



The Mediating Roles of Consumer Satisfaction and Word-of-Mouth in the Relationship between Service Quality, Price Fairness, and Loyalty in Indonesian Fast Food

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of service quality and price fairness on consumer loyalty in the fast-food restaurant industry in Tangerang, Indonesia. It further investigates the mediating roles of consumer satisfaction and word-of-mouth communication (WOM) in these relationships. A quantitative research approach was employed using structural equation modeling (SEM) with LISREL software to test the proposed relationships. Data were collected from 347 respondents who visited six fast-food restaurants in Tangerang, including both local and international franchises. The stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representativeness. The results indicate that service quality positively influences consumer satisfaction (loading factor: 0.64, t-value: 2.44) and WOM (loading factor: 0.36, t-value: 6.00). However, service quality negatively affects consumer loyalty (loading factor: -0.21, t-value: 3.25). Price fairness does not significantly impact consumer satisfaction (loading factor: 0.00, t-value: 0.065) but has a positive effect on WOM (loading factor: 0.36, t-value: 8.12) and consumer loyalty (loading factor: 0.39, t-value: 9.13). Moreover, consumer satisfaction does not significantly influence WOM (loading factor: -0.33, t-value: 0.55) but has a moderate positive effect on consumer loyalty (loading factor: 0.23, t-value: 3.64). The strongest relationship is found between consumer loyalty and WOM (loading factor: 0.65, t-value: 13.31), indicating that loyal customers are more likely to share positive experiences. Fast-food restaurant managers should focus on enhancing service quality to boost customer satisfaction and encourage positive WOM communication. Although price fairness is crucial, it plays a greater role in fostering WOM and loyalty rather than directly influencing satisfaction. The findings suggest that strategic service quality improvements, fair pricing policies, and WOM-driven marketing approaches are essential for sustaining customer engagement and competitive advantage. This study provides empirical evidence on the complex interplay between service quality, price fairness, consumer satisfaction, and loyalty in Indonesia's fast-food industry.

Keywords: Fast-Food Restaurants, Service Quality, Price Fairness, Consumer Satisfaction, Word-of-Mouth Communication, Consumer Loyalty

JEL Classifications: D12, M31, L66

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as one of the largest emerging markets, is experiencing rapid economic transformation driven by urbanization and a growing middle class (Setyaningrum et al., 2024; Zuhroh et al., 2025). With a population of over 281 million people, the country ranks fourth in the world in terms of population size. Approximately 68% of Indonesians reside in urban areas, where modern consumer behavior is heavily shaped by convenience,

digital transformation, and shifting lifestyle preferences (Fahlevi, 2025). The growing urban demographic, particularly millennials and Gen Z consumers, represents a key driver of consumption trends, influencing industries such as retail, e-commerce, and food and beverage (Ardini et al., 2024; Fahlevi et al., 2023). Among these sectors, fast-food restaurants play a critical role in meeting the increasing demand for quick, affordable, and accessible meals in urban areas (Sahir et al., 2021; Zhuang et al., 2022). The fast-food industry in Indonesia has grown significantly over the past

decade, fueled by increasing disposable income, time constraints, and a cultural shift toward convenience-oriented consumption. The sector is highly competitive, with both local and international fast-food brands vying for consumer attention. Global brands such as McDonald's, KFC, and Pizza Hut have established strong market dominance, leveraging brand reputation, standardized quality, and extensive marketing strategies. At the same time, local fast-food brands such as Solaria, Hoka Hoka Bento, and Recheese Factory have gained traction, benefiting from consumers' preference for local flavors and perceptions of better value for money. This competitive landscape raises a critical question, what factors influence consumer loyalty in Indonesia's fast-food industry, and how do service quality and price fairness shape customer behavior (Husainah et al., 2023).

Service quality and price fairness are among the most significant factors influencing consumer decision-making in the food and beverage industry (Konuk, 2019). Consumers not only seek fast and convenient meals but also expect a satisfying dining experience that includes friendly service, cleanliness, product consistency, and overall value for money (Chamhuri and Batt, 2015). While previous studies have confirmed that service quality plays a crucial role in customer satisfaction and retention, the relationship between service quality, price fairness, and consumer loyalty remains an area of debate (Hanaysha, 2016; Konuk, 2019). Some scholars argue that price fairness directly affects consumer satisfaction, while others suggest that its impact is mediated by service quality, perceived value, and word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. Given these discrepancies, a comprehensive analysis using empirical data is necessary to better understand the determinants of consumer loyalty in the fast-food sector (Zhong and Moon, 2020). One of the major shifts influencing consumer behavior in Indonesia's fast-food industry is the rise of digital food delivery services. Online platforms such as GrabFood, GoFood, and ShopeeFood have transformed how consumers engage with fast-food restaurants. According to Zuhroh et al. (2024), Indonesia is now the largest market for online food delivery in Southeast Asia, with a gross transaction value of USD 4.6 billion in 2023. The ability to order food online has altered consumer expectations regarding service speed, pricing transparency, and overall convenience. As a result, understanding how digital food delivery trends interact with consumer perceptions of service quality and price fairness is crucial for both academic research and managerial decision-making.

