Improving Customer Loyalty Based On Relationship And Service Quality On Networked Store Customer

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Abstract: The research objectives of this study is to examine: (i) the influence of service quality on relationship quality and customer loyalty; (ii) the influence of relationship quality on customer loyalty; and (iii) the intermediate effect of service quality on customer loyalty mediated by relationship quality in networked mini-markets We collected the data from 140 customers based on a purposive sampling, using a structured questionnaire distributed at seven Indonesian cities. The research results of the study show that the increase in service quality directly improves relationship quality. However, we could not prove that the increase in service quality directly increases customer loyalty. Finally, we find that there is an intermediate effect of service quality on customer loyalty mediated by relationship quality in networked mini-markets

Index Terms: customer loyalty, networked store, relationship quality, service quality

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1 INTRODUCTION

THE globalization era that characterized by technological advances and it is getting more difficult to gain customer loyalty led to an increasingly tight business competition. Therefore, the companies should be competent in arranging a good marketing strategy to keep their existence in the market. The company's marketing activities are the most important activities to win the competition in the market. The system that formed in marketing activities should be directed to introduce the brand or the product, to make the customers familiar with the product and then become loyal to the product offered. One example of the fast-growing businesses in Indonesia is the modern retail of the convenience store in the form of networked mini-market. The evolution of networked mini-market business in Indonesia is driven by the tight competition in the end consumer market as stated by Berman and Evans (2001) that the competition occurs because of the nature of the retail business that it is very difficult to differentiate the product and service offered with the very low entry barrier. The competition is no longer among the retailers with the same retail format, but also among the retailers with a different retail format, e.g., a supermarket is not only competing with other supermarkets, but also competing with mini-markets, hypermarkets, department stores, superstore, and wholesale stores. One strategy to win the competition in the networked mini-market business is by improving service quality. Service quality provided to the customers will affect their behavior that will finally affect company's profitability. The level of service quality cannot be assessed from the company's perspective, but should be viewed from the customer's perspective.

Therefore, the formulation of strategies and service programs should be oriented towards the customer by focusing on service quality components. Applying service quality improvement program will increase customer loyalty. The implementation of a relationship marketing strategy is an important factor for the success of the modern retail business (Meerzorg, 2003). Relationship marketing strategy plays a vital role in increasing consumer demand in order to build a harmonious relationship between the customer and the retailer (Utami, 2006). This is because by performing the communication activities the company can perform preferential treatment, personalization, and rewarding (Levy and Weitz, 2004). Consumer behavior is the activities of individuals who are directly involved in obtaining, consuming, and spending the goods or services, including the decision process that precedes and follows those activities (Engel, 1993). Consumers are willing to buy a product based on both rational and irrational impulses. This impulse encourages them to satisfy their needs and desires by the action of purchasing the goods or services. Responding to this situation, the companies should focus its attention on delivering best service quality to increase customer loyalty. Empirical studies conducted by Utami (2006); Dabholker, Thorpe, and Rentz (1996); shows that physical environment, pricing policy and product return guarantee are closely related to the operational aspects of retail business. Brady and Cronin (2001) also stated that a wide variety of merchandise, layout, and the employee's were important attributes for retail business to serve their customer. In addition, the company must also improve the relationship quality to improve its customer loyalty. Service quality in services marketing is important as it will affect the relationship quality and the level of customer loyalty. The better the quality of the existing services, the better the relationship quality and customer loyalty. A key component to maintaining a company's sustainability in the long term is customer loyalty (Aydin and Ozer, 2004). Research by Naki (2009) shows that the relationship quality is directly affected by service quality and eventually will have a direct effect on customer loyalty, but, on the other hand, service quality has no direct effect on customer loyalty. This finding is supported by studies of Caruana (2002) and Aryani and Rosita (2010) stating that service quality does not directly affect customer loyalty. However, studies by Akbar and Pavez (2009), Dimyati (2011), and Dimyati (2016) find different results and concluding that

