

# Service Quality, Customer Value, and Trust on Three-Star Hotel Loyalty in Batam: Satisfaction as Mediator

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## Article History

Received on 14 November 2025

1<sup>st</sup> Revision on 3 December 2025

2<sup>nd</sup> Revision on 21 December 2025

3<sup>rd</sup> Revision on 4 January 2026

Accepted on 16 January 2026

## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study examines the effects of service quality, customer value, and trust on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable, among guests of three-star hotels in Batam City, Indonesia.

**Research Methodology:** An explanatory quantitative design was employed. Data were collected through structured questionnaires from 125 guests who had stayed at a three-star hotel in Batam within the previous six months and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS.

**Results:** Service quality ( $\beta=0.386$ ), customer value ( $\beta=0.376$ ), and trust ( $\beta=0.336$ ) positively and significantly affect satisfaction. Loyalty is directly influenced by service quality ( $\beta=0.166$ ), trust ( $\beta=0.235$ ), and satisfaction ( $\beta=0.553$ ), while customer value has no significant direct effect ( $\beta=0.042$ ;  $p=0.484$ ). Satisfaction mediates all three relationships, partially for service quality and trust and fully for customer value. The model explains 68.0% of satisfaction and 73.0% of loyalty variance.

**Conclusions:** In three-star hotels, value for money does not automatically generate loyalty but must first translate into satisfaction.

**Limitations:** The cross-sectional, self-reported, single-city, and single-tier design limits causal inference and generalizability.

**Contributions:** The study demonstrates differentiated mechanisms underlying customer loyalty: Service quality and trust maintain direct effects, whereas customer value operates exclusively through satisfaction. These findings refine relationship-marketing and expectancy-disconfirmation perspectives and support mechanism-specific retention strategies in midscale hospitality.

**Keywords:** *Customer Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Value, Service Quality, Trust*

**How to Cite:** Rusmilee, R., Satriawan, B., & Sajiyo, S. (2026). Service Quality, Customer Value, and Trust on Three-Star Hotel Loyalty in Batam: Satisfaction as Mediator. *Jurnal Bisnis dan Pemasaran Digital*, 5(2), 39-52.

## 1. Introduction

The hospitality industry in Batam City operates in a dynamic market because the city functions as a tourism gateway, a business hub, and a transit area close to Singapore and Malaysia. Rising tourism activity creates opportunities while simultaneously intensifying competition among accommodation providers. The Central Statistics Agency of Batam City [BPS \(2025\)](#) reported that international tourist arrivals in December 2025 reached 195,525 visits and the room occupancy rate of star-rated hotels

reached 63.33%. These figures indicate substantial demand, but occupancy alone does not guarantee that guests return or recommend the same hotel. As accommodation choices become easy to compare through digital platforms, hotel success is increasingly determined by the ability to retain guests after the first stay experience. Retaining guests is also economically consequential, since guest-related performance is a key determinant of star-hotel profitability ([Kusumawati & Rahayu, 2020](#)).

Three-star hotels occupy a specific position within this competition. This segment serves guests who demand a balance between price, facilities, location, comfort, and service reliability. Unlike the luxury segment, which can rely on premium facility differentiation, three-star hotels face guests who are relatively sensitive to value for money and quick to switch when a comparable alternative appears. Loyalty is therefore a strategic outcome: loyal guests not only intend to return, but also tend to make the hotel their first choice, recommend it to others, and resist competitors' offers. Following [Oliver \(1999\)](#), loyalty is understood here as a firmly held intention to keep repurchasing a preferred offering, one that persists even when situational pressures or competitors' marketing attempts push the guest toward switching.

Service quality is one of the primary antecedents of loyalty. In the Service and Quality (SERVQUAL) tradition, service quality is captured across five dimensions tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy ([Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988](#)). In the hotel context, quality is reflected not only in room condition, but also in information accuracy, check-in speed, staff readiness, complaint resolution, security, and consistency of service across touchpoints. Good quality can build a practical reason to return, but guests may also integrate multiple service experiences into a satisfaction evaluation before deciding whether the hotel deserves to be chosen again ([Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000](#); [Nazarian, Shabankareh, Ranjbaran, Sadeghilar, & Atkinson, 2024](#); [Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996](#)).

