviewed here were conducted in banking, telecommunications, automotive, and app-based services, and they examined experience and CRM separately. Less is known about how in-store experience and digital relationship management operate together in coffee shops, where customers switch easily between brands and order through both outlets and delivery platforms. This study therefore integrates both variables, with Customer Satisfaction as a mediator, to explain Customer Loyalty in Medan Maimun.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship Marketing Theory

Relationship marketing focuses on long-term customer relationships built through interaction and value creation. Malki et al. (2024), drew on this theory to show that social CRM improves satisfaction and loyalty. Here, it supports the argument that experience, Digital CRM, and satisfaction jointly build loyalty in coffee shops.

Experiential Marketing (X_1)

Experiential marketing creates experiences through sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational engagement with a brand. Schmitt (1999), formalized these as the modules of sense, feel, think, act, and relate, which serve as the dimensions of this construct. Carmo et al. (2022), and Molinillo et al. (2022) ,found that the affective dimension weighs most on satisfaction and loyalty.

Digital Customer Relationship Management (Digital CRM) (X_2)

Digital CRM is the management of customer relationships through digital technology. CRM helps firms understand their customers Guerola-Navarro et al. (2024), and e-CRM can support sustainable business practices Mansour et al. (2025). Following Magatef et al. (2023), Digital CRM is measured through information quality, system quality, personalization, responsiveness, and channel integration.

Customer Satisfaction (Z)

Customer satisfaction is the evaluation customers form after comparing their experience with their expectations, measured here through product quality, service, fulfillment of expectations, overall satisfaction, and choice of the coffee shop Ahmed et al. (2023); Gazi et al. (2024). In Medan Situmorang and Wijaya (2025), linked satisfaction to loyalty in a food business, and Kisono et al. (2026), described how relationship marketing raises satisfaction among culinary MSMEs.

Customer Loyalty (Y)

Customer loyalty is a customer's commitment to a brand, shown through repeat purchases, preference, and recommendation. CRM strengthens satisfaction and retention Dwivedi et al. (2024), while in local food retail in Medan, price and taste also shape loyalty Situmorang & Pane (2024). Loyalty is measured through repurchase intention, primary choice, low switching, recommendation, and a positive brand relationship Dwivedi et al. (2024); Pereira et al. (2025).

Hypothesis Development

The Effect of Experiential Marketing on Customer Satisfaction

Sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational experiences add value beyond the product. Carmo et al. (2022), found that sensory and affective experiences directly increase satisfaction, and Hutabarat et al. (2026), reported a similar effect. Therefore:

H1: Experiential marketing has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

The Effect of Digital Customer Relationship Management on Customer Satisfaction

Accurate information, easy ordering, timely responses, and personalized treatment reduce customer effort and uncertainty. Mokha and Kumar (2022) ,found that e-CRM increases satisfaction among bank customers, and Malki et al. (2024) ,showed that traditional CRM and social media use both raise satisfaction. Therefore:

H2: Digital Customer Relationship Management has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

The Effect of Experiential Marketing on Customer Loyalty

Memorable experiences can also build loyalty directly through affective bonds and behavioral engagement. Carmo et al. (2022), found direct effects of affective and behavioral experience on loyalty, and Dhillon et al. (2022), argued that experiential strategies foster lasting brand meaning. Therefore:

H3: Experiential marketing has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

The Effect of Digital Customer Relationship Management on Customer Loyalty

Personalized offers, integrated channels, and relationship-based rewards can strengthen loyalty directly, although the evidence varies by dimension. Syaifullah et al. (2024), reported a positive effect of e-CRM on loyalty among Gojek users in Indonesia, Malki et al. (2024), found that social media use affected loyalty only indirectly, and Magatef et al. (2023), found a negative direct effect of the personal e-CRM dimension. Therefore:

H4: Digital Customer Relationship Management has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

The Effect of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

Satisfied customers have stronger reasons to repurchase and recommend a provider, although satisfaction does not guarantee loyalty in every situation. Ahmed et al. (2023), Gazi et al. (2024), Arora and Banerji (2024), and Malki et al. (2024), all reported a positive link between the two. Therefore:

H5: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, adopted by Mokha and Kumar (2022), holds that stimuli shape behavior through internal evaluations. Carmo et al. (2022), found that satisfaction mediates the effects of sensory and affective experience on loyalty. Therefore:

H6: Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of experiential marketing on customer loyalty.

The same logic applies to Digital CRM. Mokha and Kumar (2022), Malki et al. (2024), and Gazi et al. (2024), found that satisfaction mediates the link between CRM and loyalty, and Syaifullah et al. (2024), described satisfaction as a potent mediator in an Indonesian app context. Therefore:

H7: Customer satisfaction mediates the positive effect of Digital Customer Relationship Management on customer loyalty.