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service quality directly influences customer loyalty. Therefore, the differences in the empirical findings require further research to examine the effect of service quality on customer loyalty. The current rapid development of the networked mini-market business is supported by the early change in the business environment that creates fierce competition in the market. This competition forces the company management to think about the best strategies to make their customers remain loyal. It is critical for the company management to understand better what influences their customer loyalty. This is because most of the customers today are the discerning customers and it is easy for them to change their purchasing behavior and switch to another company offering better service (Beckett et al., 2000). Therefore, companies must have the ability to satisfy the preferences and expectations of its customers to make sure that the customer will not switch to other competitors. The networked mini-market business has the low market entry barrier that makes it easy to enter so that many new companies joining the competition. This situation is also happening in East Java Province, Indonesia, especially in Tapal Kuda region. Tapal Kuda area is located at the eastern end of Java Island. Its shape on the map looks similar to the shape of a Horseshoe or known as Tapal Kuda in Indonesian Language. The region covers the seven cities or regencies of: Pasuruan (the eastern part), Probolinggo, Lumajang, Jember, Situbondo, Bondowoso and Banyuwangi with the population consisted of Pendalungann ethnic group or the mix of Java and Madura ethnic groups (Anwar, 2014). Tapal Kuda region is an area that often be used as the barometer of the development of networked mini-markets in East Java Province. This region is currently a preferable areas for developing the networked mini-market businesses in East Java. This condition indicates that the competition between the networked mini-markets is unavoidable that every company joining the business should take reasonable efforts to win the market. The primary purpose of the entrepreneurs in entering the networked mini-market business is not only to gain the economic benefits in the form of profit, but the more important is to provide the best service quality to its customers. Being able to provide the best service quality to the customer will lead to customer satisfaction that will finally create customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is very crucial to make the customers loyal to the products or services, and it can be created from the effective services provided by the company.   Referring to the previous argumentations, the first aims of this study is to examine the direct effect of service quality on relationship quality and customer loyalt. The second is to reveal the direct effect of relationship quality on customer loyalty. The third is to find whether any indirect effect of service quality on customer loyalty mediated by relationship quality in the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda area. Results of the study are expected to offer more insights into the development of the knowledge about how to build customer loyalty by providing best management of service quality and relationship quality. This study proposes three hypotheses, i.e., the increase in service quality will directly improve relationship quality, the increase in service quality will directly increase customer loyalty, and the increase in relationship quality will directly increase customer loyalty.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Service Quality
Service is a tangible or intangible activity to serve the consumers by providing goods or services with or without the transfer of ownership of particular goods or services (Savitri and Halim, 2003: 41). Service quality is defined as a comprehensive assessment or attitude related to the superiority of a service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1985). Dimyati (2011) suggests that service quality can also be interpreted as a company's care towards its customers. Understanding the concept of quality with the appropriate dimensions and attributes in the networked mini-markets business requires a comprehensive review of the studies related to service quality in retail business. Brady and Cronin (2001) use three dimensions of service quality: (1) personal interaction, (2) physical environment quality, and (3) quality outcome. Dabholker et al. (1996) measures service quality using five indicators, including: (1) physical aspect, (2) reliability, (3) personal interaction, (4) problem-solving, and (5) policy. This study adopts previous dimension to measure service quality: (1) quality of interaction, (2) quality of outcomes, (3) output of environment, and (4) retailer policy. Cronin and Taylor (1992) propose an alternative measure of service quality known as SERVPERF (service performance). This measurement includes the question of service quality performance. This study uses a SERVPERF measurement scale because it measures the perception or assessment of the customer to the service quality they received from the company. It is considered more appropriate to use SERVPERF scale to measure service quality based on the performance of service quality compared to SERVQUAL (service quality measurement offered by Parasuraman et al., 1985) that measures service quality based on the gap between expectation and performance.

2.2 Relationship Quality
Relationship quality is related to conflict, trust, commitment, and sustainability of future relations between the company and its customers. Good relationship quality will reduce the level of conflict and will increase trust, commitment, continuous long-term relationship, and investment. Roberts et al., in Naki (2009) states that there are four dimensions that can be used to measure relationship quality. Trust in a partner's honesty, which is customers' trust that company's words and promises are trustworthy, that the company will realize them, and the company will be more active in convincing its customer by showing a good performance. Trust in a partner's benevolence, which is customers' perception that they believe the company will pay attention to customers needs and welfare. Affective commitment, which is customers commitment to keep in touch and to keep interacting with the company because they enjoy the relationship created by the company. The last dimension is satisfaction, which is the feeling of happy or disappointment because of the comparison between the perceived and expected services or products.