Despite the growing body of literature on fast-food consumer behavior, several research gaps remain. First, while studies have explored consumer preferences in the Indonesian food and beverage industry, limited research has examined the specific drivers of loyalty in the fast-food segment. Second, the role of price fairness in shaping consumer satisfaction and loyalty has yielded mixed findings, necessitating further empirical validation. Third, word-of-mouth communication (WOM) remains an underexplored factor in the Indonesian context, despite its recognized influence on consumer behavior. Given that digital platforms and social media have amplified the role of WOM, examining its relationship with service quality, price fairness, and consumer satisfaction is essential. Lastly, while global fast-food chains have dominated

the Indonesian market, local brands are increasingly gaining competitive strength, yet few studies have compared consumer perceptions and loyalty patterns between local and international brands. Addressing these gaps, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the relationships between service quality, price fairness, consumer satisfaction, WOM, and consumer loyalty in Indonesia's fast-food industry. By employing structural equation modeling (SEM) with LISREL (Byrne, 2012), the research offers a rigorous statistical assessment of causal relationships between these variables. Additionally, this study provides a comparative analysis of local and international fast-food brands, offering valuable insights into the competitive dynamics shaping the industry (Molenaar, 2019).

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of multiple dimensions influencing consumer loyalty, including service quality, price fairness, WOM, and consumer satisfaction. Unlike previous research that primarily focuses on customer satisfaction as a direct outcome, this study investigates the mediating roles of WOM and satisfaction in shaping long-term consumer loyalty. Moreover, by considering both dine-in and online food delivery consumers, this research captures the evolving nature of consumer preferences in a digitally driven food service industry. The findings contribute to both academic discussions and practical managerial strategies, offering recommendations for fast-food operators seeking to enhance customer retention, competitive positioning, and overall brand loyalty in Indonesia's evolving market. This study is particularly relevant for fast-food managers, policymakers, and marketers who are looking to improve customer engagement strategies in an increasingly competitive environment. As digital platforms continue to reshape consumer interactions, understanding how service quality and pricing strategies influence loyalty in both physical and digital restaurant settings will be essential for sustaining long-term business success. By examining these factors through an empirical, data-driven approach, this research contributes to the broader discourse on consumer behavior, service marketing, and the digital transformation of the food industry.

The study is structured as follows. The next section reviews the literature on service quality, price fairness, consumer satisfaction, WOM, and loyalty, highlighting key theoretical frameworks and prior empirical findings. The methodology section outlines the research design, sampling techniques, and data analysis methods using LISREL-based SEM modeling. The results and discussion section presents key findings, followed by managerial implications and strategic recommendations for fast-food brands. The final section concludes with key takeaways and future research directions, offering insights into how fast-food brands can enhance consumer loyalty in a rapidly changing marketplace.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Service Quality

Service quality refers to the consumer's perception of how well a service meets or exceeds their expectations (Zeithaml et al., 1996). It is commonly evaluated based on the SERVQUAL model, which includes five dimensions: Tangibles, reliability,

responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In the fast-food industry, service quality encompasses various aspects such as speed of service, accuracy of orders, staff friendliness, cleanliness, and overall dining experience. Consumers tend to prioritize efficiency and consistency, meaning that high service quality can significantly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty (Djakasaputra et al., 2021). As the fast-food sector grows increasingly competitive, ensuring superior service quality has become a key differentiator for brands, helping them retain customers in a market where switching costs are relatively low. Previous research has consistently highlighted the positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the food and beverage industry (Sahir et al., 2021). Studies by Zhong and Moon (2020) found that perceived service quality directly affects customer satisfaction and indirectly influences loyalty through customer experience. In the Indonesian fast-food sector, service quality remains a critical determinant of repeat patronage, especially with the rise of digital ordering and food delivery services (Sutia et al., 2019). However, there is limited research exploring the direct and indirect effects of service quality on consumer loyalty, particularly in the context of WOM communication and digital food delivery services, which this study aims to address.

2.2. Price Fairness

Price fairness refers to the consumer's perception of whether a product or service is priced reasonably relative to its value, competition, and market standards (Iyer et al., 2016). It is influenced by internal reference prices (based on past purchases) and external reference prices (competitor pricing and promotions). Consumers tend to evaluate fairness based on price transparency, perceived value, and justifications provided by companies (Meiryani et al., 2022). In the fast-food industry, price fairness is particularly important because consumers often compare prices across multiple brands, especially between local and international fast-food chains (Li et al., 2020). If customers perceive that prices are unjustifiably high or inconsistent, their trust and loyalty toward the brand may decline. Prior research has demonstrated mixed findings regarding the impact of price fairness on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Some studies argue that price fairness has a direct effect on satisfaction and subsequent loyalty (Ryu and Han, 2010), while others suggest that the relationship is indirect, mediated by perceived value and service quality. In the context of Indonesia's fast-food industry, where price sensitivity is high, price fairness can shape not only customer satisfaction but also brand perception and word-of-mouth communication. However, limited studies have examined how price fairness interacts with service quality and consumer loyalty, particularly in the presence of digital food delivery platforms, making it a significant research gap that this study seeks to address.