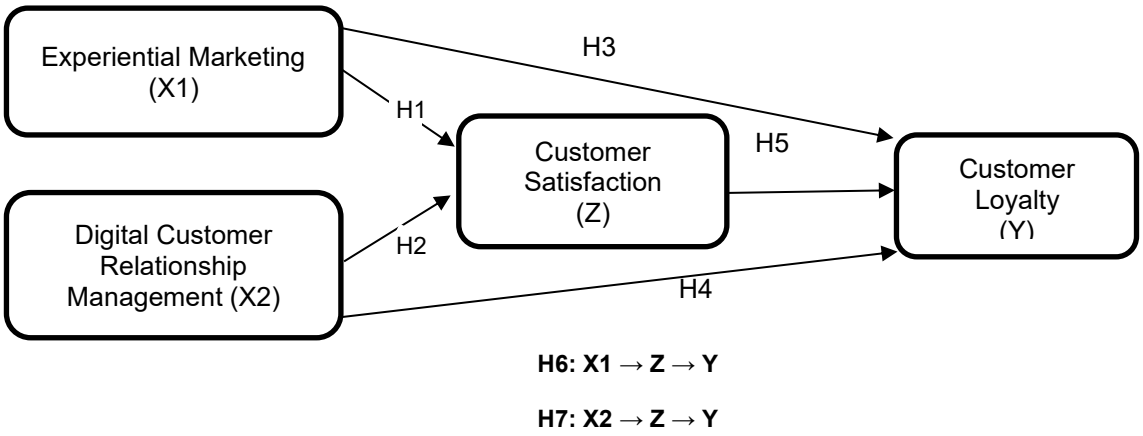


Figure 3. *Proposed Conceptual Framework*

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative explanatory survey of coffee shop customers in Medan Maimun District who were at least 17 years old, had purchased at a coffee shop, and had used its digital services. Because the population size is unknown, respondents were selected according to these criteria Candra Susanto et al. (2024). A five-point Likert questionnaire measured each variable through five indicators (20 indicators, 60 items). Following Hair et al. (2014), the sample was set at five to ten times the number of indicators, giving 200 respondents. Questionnaires were distributed in person through QR codes and online.

The instrument was pretested on 30 customers outside Medan Maimun. An item was valid when its Pearson item-total correlation exceeded the r-table value of 0.361 (df = 28; α = 0.05), and a construct was reliable when its Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.60. The main data were analyzed in SPSS 27 through descriptive statistics, classical assumption tests, and two regression models. Model 1 regressed Customer Satisfaction on Experiential Marketing and Digital CRM, and Model 2 regressed Customer Loyalty on all three variables. Partial and joint effects were tested with t- and F-tests. For H6 and H7, the indirect effect (a × b) was tested with a 5,000-resample percentile bootstrap following PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes, 2022), with the other independent variable entered as a covariate. An indirect effect was significant when its 95% confidence interval excluded zero, and the Sobel test served as a supplementary check.

RESULTS

Table 1.
Descriptive Analysis

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	93	46.5%
	Female	107	53.5%
Age	17-25 years	108	54.0%
	26-35 years	90	45.0%
	36-45 years	2	1.0%
Occupation	Student	67	33.5%

	Civil Servant (PNS)	31	15.5%
	Private-Sector Employee	64	32.0%
	Entrepreneur	38	19.0%
Most Frequently Visited Coffee Shop	Kopi Kenangan	49	24.5%
	Starbucks	37	18.5%
	Point Coffee	35	17.5%
	Fore Coffee	38	19.0%
	Tomoro Coffee	41	20.5%
Frequency of Coffee Shop Visits in the Last Three Months	1-2 times	21	10.5%
	3-5 times	81	40.5%
	6-10 times	76	38.0%
	More than 10 times	22	11.0%
Digital Media Used for Interaction	Instagram	11	5.5%
	WhatsApp	14	7.0%
	Coffee shop application	74	37.0%
	GoFood	45	22.5%
	GrabFood	49	24.5%
	Website	7	3.5%

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2026

Most respondents were female (53.5%), aged 17 to 25 years (54.0%), and students (33.5%). Most had visited coffee shops three to five times in the previous three months (40.5%), and coffee shop applications were the main digital channel (37.0%). Visits were spread across brands, which reflects the switching tendency noted earlier.