Customer value is another important factor because guests evaluate the benefits received against the sacrifices of price, time, effort, and risk. For [Parasuraman et al. \(1988\)](#), perceived value is the guest's summary judgement of an offering's usefulness, weighed as a trade-off between the benefits gained and what must be given up to obtain them, while [Sweeney and Soutar \(2001\)](#) decompose it into quality/performance, emotional, social, and value-for-money dimensions. In three-star hotels, value can be created through a combination of reasonable rates, cleanliness, functioning basic facilities, location, ease of transaction, and an experience that matches expectations. However, perceived value does not automatically create commitment, because guests may still regard several hotels as offering comparable benefits.

Trust is also relevant because hotel transactions carry an element of uncertainty. Before arrival, guests rely on information about room photos, facilities, price, cancellation policy, payment security, and reviews. Trust forms when the hotel is perceived as competent, honest, consistent, and able to fulfil its promises. Within commitment-trust theory, trusting a provider lowers a guest's sense that the provider might act opportunistically and thereby supports the continuity of the relationship by [Morgan and Hunt \(1994\)](#), the effect is echoed in findings that brand trust helps translate brand affect into stronger brand loyalty ([Chen, Wang, Lyu, & Zhang, 2022](#)). In Indonesia's hospitality industry, recent studies also show that experience quality can shape satisfaction and trust, which subsequently contribute to customer loyalty by [Hapsari, Hussein, Ghofar, and Hanafiah \(2024\)](#), and that trust together with perceived customer value explains loyalty formation in Indonesian service settings more broadly ([Soliha, Maskur, Widyasari, & Ariyani, 2021](#)).

Customer satisfaction is positioned as the evaluative mechanism linking service quality, value, and trust to loyalty. Satisfaction arises when the actual experience at least meets or exceeds expectations. In hotel services, guests combine room experience, staff interaction, price, comfort, security, and promise consistency into an overall evaluation. [El-Adly \(2019\)](#) shows that perceived value relates to satisfaction and loyalty in a hotel context, while cross-cultural hospitality research confirms that the path toward revisit intention can differ according to how satisfaction, quality, and loyalty are evaluated ([Nazarian et al., 2024](#)). This indicates that the influence of loyalty antecedents does not

always operate directly, and is consistent with hotel-industry evidence in Indonesia that structural models of loyalty must be estimated with mediating mechanisms in mind ([Gultom, Purnama, & Arif, 2021](#)).

Although the relationships among service quality, customer value, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty have been widely discussed, a critical reading of prior work reveals three unresolved gaps. First, many studies estimate these relationships partially or pool all hotel classes together ([Anabila, Ameyibor, Allan, & Alomenu, 2022](#); [Gultom et al., 2021](#)). Segment-specific mechanisms are obscured; evidence isolating the three-star tier in a border-and-transit market such as Batam remains scarce, even though this segment competes on price and experience simultaneously. Second, findings on customer value and loyalty are not always consistent; value can be a reason to choose a hotel but not necessarily a reason to stay when comparable alternatives are available. Third, studies often emphasize the significance of direct relationships without explicitly distinguishing whether a factor builds loyalty directly or only becomes effective once converted into satisfaction. The Batam context matters because most respondents in this study are at an early relationship stage: 41.6% were staying for the first time and 38.4% had stayed two to three times, so the process of satisfaction and loyalty formation is still very much open.

This study contributes by integrating service quality, customer value, and trust within a single loyalty model and positioning satisfaction as the mediating mechanism that distinguishes how each antecedent reaches loyalty. The novelty lies not in re-testing well-known links but in showing that the three antecedents travel structurally different routes to loyalty in the three-star context: two retain direct paths while one becomes effective only after conversion into satisfaction. Empirically, the study shows whether quality, value, and trust have direct paths to loyalty or work mainly through the satisfaction evaluation. Contextually, the study focuses on the three-star hotel segment in Batam City, which competes on both price and experience. The research objective is therefore to analyze the effects of service quality, customer value, and trust on satisfaction and loyalty, to test the effect of satisfaction on loyalty, and to assess the mediating role of satisfaction in each antecedent-loyalty relationship.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

### ***2.1 Service Quality, Satisfaction, and Loyalty***

Service quality represents guests' assessment of the excellence of the service process and outcome. SERVQUAL divides quality into tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy ([Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988](#)). In hotels, all five dimensions are present simultaneously: guests assess physical condition, service accuracy, response speed, competence and reassurance, and personal attention. Because a service is produced and consumed in the same interaction, a small failure at one touchpoint can affect the evaluation of the entire experience.