2.3. Consumer Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction is defined as the overall evaluation of a service or product based on whether it meets or surpasses consumer expectations (Flavián et al., 2006). It is often measured as a cognitive and emotional response to the service encounter and is influenced by various factors such as service quality, price fairness, brand reputation, and past experiences (Aulia et al., 2021). In the fast-food industry, consumer satisfaction

is particularly significant because it determines repeat patronage, positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and long-term brand loyalty (Juwaini et al., 2022). Satisfied customers are more likely to develop strong emotional connections with brands, leading to increased engagement and retention. Several studies have established a strong link between consumer satisfaction and behavioral outcomes such as loyalty and word-of-mouth communication. Research by Sahir et al. (2021) found that higher customer satisfaction leads to increased consumer retention in quick-service restaurants. Similarly, Zhong and Moon (2020) demonstrated that satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and consumer loyalty. In the Indonesian context, consumer satisfaction has become an increasingly important metric for fast-food chains, particularly as digital food delivery platforms reshape customer expectations. However, the extent to which satisfaction influences consumer loyalty in Indonesia's fast-food sector remains underexplored, providing an opportunity for further empirical validation.

2.4. Word-of-Mouth (WOM) Communication

WOM communication refers to the process by which consumers share opinions, experiences, and recommendations about a product or service with others (Adila et al., 2020; Fahlevi et al., 2024). WOM can be classified into traditional WOM (face-to-face communication) and electronic WOM (e-WOM), which occurs via online platforms, reviews, and social media. In the fast-food industry, WOM plays a crucial role in influencing brand image, consumer trust, and purchasing decisions (Fahlevi et al., 2023). Given that fast food is a frequently consumed product, customers rely heavily on peer recommendations to evaluate new dining options, assess service quality, and determine value for money. Positive WOM can significantly enhance a brand's reputation and market positioning, while negative WOM can deter potential customers. Existing research highlights the powerful impact of WOM on consumer behavior and brand loyalty (Bulut and Karabulut, 2018). Studies by Kudeshia and Kumar (2017) found that consumers who are satisfied with service quality and price fairness are more likely to engage in positive WOM. In the Indonesian fast-food market, where social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter influence dining trends, WOM has become even more critical. However, few studies have examined how service quality and price fairness contribute to WOM in Indonesia's fast-food sector, making it an important aspect to explore in this research.

2.5. Consumer Loyalty

Consumer loyalty refers to a customer's commitment to repeatedly purchasing from a specific brand despite the availability of alternative options (Cossío-Silva et al., 2019). It consists of behavioral loyalty (repeat purchases) and attitudinal loyalty (emotional attachment to a brand). In the fast-food industry, loyalty is often influenced by service quality, price fairness, consumer satisfaction, and WOM (Fahlevi, 2025). Given the competitive nature of the fast-food market, fostering strong customer loyalty is crucial for businesses to achieve sustainable growth and market differentiation. Consumers who are loyal to a brand are not only more likely to return but also willing to pay premium prices, recommend the brand to others, and remain committed even

in the presence of competitors (Alhitmi et al., 2023). Previous studies confirm that consumer loyalty is directly and indirectly shaped by multiple factors. Zeithaml et al. (1996) found that service quality and satisfaction positively influence customer loyalty, while Matroji et al. (2023) highlighted the role of brand perception in driving long-term loyalty. In Indonesia's fast-food sector, price-sensitive consumers and increasing competition from digital food delivery platforms make loyalty a complex and evolving phenomenon. However, limited research has examined the interplay between service quality, price fairness, consumer satisfaction, and WOM in driving consumer loyalty, which this study aims to address.

2.6. Research Framework

The proposed research framework is designed to analyze the influence of service quality and price fairness on consumer loyalty, with consumer satisfaction and WOM communication as mediating variables. The model is based on established theories of consumer behavior, emphasizing how perceived service quality and pricing strategies shape customer experiences and long-term brand commitment. Given the competitive nature of the fast-food industry in Indonesia, understanding these relationships is essential for developing strategies that enhance consumer retention and brand advocacy. Service quality plays a fundamental role in shaping consumer perceptions, directly impacting customer satisfaction, loyalty, and WOM communication. Similarly, price fairness determines whether consumers perceive the pricing of products or services as justifiable in relation to the value received. While satisfaction is a key determinant of loyalty, it also influences the extent to which consumers engage in WOM communication. Satisfied customers are more likely to promote a brand through positive recommendations, whereas dissatisfied customers may engage in negative WOM, influencing the perceptions of potential consumers. The following figure illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