Table 2.
Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variable	Items	r-count range	r-table	Cronbach α	Conclusion
Experiential Marketing (X_1)	15	0.369 to 0.859	0.361	0.883	Valid; reliable
Digital CRM (X_2)	15	0.574 to 0.792	0.361	0.919	Valid; reliable
Customer Satisfaction (Z)	15	0.448 to 0.860	0.361	0.905	Valid; reliable
Customer Loyalty (Y)	15	0.598 to 0.854	0.361	0.924	Valid; reliable

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2026

All 60 items exceeded the r-table value of 0.361, the lowest being X1.12 (0.369), and all Cronbach's alpha values (0.883 to 0.924) exceeded 0.60. The instrument was therefore valid and reliable, and no item was removed.

Table 3.
Classical Assumption Test Results

Test	Model / Variable	Sig. or Tol.; VIF	Criterion	Conclusion
Normality (K-S)	Model 1	Sig. = 0.200	Sig. > 0.05	Normal
	Model 2	Sig. = 0.200		
Multicollinearity	Model 2: X_1	0.582; 1.719	Tol. > 0.10; VIF < 10	Not detected
	Model 2: X_2	0.588; 1.702		
	Model 2: Z	0.618; 1.617		
Heteroscedasticity (Glejser)	Model 1: X_1	Sig. = 0.536	Sig. > 0.05	Not detected
	Model 1: X_2	Sig. = 0.169		
	Model 2: X_1	Sig. = 0.840		

Model 2: X_2	Sig. = 0.606
Model 2: Z	Sig. = 0.314

Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2026

The residuals of both models were normally distributed (Asymp. Sig. = 0.200). Tolerance values above 0.10 and VIF values below 10 indicate no multicollinearity, and all Glejser significance values (0.169 to 0.840) exceed 0.05, so neither model shows heteroscedasticity.

Table 4.
Multiple Linear Regression Results

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Model 1 (dependent variable: Customer Satisfaction, Z)					
Constant	22.048	3.659			
Experiential Marketing (X_1)	0.311	0.060	0.355	5.141	< 0.001
Digital CRM (X_2)	0.332	0.067	0.340	4.924	< 0.001
R^2 = 0.382; F = 60.777; Sig. < 0.001					
Model 2 (dependent variable: Customer Loyalty, Y)					
Constant	18.647	3.522			
Experiential Marketing (X_1)	0.161	0.057	0.196	2.822	0.005
Digital CRM (X_2)	0.351	0.063	0.384	5.549	< 0.001
Customer Satisfaction (Z)	0.193	0.063	0.207	3.066	0.002
R^2 = 0.448; Adjusted R^2 = 0.440; F = 53.103; Sig. < 0.001					

Note: t-table = 1.972; F-table (Model 2) = 2.65. Source: SPSS Data Processing Results, 2026

Table 4 yields the following equations for Model 1 and Model 2:

$$Z = 22.048 + 0.311X_1 + 0.332X_2 + e$$

In Model 1, Experiential Marketing (t = 5.141) and Digital CRM (t = 4.924) both exceed the t-table value of 1.972 (Sig. < 0.001), which supports H1 and H2. Together they explain 38.2% of the variance in Customer Satisfaction (F = 60.777; Sig. < 0.001).

$$Y = 18.647 + 0.161X_1 + 0.351X_2 + 0.193Z + e$$

In Model 2, Experiential Marketing (t = 2.822; Sig. = 0.005), Digital CRM (t = 5.549; Sig. < 0.001), and Customer Satisfaction (t = 3.066; Sig. = 0.002) all significantly increase Customer Loyalty, supporting H3, H4, and H5. The model is significant (F = 53.103 > 2.65; Sig. < 0.001) and explains 44.8% of the variance in loyalty. Digital CRM has the largest standardized coefficient (β = 0.384), followed by Customer Satisfaction (β = 0.207) and Experiential Marketing (β = 0.196).

Table 5.
Mediation Test Results

Path	Indirect effect (a×b)	Boot SE	95% CI (LLCI; ULCI)	Sobel z	p (Sobel)
X1 → Z → Y	0.060	0.023	0.020; 0.108	2.633	0.008
X2 → Z → Y	0.064	0.027	0.019; 0.125	2.603	0.009

Source: Data processing results (5,000 bootstrap resamples), 2026

Both indirect effects are positive and significant, because neither bootstrap confidence interval contains zero, and the Sobel test agrees (p < 0.01). Since the direct effects also remain significant (Table 4), Customer Satisfaction partially mediates both relationships, which supports H6 and H7.