2.3 Customer Loyalty
Customer loyalty is a deeply held commitment to repurchase or resubscribe a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing effort of having the potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver

(1997). Meanwhile, Caruana (2002) states that customer loyalty is a final effect of repeat purchases made by the customer that is important in constructing a marketing strategy. Furthermore, Roberts et al., in Naki (2009) suggests six indicators that support customer loyalty. Sharing information, which is a form of behavior loyalty by providing information to others related to the products or services as a form of the pride to the products or services. Saying positive things, which is always telling positive things about a product or company's service to others. Giving recommendation to friends, the condition where the loyal customers tend to suggest or recommend the products or services that they have consumed to other persons. Continuing in purchasing the product, which is keep purchasing or consuming the products or services with the greater possibility to increase the frequency of consumption of the products or services. Purchasing additional service, which is to consume or to purchase additional products and services offered by the company. The six indikator is testing new services, which is the condition when measuring loyalty is not only by purchasing the products or services continuously in large numbers, but also from purchasing the new products and trying the new services offered by the company. A service company should not only focusing its attention on the existing customers, but also the more important is how to make these customers as the loyalists, those who defend the image of the products or services and spread the positive values of the company to others. It is a success for the company's marketing team if they can establish customer loyalty for the long term.

3 METHODOLOGY

This research is a confirmatory research with the population of the customers of networked mini-markets located in seven cities in Tapal Kuda region. The sampling method used is purposive sampling with the sample consisted of the customers of the networked mini-markets in Probolinggo, Lumajang, Jember, Situbondo, Bondowoso, Banyuwangi, and Pasuruan (the eastern part). The sample consists of 140 respondents determined from the sum of all indicators of latent variables multiplied by 10. The sample amount is based on Roscoe (in Sekaran 2003); Ghozali (2005); and Ferdinand (2005). Sample allocation uses disproportionate distribution with the sample of 20 respondents in each city. The research variables are grouped into three, namely: exogenous variable which is the service quality (X1) measured by four indicators; intervening endogenous variable which is the relationship quality (Y1) measured by four indicators, and dependent endogenous variable which is the customer loyalty (Y) measured by six indicators. The variable measurement scale used is Likert scale with five alternative answers. Research data are sourced from primary data collected from the questionnaires distribution.

Table 1. *Results of Validity and Reliability Test for the Indicators of Research Variables*

Variable	Validity Test					Construct Reliability
	Indicators	Loading Factor	P	Remarks	GFI	
Service Quality	Interaction Quality (X1.1)	0.603	***	Valid	0.930	0.851 (Reliable)
	Output Quality (X1.2)	0.715	***	Valid		
	Environmet Output (X1.3)	0.742	***	Valid		
	Retailer's Policy (X1.4)	0.668	***	Valid		
Relationship Quality	Trust in Partner's Honesty (Y1.1)	0.574	***	Valid	0.930	0.815 (Reliable)
	Trust in Partner's Benevolence (Y1.2)	0.693	***	Valid		
	Affective Commitment (Y1.3)	0.592	***	Valid		
	Satisfaction (Y1.4)	0.436	***	Valid		
Customer Loyalty	Sharing information (Y2.1)	0.658	***	Valid	0.990	0.646 (Reliable)
	Saying positive things (Y2.2)	0.748	***	Valid		
	Recommending friends to purchase (Y2.3)	0.617	***	Valid		
	Continue purchasing (Y2 4)	0.614	***	Valid		
	Purchasing additional service (Y2.5)	0.673	***	Valid		
	Testing new service (Y2.6)	0.555	***	Valid		

Source: results of analysis run with AMOS program.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of validity and reliability test of the instrument (Table 1) show that all variable indicators are valid and reliable, with the loading factor value of latent variables above 0.4 with significant probability at the α of 5%, and the value of construct reliability above 0.6.
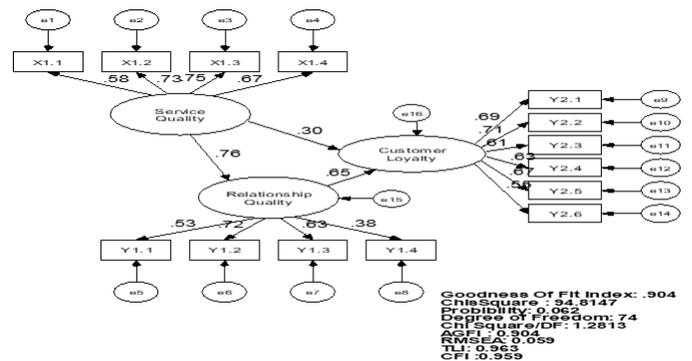