As depicted in Figure 1, service quality and price fairness are hypothesized to have both direct and indirect effects on consumer loyalty, mediated by consumer satisfaction and WOM

communication. This model suggests that while higher service quality leads to increased consumer satisfaction and loyalty, the influence of price fairness on loyalty may depend on consumer satisfaction and the spread of WOM. Additionally, WOM communication is expected to reinforce consumer loyalty, as strong peer recommendations can increase brand trust and retention.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships between service quality, price fairness, consumer satisfaction, WOM communication, and consumer loyalty in the fast-food industry in Tangerang, Indonesia. A causal-explanatory research design is utilized to investigate how these variables influence consumer behavior, with a focus on direct and indirect effects. The study applies structural equation modeling (SEM) with LISREL (Byrne, 2012), a statistical technique that enables the evaluation of complex relationships between multiple constructs, allowing for a rigorous analysis of the hypothesized framework. The primary data collection method involves a structured questionnaire distributed to 347 respondents, who were selected based on a stratified random sampling technique. The sample includes consumers from six different fast-food restaurant brands, consisting of both local and international chains.

3.1. Sample and Sampling Technique

The target population for this study consists of consumers who have dined at fast-food restaurants in Tangerang within the past 6 months. The selection of Tangerang as the research location is based on its rapid urbanization and economic growth, which have led to an increasing demand for fast-food services. To ensure the sample is representative, a stratified random sampling method is employed (Saunders et al., 2009; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016), dividing the respondents into subgroups based on the type of fast-food restaurant they visited (local vs. international brands). The sample size of 347 respondents was determined using the Slovin formula (Slovin et al., 1993), with a 5% margin of error, ensuring sufficient statistical power for SEM analysis (Vaughan and Tague-Sutcliffe, 1997). The distribution of respondents across different demographic characteristics is presented in the following Table 1.

Figure 1: Research framework

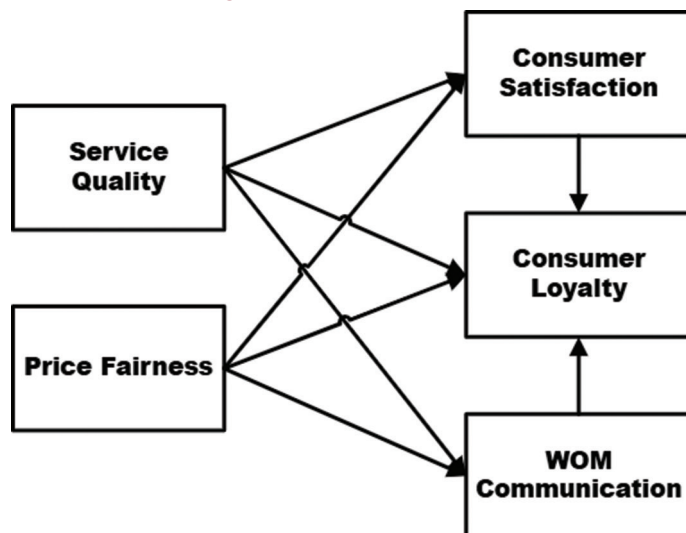


Table 1: Sample distribution based on demographic characteristics

Demographic category	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	176	50.7
Female	171	49.3
Age group		
18-25 years	84	24.2
26-35 years	103	29.7
36-45 years	92	26.5
46-55 years	46	13.3
56 years and above	22	6.3
Education level		
High school or below	52	15.0
Diploma/Bachelor's degree	210	60.5
Postgraduate degree	85	24.5
Type of fast-food restaurant visited		
Local fast-food chains	159	45.8
International fast-food chains	188	54.2

The distribution of respondents suggests that male and female consumers are nearly evenly represented, ensuring a balanced perspective. The majority of respondents fall within the 26-35 age group, a segment known for high consumption of fast food due to lifestyle choices and purchasing power. Moreover, the majority of respondents have a diploma or bachelor's degree, which aligns with Indonesia's rising educated consumer base that prioritizes quality and value in purchasing decisions.

3.2. Measurement of Variables

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research, established measurement scales from prior studies are used to assess each variable. The questionnaire consists of closed-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Service quality is measured using an adapted SERVQUAL scale (Zeithaml et al., 1996), covering five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The measurement items assess consumer perceptions of cleanliness, staff responsiveness, order accuracy, and overall service experience in fast-food restaurants. Price fairness is evaluated based on perceived price reasonability, transparency, and comparison with competitors (Konuk, 2019). The items focus on whether consumers believe that menu prices are justified, stable, and provide good value relative to competitors. Consumer satisfaction is assessed using the expectancy-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980). The items measure the extent to which consumers feel their expectations were met or exceeded in terms of service, pricing, and food quality. WOM is measured using items adapted from (Adila et al., 2020; Fahlevi et al., 2024), evaluating the likelihood of consumers recommending the restaurant to others. This includes both face-to-face recommendations and digital WOM via social media or online reviews. Loyalty is measured using the framework from (Yasami et al., 2021), capturing both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Items assess repeat patronage, resistance to switching brands, and willingness to pay a premium for preferred fast-food chains. To ensure measurement reliability, a Cronbach's Alpha threshold of 0.7 is used, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is conducted to assess construct validity.