The relationship between quality and satisfaction can be explained through the post-consumption evaluation process. When guests compare actual performance with expectations and find the service consistent, convenient, fast, and reliable, the experience confirms their decision and raises satisfaction. Evidence from structured service-quality evaluations similarly shows that closing the gap between expected and delivered service raises satisfaction ([Qurani & Mulyono, 2025](#)). Service literature also shows that quality and satisfaction are distinct but related constructs in explaining behavioral intentions by [Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000](#) and [Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996](#), and hospitality-specific evidence further indicates that the service experience shapes satisfaction indirectly through the emotional responses it generates, with satisfaction subsequently affecting guests' price acceptance and loyalty ([Ali, Amin, & Cobanoglu, 2016](#)). Cross-cultural hospitality research finds that service quality is an important antecedent of satisfaction and revisit behavior, although the strength of the path can differ across contexts ([Nazarian, Shabankareh, Ranjbaran, Sadeghilar, & Atkinson, 2024](#)). Accommodation-sector evidence similarly links service quality to satisfaction and subsequent loyalty ([Priporas, Stylos, Vedanthachari, & Santiwatana, 2017](#)). Indonesian tourism studies likewise report that satisfaction mediates the effect of service quality on revisit intention ([Riadi, Permadi, & Retnowati, 2023](#)).

Recent empirical evidence further strengthens the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty. [Riswanda and Millanyani \(2025\)](#) found that e-service quality contributes to customer loyalty through customer satisfaction and e-trust in the context of the Agoda platform. Similarly, [\(Fanggidae & Wahyoedi, 2025\)](#) demonstrated that service quality significantly influences loyalty both directly and indirectly through satisfaction. These findings reinforce the argument that consistent and responsive service delivery enhances customer evaluations, strengthens satisfaction, and ultimately encourages continued loyalty.

Quality can also directly affect loyalty. Guests may return because they know the hotel's service standard has proven reliable, lowering the cost and risk of searching for alternatives. However, quality can also work indirectly: various service attributes are first integrated into satisfaction, which then drives the intention to return, recommend, and prefer the hotel, a service-quality-to-loyalty path that recent studies confirm operates mainly through satisfaction [\(Yum & Yoo, 2023\)](#). The causal mechanism follows expectancy-disconfirmation logic: in a three-star stay, guests hold moderate, price-anchored expectations, and when reliable, responsive, and convenient service confirms or mildly exceeds those expectations, positive disconfirmation raises satisfaction, which in turn carries the quality signal forward into loyalty. Satisfaction is therefore expected to reinforce the mechanism converting quality into loyalty rather than leaving it as a purely direct effect.

*H<sub>1</sub>: Service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Service quality has a positive effect on customer loyalty*

*H<sub>8</sub>: Customer satisfaction mediates the effect of service quality on customer loyalty*

## **2.2 Customer Value, Satisfaction, and Loyalty**

Customer value is a trade-off evaluation between the benefits received and the sacrifices incurred [\(Zeithaml, 1988\)](#). Perceived value is therefore not identical to low price. [Sweeney and Soutar \(2001\)](#) show that value also encompasses quality or performance, emotional, social, and value-for-money dimensions. In three-star hotels, guests may judge an offer as high value when rate, cleanliness, comfort, location, facilities, and process convenience are seen as proportionate. Experience quality has been shown to raise perceived value and satisfaction and, through them, customer loyalty [\(Kusumawati & Rahayu, 2020\)](#).