DISCUSSION

Experiential Marketing Has a Positive Effect on Customer Satisfaction

Experiential Marketing increased Customer Satisfaction (t = 5.141; Sig. < 0.001), so H1 is supported: atmosphere, attentive service, and meaningful interaction translate into higher satisfaction. This is consistent with Carmo et al. (2022), and Hutabarat et al. (2026), although the dimension-level evidence is less uniform. In the former study only the sensory and affective dimensions raised satisfaction, and Molinillo et al. (2022), found no significant effect of the relational dimension. Because this study treats experience as one aggregate construct, the significant coefficient may conceal weaker dimensions.

Digital Customer Relationship Management Has a Positive Effect on Customer Satisfaction

Digital CRM also increased Customer Satisfaction (t = 4.924; Sig. < 0.001), supporting H2. The finding is consistent with Mokha and Kumar (2022), among bank customers, with Malki et al. (2024), where both traditional CRM and social media use raised satisfaction, and with the descriptive evidence of Kisono et al. (2026), from culinary MSMEs in Medan. Informative, responsive, and convenient digital contact thus appears to be valued similarly across industries.

Experiential Marketing Has a Positive Effect on Customer Loyalty

Experiential Marketing had a positive direct effect on Customer Loyalty (t = 2.822; Sig. = 0.005), so H3 is supported. This is consistent with the direct effects of affective and behavioral experience reported by Carmo et al. (2022), and with Dhillon et al. (2022). Yet it is the weakest direct path in Model 2 (β = 0.196), suggesting that a good in-store experience secures loyalty mainly when it first produces satisfaction.

Digital Customer Relationship Management Has a Positive Effect on Customer Loyalty

Digital CRM had the strongest direct effect on Customer Loyalty (t = 5.549; β = 0.384), supporting H4. This is consistent with Syaifullah et al. (2024), among Gojek users and with the direct CRM path reported by Gazi et al. (2024). It is inconsistent with Malki et al. (2024), where social media use affected loyalty only indirectly, and with Magatef et al. (2023), where the personal e-CRM dimension reduced loyalty. A plausible reason is that Digital CRM in coffee shops works mainly through transactional channels: 37.0% of respondents interacted mainly through coffee shop applications and 47.0% through GoFood or GrabFood, where ordering, payment, and rewards create convenience and switching costs.

Customer Satisfaction Has a Positive Effect on Customer Loyalty

Customer Satisfaction increased Customer Loyalty (t = 3.066; Sig. = 0.002), supporting H5. The direction is consistent with Ahmed et al. (2023), Arora and Banerji (2024), Gazi et al. (2024), and Situmorang and Wijaya (2025). Its strength, however, is lower than the strong predictive role reported in digital banking, as the coefficient of satisfaction (β = 0.207) is about half that of Digital CRM. This supports the earlier caution that satisfaction alone does not guarantee loyalty, especially where only 34.29% of surveyed customers intended to stay with one coffee shop.

Customer Satisfaction Mediates the Positive Effect of Experiential Marketing on Customer Loyalty

Customer Satisfaction partially mediated the effect of Experiential Marketing on Customer Loyalty (indirect effect = 0.060; 95% CI 0.020 to 0.108), supporting H6 and

agreeing with Carmo et al. (2022), who found that satisfaction carries the effects of sensory and affective experience to loyalty. About 27% of the total effect (0.060 of 0.221) passes through satisfaction, which fits the S-O-R view that experiential stimuli act through internal evaluations.

Customer Satisfaction Mediates the Effect of Digital Customer Relationship Management on Customer Loyalty

Customer Satisfaction also partially mediated the effect of Digital CRM (indirect effect = 0.064; 95% CI 0.019 to 0.125), supporting H7. The direction is consistent with Mokha and Kumar (2022), Malki et al. (2024), and Gazi et al. (2024), but the magnitude is inconsistent with Syaifullah et al. (2024), who described satisfaction as a potent mediator: only about 15% of the total effect (0.064 of 0.415) passes through satisfaction here. Digital CRM appears to build loyalty in coffee shops mostly through convenience and habit.

CONCLUSION

Experiential Marketing and Digital CRM increase Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty among coffee shop customers in Medan Maimun, and satisfaction in turn increases loyalty. Satisfaction partially mediates both effects, but the two capabilities work differently: experience depends more on satisfaction, whereas Digital CRM builds loyalty mostly directly.

RECOMMENDATION

Coffee shops should strengthen the in-store experience through atmosphere, comfort, and service, because its effect on loyalty depends largely on whether customers leave satisfied. They should also invest in their applications and delivery-platform presence, where ordering, rewards, and responsiveness build loyalty directly, and monitor satisfaction regularly. Future studies should model experience dimensions separately, cover a wider area, and use probability sampling to improve generalizability.

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