3.3. Data Analysis using LISREL

The study employs structural equation modeling (SEM) with LISREL to analyze the relationships among the variables. LISREL is chosen due to its robustness in handling complex models with multiple mediating variables. Measurement model testing (Confirmatory factor analysis - CFA), this step evaluates convergent and discriminant validity, ensuring that each construct is reliable and distinct. Factor loadings above 0.6 and average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.5 are considered acceptable. Structural model testing, this step assesses the causal relationships between variables, evaluating the significance of direct, indirect, and total effects. Fit indices such as RMSEA (<0.08), CFI (>0.90), and GFI (>0.90) are used to determine the adequacy of the model (Kang and Kvam, 2012). By applying LISREL, the study ensures rigorous hypothesis testing, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the fast-food industry.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

This research adheres to ethical principles to ensure transparency, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Before data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses. Respondents were required to provide explicit consent before completing the survey. No personally identifiable information was collected to maintain privacy and anonymity. The collected data was stored in a secure, password-protected system, accessible only to authorized researchers. The questionnaire was designed to minimize bias, ensuring that respondents were not misled about the study's objectives. The research was approved by an ethics committee to ensure compliance with academic research standards and data protection policies. By implementing these ethical safeguards, the study maintains its credibility and integrity, ensuring that the findings contribute meaningfully to the fast-food industry and academic research on consumer behavior.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics were computed for all key variables, including service quality, price fairness, consumer satisfaction, WOM communication, and consumer loyalty. These statistics provide insights into the central tendencies (average mean), dispersion (average standard deviation), and range (minimum and maximum values) of consumer perceptions regarding fast-food services in Tangerang. The Table 2 below presents the summary of descriptive statistics.

The results indicate that Price Fairness has the highest mean value of 4.45, suggesting that respondents generally perceive the pricing of fast-food restaurants as fair and reasonable. The effectiveness of competitive pricing strategies, which may enhance consumer trust and willingness to repurchase. The low standard deviation (0.53) indicates that most responses are consistent, meaning that the perception of price fairness does not vary significantly across the sample. Consumer Satisfaction has a mean of 4.23 with a standard deviation of 0.93, reflecting that while most consumers are generally satisfied, there is some variation in satisfaction levels. This could be influenced by differences in service experiences, expectations, or brand preferences. The relatively higher standard deviation suggests that some consumers may have neutral or negative experiences, which could impact long-term retention. WOM Communication has a mean score of 4.10, indicating that many consumers actively share their opinions, recommendations, or reviews about fast-food restaurants. WOM is a critical factor in influencing consumer choices, particularly in the digital era where social media plays a significant role in shaping brand

Table 2: Descriptive statistics table

Variable	Average mean	Average standard deviation
Service quality	3.87	0.58
Price fairness	4.45	0.53
Consumer satisfaction	4.23	0.93
WOM communication	4.10	0.80
Consumer loyalty	3.66	0.85

perceptions. The standard deviation of 0.80 suggests that while many consumers engage in WOM, there are variations in the extent of their engagement, with some consumers being more vocal than others. Service quality has a mean score of 3.87, showing that consumers perceive the quality of service provided by fast-food chains as relatively high. However, the standard deviation of 0.58 indicates consistent responses across the sample, suggesting that service quality is relatively stable across different restaurants. Since service quality significantly impacts consumer satisfaction and loyalty, ensuring fast and efficient service, cleanliness, and friendly staff interactions remains essential for fast-food businesses. Consumer Loyalty has the lowest mean score (3.66) among all variables, suggesting that although consumers are generally satisfied with service and pricing, their loyalty to a particular brand is moderate. The higher standard deviation (0.85) suggests that consumer loyalty varies across individuals, with some customers displaying strong brand commitment while others frequently switch between fast-food brands based on convenience, promotions, or other factors. The results indicate that while consumers are satisfied with service quality and pricing, loyalty levels are relatively lower, emphasizing the need for effective loyalty programs and brand differentiation strategies. Word-of-mouth communication plays a pivotal role in influencing customer retention, meaning that businesses should focus on enhancing customer experience to encourage positive WOM.

4.2. Validity and Reliability

To ensure that the measurement model is both valid and reliable, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using LISREL. The results of factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were analyzed to confirm the adequacy of each construct. Factor loading values >0.6 indicate strong item relationships with their respective latent variables. Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 suggest good internal consistency, while composite reliability (CR) exceeding 0.7 confirms that the construct indicators are reliable. The AVE values above 0.5 demonstrate sufficient convergent validity, ensuring that the constructs explain more variance than measurement error. The Table 3 below presents the results of the validity and reliability tests.

The findings confirm that all constructs meet the validity and reliability thresholds. Factor loadings range from 0.75 to 0.94, indicating strong correlations between indicators and their respective constructs. Cronbach's alpha values exceed 0.7 for all variables, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency. The composite reliability (CR) values are above 0.7, suggesting that the indicators are reliable measures of their respective constructs.