Higher value is theoretically expected to raise satisfaction because guests feel the purchase decision yields benefits worth the sacrifice. [El-Adly \(2019\)](#) finds an important relationship among hotel perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty, so the benefit-cost evaluation becomes part of the post-consumption response formation. Consistent with this, holistic service-marketing evidence shows that service quality and customer value shape loyalty and word-of-mouth mainly through satisfaction [\(Marcos & Coelho, 2022\)](#). In the Indonesian context more broadly, trust and perceived customer value have also been shown to jointly explain loyalty outcomes [\(Soliha et al., 2021\)](#). Nevertheless, value does not always translate automatically into loyalty. In a market with many alternatives offering similar price ranges and facilities, guests may judge one hotel "worth it" while remaining willing to try another.

The distinction between value evaluation and loyalty commitment underlies the expectation that satisfaction plays a mediating role. Value only becomes a basis for retention once the benefits received genuinely produce a pleasant, expectation-consistent experience. This study therefore tests not only the direct effect of value on loyalty, but also whether satisfaction is the primary mechanism linking the two.

*H<sub>2</sub>: Customer value has a positive effect on customer satisfaction*

*H<sub>5</sub>: Customer value has a positive effect on customer loyalty*

*H<sub>9</sub>: Customer satisfaction mediates the effect of customer value on customer loyalty*

### 2.3 Trust, Satisfaction, and Loyalty

Trust describes guests' belief that the service provider has both the ability and the willingness to fulfil its promises. [Doney and Cannon \(1997\)](#), emphasize credibility and benevolence in trust formation, while [Morgan and Hunt \(1994\)](#) position trust as the foundation of long-term relationships. In hotels, trust forms when pre-purchase information is consistent with the actual experience, transactions are secure, policies are transparent, and guest problems are handled reliably.

Trust can raise satisfaction because guests interpret the match between promise and delivery as evidence that choosing the hotel was the right decision. Trust may also directly affect loyalty by lowering perceived risk and the cost of searching for alternatives; guests who already trust a hotel do not need to re-verify basic quality every time they book. Findings from [Hapsari et al. \(2024\)](#) in Indonesian hospitality show that trust and satisfaction are important parts of relationship quality that bridge experience quality with customer loyalty, and CSR-driven trust has similarly been shown to strengthen customer identification and loyalty in service settings ([Jiddi, 2023](#)).

Even so, trust does not only work as a pre-transaction belief. After the service is consumed, promise fulfilment reinforces satisfaction. Trust may therefore have two paths to loyalty: a direct path through confidence in the hotel's reliability, and an indirect path through a satisfaction evaluation consistent with the promise made.

*H<sub>3</sub>*: Trust has a positive effect on customer satisfaction

*H<sub>6</sub>*: Trust has a positive effect on customer loyalty

*H<sub>10</sub>*: Customer satisfaction mediates the effect of trust on customer loyalty

### 2.4 Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Satisfaction is an overall evaluation formed after guests compare expectations with actual performance. In hotels, this evaluation integrates room quality, service process, staff interaction, cost, security, and comfort. High satisfaction reduces the reason to search for alternative providers because prior experience has already demonstrated that the hotel can meet guest needs.

Loyalty in this study is primarily understood as attitudinal loyalty and behavioral intention, reflected in the intention to return, making the hotel the first choice, providing recommendations, and resistance to switching. [Oliver \(1999\)](#) explains that satisfaction is an important stage toward a more stable commitment. More recent hospitality findings also show that satisfaction and trust can be the mechanisms that convert experience quality into loyalty ([Hapsari et al., 2024](#)). Satisfaction is therefore expected to be the strongest direct predictor of loyalty.

*H<sub>7</sub>*: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on customer loyalty

Table 1. Summary of constructs and measurement basis

| Construct             | Key Dimensions/Indicators                                                                  | Main References                                                                                              |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Service quality       | Tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy                                 | ( <a href="#">Parasuraman et al., 1988</a> ; <a href="#">Cronin et al., 2000</a> )                           |
| Customer value        | Quality/performance, emotional, social, and value-for-money value                          | ( <a href="#">Parasuraman et al., 1988</a> ; <a href="#">Sweeney, 2001</a> ; <a href="#">El-Adly, 2019</a> ) |
| Trust                 | Competence, integrity, consistency, security, promise fulfilment                           | ( <a href="#">Doney, 1997</a> ; <a href="#">Morgan, 1994</a> )                                               |
| Customer satisfaction | Confirmation of expectations, overall satisfaction, choice accuracy, experience evaluation | ( <a href="#">Oliver, 1999</a> ; <a href="#">El-Adly, 2019</a> )                                             |
| Customer loyalty      | Intention to return, first choice, recommendation, resistance to switching                 | ( <a href="#">Oliver, 1999</a> )                                                                             |