Figure 1. *SEM model, the mediating role of relationship quality on the effect of service quality on customer loyalty in the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda area.*

The SEM model (Figure 1) test is comply with the requirement of normal multivariate assumption. The CR value is 1.271 (between -1.96 up to 1.96), there is no multicollinearity between the exogenous variables. No multicollinearity condition happens because the exogenous variable is only one and no outlier on the data as indicated by the value of Mahalanobis distance. All value of Mahalanobis distance are under 23.684 (χ2 df: 14, the number of indicators). The SEM model also complies with the requirements of model fit (Table 2) so that the model can be accepted because of the conformity with the data.

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Table 2. *SEM Conformity Indices*

Criteria	Cutoff Value	Results of Calculation	Remarks
Chi-square	Should be smaller than the value of the Table-Chi Square: $\chi 2\alpha = 0.05$. df= 74 (95.0815)	94.8147	Achieved
DF	Should be positive	74	Achieved
Si_ Probability	≥ 0.05	0.062	Achieved
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.059	Achieved
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.904	Achieved
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.904	Achieved
Chi-square /DF	≤ 2 or 3	1.2813	Achieved
TLI	≥ 0.95	0.963	Achieved
CFI	≥ 0.95	0.959	Achieved

Source: results of analysis run with AMOS program.

Table 3 provides the results of causality test of the hypothesis of the research showing that hypotheses 1 and 3 are supported, but hypothesis 2 is not supported.

4.1 Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1: the increase in service quality will directly increase relationship quality in the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda area.

Hypothesis 1 of this study is supported which is indicated by the positive path coefficient 0.513 with the CR value 3.362 and significant probability (p) *** which is smaller than α 0.05. From these findings, it can be stated that if the company provides a good and satisfactory service to its customers, then the customers will put great trust to the company. By creating a good relationship quality will lead to a good relation between the company and its customers. This condition is supported by the characteristic of the majority of respondents. Most of them were students and housewives with the educational background of high school and university graduates. They represent the customers with selective and intellectual attitude in choosing and deciding the places to go shopping. Also they have the knowledge about what kinds of benefit they would like to get from the mini-markets that will finally affect the way they make the assessment about the relationship quality offered by the company. Findings of the study also mean that the customers have experienced the performance of good service quality of the networked mini-markets that can encourage their trust towards the positive reputation of the company, encourage their intention and commitment to keep on purchasing the product, and also the happy feeling resulted from the service given by the enterprise. In other words, real customers' assessments of the service quality that they have received will lead to the establishment of a good relationship quality between the networked mini-markets and its customers. Findings of this study support the research by Ratnasari (2007) stating that service quality significantly affects relationship quality. The higher the level of service quality provided by the company, the higher the level of relationship quality that exists between the enterprise and its customers. Findings of the study also support the research by Naki (2009) stating that better service quality received by the customers will positively improve the relationship quality between the customer and the company.

Tabel 3. *Results of Causality Test*

Variable	Path Coefficient	CR	Probability	Remarks
X1— Y1	0.513	3.362	***	Significant (supported)
X1 — Y2	0.013	1.680	0.093	Not Significant (not supported)
Y1— Y2	0.529	2.789	0.005	Significant (supported)

Source: results of the analysis with AMOS program.

4.2 Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2: the increase in service quality will directly increase customer loyalty in the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda region.