Table 3: Validity and reliability test results

Variable	Factor loading (≥ 0.6)	Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.7)	Composite reliability (≥ 0.7)	AVE (≥ 0.5)
Service quality	0.75	0.81	0.89	0.75
Price fairness	0.94	0.82	0.82	0.60
Consumer satisfaction	0.92	0.85	0.84	0.68
WOM communication	0.79	0.84	0.85	0.70
Consumer loyalty	0.79	0.82	0.86	0.56

Lastly, the AVE values exceed the 0.5 threshold, confirming that the constructs have strong convergent validity.

4.3. Goodness of Fit (GOF)

The goodness of fit (GOF) analysis evaluates whether the structural model accurately represents the collected data. Using LISREL, several fit indices are assessed to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the model. The Table 4 below presents the key model fit statistics and their interpretations.

The Chi-Square (χ^2) test suggests a poor fit with a $P = 0.0$, which is likely influenced by the large sample size of 347 respondents. Since χ^2 is highly sensitive to sample size, alternative fit indices are considered for a more accurate assessment. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.065, which falls within the acceptable range (0.05-0.08), indicating that the model provides a reasonable fit to the data. Similarly, the root mean square residual (RMSR) value of 0.021 is well below 0.05, confirming a strong model fit with minimal residual errors. The comparative fit index (CFI = 0.97), non-normed fit index (NNFI = 0.97), and incremental fit index (IFI = 0.97) all exceed the 0.90 threshold, indicating that the model fits well in comparison to a baseline (null) model. The relative fit index (RFI = 0.95) further supports this conclusion. The goodness of fit index (GFI = 0.81) suggests a marginal fit, while the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI = 0.79) falls below the acceptable threshold, indicating some limitations in the model's ability to fully explain variance in the data. The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Consistent Akaike Information Criterion (CAIC) values show that the model is well-fitted in comparison to alternative models, as the estimated values are close to their saturated values, while some indices such as χ^2 and AGFI indicate limitations, the majority of key indicators, including CFI, NNFI, IFI, and RMSR, suggest that the model is reasonably well-fitted and can be used for further hypothesis testing.

4.4. Path Analysis

To evaluate the relationships between variables in the proposed research model, SEM using LISREL was applied to test both direct and indirect effects. The hypothesis testing results provide insights into how service quality, price fairness, consumer satisfaction, word-of-mouth (WOM) communication, and consumer loyalty interact within the fast-food industry in Tangerang. The Table 5 below presents the combined summary of hypothesis testing results, including both direct and indirect effects.

The results show that service quality has a strong positive influence on consumer satisfaction (H_1 , $t = 6.31$) and WOM communication (H_2 , $t = 2.36$). This suggests that when consumers perceive a high level of service quality, they are more likely to be satisfied with their dining experience and share positive feedback with others. However, service quality does not have a direct positive effect on consumer loyalty (H_3 , $t = -0.65$, not significant), indicating that other mediating factors, such as satisfaction and WOM, play a role in influencing long-term brand commitment. Price fairness also plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions. The findings indicate that price fairness significantly affects consumer satisfaction (H_4 , $t = 5.37$), WOM communication (H_5 , $t = 6.04$),

Table 4: Goodness of fit index table

Goodness of fit measure	Threshold for acceptable fit	Estimated value	Model fit evaluation
Chi-Square (χ^2/chi^2)	Smaller is better ($P \geq 0.05$)	3391.34 ($P=0.0$)	Poor fit
Non-centrality parameter (NCP)	Smaller is better	1937.67	Poor fit
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	≤ 0.05 (Good Fit), 0.05-0.08 (Acceptable), ≥ 0.10 (Poor)	0.065	Reasonable fit
Expected cross validation index (ECVI)	Closer to ECVI saturated is better	12.42 (M*), 11.06 (S*), 243.39 (I*)	Good fit
Akaike information criterion (AIC)	Closer to AIC saturated is better	3713.67 (M*), 3306.00 (S*), 72773.97 (I*)	Good fit
Consistent akaike information criterion (CAIC)	Closer to CAIC saturated is better	4292.23 (M*), 11081.35 (S*), 73042.09 (I*)	Good fit
Normal fit index (NFI)	≥ 0.90 (Good Fit), 0.80-0.89 (Marginal)	0.95	Perfect fit
Non-normed fit index (NNFI/TLI)	≥ 0.90 (Good Fit), 0.80-0.89 (Marginal)	0.97	Good fit
Comparative fit index (CFI)	Closer to 1 is better	0.97	Good fit
Incremental fit index (IFI)	≥ 0.90 (Good Fit), 0.80-0.89 (Marginal)	0.97	Perfect fit
Relative fit index (RFI)	≥ 0.90 (Good Fit), 0.80-0.89 (Marginal)	0.95	Good fit
Critical N (CN)	≥ 200 (Good Fit)	147.50	Poor fit
Root mean square residual (RMSR)	≤ 0.05 (Good Fit)	0.021	Good fit
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	≥ 0.90 (Good Fit), 0.80-0.89 (Marginal)	0.81	Marginal fit
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)	≥ 0.90 (Good Fit), 0.80-0.89 (Marginal)	0.79	Poor fit

Table 5: Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Path relationship	Loading factor	t-value (≥ 1.96)	Decision
H ₁	Service Quality→Consumer Satisfaction	0.51	6.31	Accepted
H ₂	Service Quality→WOM Communication	0.26	2.36	Accepted
H ₃	Service Quality→Consumer Loyalty	-0.071	-0.65	Rejected
H ₄	Price Fairness→Consumer Satisfaction	0.64	5.37	Accepted
H ₅	Price Fairness→WOM Communication	0.71	6.04	Accepted
H ₆	Price Fairness→Consumer Loyalty	0.45	3.85	Accepted
H ₇	Consumer Satisfaction→WOM Communication	0.30	1.85	Rejected
H ₈	Consumer Satisfaction→Consumer Loyalty	0.54	3.69	Accepted
H ₉	Service Quality→WOM Communication→Consumer Satisfaction	0.22	2.21	Accepted
H ₁₀	Service Quality→Consumer Satisfaction→Consumer Loyalty	0.22	-0.4	Rejected
H ₁₁	Price Fairness→WOM Communication→Consumer Satisfaction	0.69	3.96	Accepted
H ₁₂	Price Fairness→Consumer Satisfaction→Consumer Loyalty	0.65	3.06	Accepted
H ₁₃	Consumer Satisfaction→WOM Communication→Consumer Loyalty	0.54	1.77	Rejected

and consumer loyalty (H₆, $t = 3.85$). Consumers who perceive fair pricing are more likely to be satisfied, recommend the restaurant to others, and continue patronizing the brand. This highlights the importance of transparent pricing strategies and perceived value in fast-food consumer behavior. Interestingly, the relationship between consumer satisfaction and WOM communication (H₇, $t = 1.85$) is not statistically significant, suggesting that consumer satisfaction alone does not always lead to active WOM engagement. Some satisfied customers may not feel the need to share their experiences unless an extraordinary service or incentive is present. However, consumer satisfaction has a strong direct influence on consumer loyalty (H₈, $t = 3.69$), confirming that higher satisfaction levels contribute to stronger brand commitment.

In terms of indirect effects, the results indicate that service quality indirectly influences consumer satisfaction through WOM communication (H₉, $t = 2.21$, significant). This means that while service quality may not directly impact consumer loyalty, its influence is reinforced through consumer satisfaction and WOM interactions. Similarly, price fairness also exerts an indirect influence on consumer satisfaction (H₁₁, $t = 3.96$) and loyalty (H₁₂, $t = 3.06$), confirming its central role in shaping overall consumer experiences. On the other hand, the indirect effect of consumer satisfaction on consumer loyalty via WOM

communication (H₁₃, $t = 1.77$) is not statistically significant, suggesting that word-of-mouth alone may not be a strong enough driver of loyalty. While consumers may share their experiences, it does not necessarily guarantee repeat patronage unless other factors—such as brand reputation, emotional attachment, or promotional incentives—are present. These findings emphasize the critical role of service quality and price fairness in shaping consumer behavior in the fast-food industry. While consumer satisfaction remains a key driver of loyalty, the study also highlights the importance of WOM communication as an intermediary variable. However, not all relationships are direct, indicating that consumer loyalty is influenced by a combination of multiple factors rather than a single determinant.

5. DISCUSSION

One of the most notable findings is the strong positive relationship between service quality and consumer satisfaction (Ryu and Han, 2010; Zhong and Moon, 2020). Consumers who perceive higher service quality in fast-food restaurants tend to express greater satisfaction with their overall experience. This result aligns with previous studies emphasizing that service attributes such as staff responsiveness, cleanliness, order accuracy, and overall dining experience significantly enhance customer perceptions. The

implications of this finding suggest that fast-food operators must prioritize customer service training and operational efficiency to maintain high satisfaction levels (Fahlevi et al., 2023). However, while service quality positively influences satisfaction and WOM communication, it does not have a direct effect on consumer loyalty. This suggests that satisfaction alone is not sufficient to ensure long-term customer retention, and other factors, such as pricing strategies, promotional efforts, and emotional brand attachment, play a role in driving loyalty. Similarly, price fairness emerges as a crucial determinant of consumer behavior, significantly affecting consumer satisfaction, WOM communication, and loyalty. This shows that fast-food customers are highly price-sensitive, and their purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by whether they perceive menu prices as reasonable and justified (Rajput and Gahfoor, 2020). The strong impact of price fairness on WOM communication further underscores the role of perceived value in customer advocacy. When customers believe that a fast-food brand offers competitive and fair pricing, they are more likely to recommend it to others. This finding supports previous research that suggests that pricing transparency and value-for-money perceptions influence consumer recommendations and repeat patronage (Hussain et al., 2023).