Hypothesis 2 of this study is not supported as indicated by the value of positive coefficient path 0.013 with the CR value 1.680 and significant probability (p) 0.093 which is greater than the α, so that service quality has no significant direct effect on customer loyalty. It means that service quality provided by the networked mini-markets in the Tapal Kuda area cannot directly create customer loyalty. This condition indicates that customers have not enjoyed the service quality provided by the networked mini-markets that will impact to their emotional satisfaction if the service is exceeding their expectations. The customers perceive that the service quality they receive from the networked mini-markets is equal to their expectations that make them merely satisfied. This feeling has not been able to create customer loyalty as reflected in customer's intention to share information. Loyal customer usually tell a positive thing about the product or service, to recommend others to purchase the product or service. This finding also indicate that consumer will not continue to buy the product in the future. Regarding this result, it will lowering the customer intention to consume the new service and the additional services offered by the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda area. This condition is caused by the relatively same level of service quality provided by the networked mini-markets so that the customer can easily switch from one mini-market to other mini-markets in Tapal Kuda region. In other words, customers have many choices of the mini-markets as the place to shop for their needs. Results of this research support the studies by Ratnasari (2007) and Naki (2009) stating that service quality does not directly affect customer loyalty, but, it indirectly affects customer loyalty through the relationship quality. However, findings of this research are different from the study by Novel (2006) which states that service quality has positive effect on customer loyalty. Research by Akbar and Parvez (2009 indicates that the better the service quality received by the customers, the more the customers become loyal to the company.

4.3 Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3: the increase in relationship quality will directly increase customer loyalty in the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda region.

Hypothesis 3 of the research is supported as indicated by the value of positive path coefficient 0.529 with CR value 2.789 and significant probability (p) 0.005 which is smaller than the α. It means that the relationship quality has a direct, positive, and significant effect on customer loyalty in the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda region. These results prove the

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important effect of relationship quality on customer loyalty which means that the company has created a good relationship quality with its customers. Good relationship quality will encourage customer's intention to share the information about the existence of the networked mini-markets to others. Customer will spread the positive things about the products and services offered by the networked mini-markets, to recommend others to purchase the products offered by the networked mini-markets, to continue using the products and services of the networked mini-markets in the future. Also, increase the customer intention to use new products and additional services offered by networked mini-markets. In other words, good assessment from the customers regarding relationship quality will lead to customer loyalty. Relationship quality is the result of the efforts of both employees and management of the networked mini-markets in providing a better attention to its customers. The findings of this study support a study by Ratnasari (2007) which states that the relationship quality significantly influences customer loyalty. Naki (2009) states that the better the relationship quality, the more customers become loyal to the company. The mediating role of relationship quality in the effect of service quality on customer loyalty in the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda region. The mediating effect can be determined by analyzing the direct and indirect effects of service quality on customer loyalty through relationship quality. The analysis results of the effects between variables are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The Effects of Variables

Direct Effect		Exogenous Variables	
		Service Quality	Relationship Quality
Endogenous Variables	Relationship Quality	0.758	0.000
	Customer Loyalty	0.296	0.653
Indirect Effect		Service Quality	Relationship Quality
Endogenous Variables	Relationship Quality	0.000	0.000
	Customer Loyalty	0.496	0.000

Source: results of SEM analysis with AMOS program.

The analysis results of the direct and indirect effects between variables show that service quality has no significant effect on customer loyalty which the value is smaller compared to its indirect effect, i.e., the effect of service quality on relationship quality. Thus, it can be concluded that relationship quality has an important and significant role in mediating the effect of service quality on customer loyalty in the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda region. The research results of the study indicate that relationship quality should be treated as the primary focus and that the improvement should be performed continuously by the management of the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda region as the efforts to build and to maintain its customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is the final objective of every company's marketing activity because a loyal customer is the solid basis for the buying and selling process of the products or services produced by the company for a long term and ongoing basis. The research results also in line with research by Naki (2009) as previously mentioned.

5 CONCLUSION

The first research hypothesis is accepted which means that a proper assessment of the customer regarding service quality offered by the company will lead to a good relationship quality between the networked mini-markets and its customers. In the other hand, hypothesis 2 is rejected, which means that service quality provided by the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda

area does not directly support the creation of customer loyalty. The rejected result might happen due to the relatively same level of the service quality provided by all networked mini-markets located in Tapal Kuda area so that customers can switch quickly from one mini-market to the other mini-market. Hypothesis 3 of the research is accepted which proves that relationship quality has a direct, positive, and significant effect on customer loyalty in the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda region. Research results consistently prove the significant effect of relationship quality on customer loyalty which means that customers assessment on relationship quality performed by the networked mini-market will directly create customer loyalty. Relationship quality has an important and significant role in mediating the effect of service quality on customer loyalty in the networked mini-markets in Tapal Kuda region. Therefore, the management of networked mini-markets should prioritize their strategy on the continuous improvement of the relationship quality to build and maintain customer loyalty.

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