An unexpected result from the hypothesis testing is the non-significant relationship between consumer satisfaction and WOM communication. While satisfaction is generally expected to lead to positive WOM, this study finds that satisfied customers do not always engage in active WOM communication (Fahlevi, 2023). This could be due to varied personal preferences, lack of motivation to share experiences, or the fact that satisfaction alone does not generate excitement strong enough to prompt recommendations. It is possible that only highly memorable or extreme service experiences (either very positive or very negative) are likely to be shared. This suggests that fast-food businesses should consider implementing referral programs, loyalty incentives, and social media engagement strategies to encourage satisfied customers to actively share their experiences (Khamaludin et al., 2022). Despite the non-significant direct effect of service quality on consumer loyalty, the indirect relationship through consumer satisfaction and WOM communication is significant. This indicates that while service quality alone does not ensure loyalty, it enhances satisfaction, which in turn influences WOM and ultimately strengthens brand commitment. The implication for fast-food businesses is that investing in high service quality is still essential, but it must be complemented by customer engagement initiatives that foster long-term relationships (Yasami et al., 2021).

Price fairness also exhibits indirect effects on consumer loyalty through satisfaction and WOM communication, reinforcing the notion that perceived value plays a vital role in brand retention. Consumers who find prices reasonable are not only more satisfied but also more likely to engage in WOM and continue their patronage. This highlights the importance of pricing strategies that align with consumer expectations, particularly in a competitive market where alternative fast-food options are readily available. Another interesting insight is the non-significant relationship between consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty via WOM communication. This finding suggests that while

satisfied customers may talk about their experiences, this does not always translate into repeat patronage. Factors such as brand variety-seeking behavior, promotional influences, and external competition may weaken the direct impact of WOM on loyalty. In the fast-food industry, where customers often explore multiple dining options, businesses must go beyond satisfaction and WOM strategies to establish strong emotional and habitual connections with their customers. Personalized offers, mobile app engagement, and exclusive deals could further enhance loyalty levels.

The broader implications of these findings indicate that consumer loyalty in the fast-food industry is not a result of a single factor but a combination of multiple interconnected variables. While service quality and price fairness play significant roles in shaping consumer perceptions, their effects on loyalty are partially mediated through consumer satisfaction and WOM communication. This suggests that businesses should adopt a holistic approach to customer retention, integrating service excellence, competitive pricing, digital engagement, and personalized marketing strategies to foster long-term loyalty. From a strategic perspective, fast-food businesses must recognize that consumer behavior is highly dynamic, influenced by both rational factors (such as pricing and service efficiency) and emotional factors (such as brand trust and personal experiences). Given the findings, it is evident that investing in customer relationship management (CRM), social media marketing, and loyalty programs can complement service quality efforts and strengthen brand loyalty. Furthermore, businesses should actively track customer feedback and online reviews, as digital WOM is increasingly shaping consumer decision-making in the food service industry.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings show that while service quality and price fairness significantly enhance consumer satisfaction and encourage positive WOM communication, their direct influence on consumer loyalty is less pronounced. Instead, their impact on loyalty is largely mediated through satisfaction and WOM, suggesting that businesses must create holistic customer experiences rather than relying solely on these factors to retain customers. The results emphasize that service quality plays a critical role in shaping customer perceptions, with higher service quality leading to increased satisfaction and a greater likelihood of positive WOM communication. However, satisfaction alone does not guarantee customer loyalty, as modern consumers often explore multiple fast-food brands based on price incentives, convenience, or promotional offers. This suggests that while maintaining high service standards is essential, it must be complemented with customer engagement strategies, reward programs, and emotional branding efforts to foster long-term brand commitment.

The impact of price fairness on consumer behavior is also evident, as customers who perceive prices as fair are more likely to be satisfied and recommend the brand to others. In a highly competitive fast-food market, pricing strategies must be carefully designed to balance affordability and perceived value. Businesses should explore personalized discounts, value meal offerings, and tiered pricing strategies to cater to different

consumer segments. The strong effect of price fairness on WOM communication suggests that when customers perceive they are getting good value for their money, they become brand advocates, spreading positive recommendations within their social circles and online communities. A key takeaway from this study is that WOM communication serves as an indirect driver of consumer loyalty. Satisfied customers are more likely to engage in positive WOM, but this does not always translate into repeat patronage. This indicates that while WOM helps build brand awareness and influence potential customers, businesses must still implement retention strategies such as loyalty programs, personalized promotions, and mobile app engagement to ensure continued consumer commitment. Additionally, given the increasing influence of digital platforms, leveraging social media engagement and online reviews can amplify WOM communication, enhancing brand credibility and visibility.

The implications of this study suggest that fast-food businesses in Tangerang must adopt a multi-faceted approach to customer retention. Instead of focusing solely on service quality improvements or competitive pricing, companies must integrate customer relationship management, digital marketing, and experiential branding to sustain long-term loyalty. By continuously monitoring consumer feedback, engaging in real-time customer interactions, and leveraging data-driven insights, businesses can refine their service offerings to better align with evolving consumer preferences.

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