Table 1 summarizes the constructs, their key dimensions, and the primary references underlying the measurement of each construct in this study. The table presents five key constructs, namely service quality, customer value, trust, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Service quality includes tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Customer value covers performance, emotional, social, and value-for-money aspects. Trust reflects competence, integrity, consistency, security, and promise fulfilment. Customer satisfaction represents the evaluation of expectations and overall experience. Customer loyalty is reflected in intention to return, recommendation, first choice, and resistance to switching.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study uses an explanatory quantitative design with a survey approach, because the main objective is to test the causal-predictive relationships among constructs formulated in the hypotheses. The unit of analysis is guests of three-star hotels in Batam City. The population comprises guests of the 22 three-star hotels operating in Batam City, a population whose exact size is unknown because hotels do not publish complete guest lists; the sampling frame was therefore constructed from estimated visits across these 22 hotels. Non-probability purposive sampling was used, with two screening criteria: respondents had to have stayed at a three-star hotel in Batam at least once within the previous six months, ensuring recent and relevant experience. The final sample comprised 125 respondents. This size satisfies common adequacy rules for PLS-SEM: it exceeds ten times the largest number of structural paths pointing at any single construct (four paths into loyalty, requiring a minimum of 40) and meets the minimum sample recommended for detecting moderate effect sizes at conventional power in path models with this number of predictors ([Hair et al., 2022](#)).

Data were collected from late 2025 to early 2026 using a closed-ended questionnaire. Each indicator was measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The service quality construct adapts the SERVQUAL dimensions; customer value refers to perceived value; trust refers to relationship trust; satisfaction measures the post-consumption evaluation; and loyalty measures intention to return, first choice, recommendation, and resistance to switching. Loyalty as measured therefore emphasizes the attitudinal/behavioral-intention aspect rather than actual repeat-purchase frequency.

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS. PLS-SEM was chosen over Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM) for three reasons aligned with this study's aims. First, the objective is causal-predictive: the study seeks not only to test the hypothesized theory but to explain and predict the key target constructs (satisfaction and loyalty), which is precisely the domain where PLS-SEM is preferred. Second, PLS-SEM does not require multivariate normality and performs well with the moderate sample size available here. Third, the model estimates several latent constructs, multiple direct relationships, and mediation effects simultaneously, and PLS-SEM handles such complex path structures efficiently while maximizing explained variance in the endogenous constructs ([Hair et al., 2022](#)). Evaluation proceeded in two stages. First, the measurement model was assessed through outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha, rho\_A, composite reliability (rho\_C), and discriminant validity. An AVE above 0.50 was used as an indicator of convergent validity, while internal reliability was assessed against accepted reliability thresholds. Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) ([Henseler et al., 2015](#); [Hair et al., 2022](#)).

Second, the structural model was evaluated through collinearity statistics (VIF), the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), the Normed Fit Index (NFI) as supplementary information, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. Relationships were declared significant at  $p < 0.05$  or  $t > 1.96$ . NFI was not used as the sole basis for model acceptance because, in PLS-SEM, primary emphasis is placed on measurement-model quality, collinearity, the strength of structural relationships, and the model's ability to explain endogenous constructs ([Hair et al., 2022](#)).

Mediation testing focused on the significance of the indirect effect and the status of the direct effect. When the indirect and direct effects are both significant and consistent in direction, satisfaction is treated as a partial/complementary mediator. When the indirect effect is significant while the direct effect is not, mediation is categorized as indirect-only, or full mediation (Zhao et al., 2010). This approach allows the study to distinguish whether a loyalty antecedent has an independent effect or must first be converted into satisfaction.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1 Respondent Profile

Table 2. Respondent characteristics

| Characteristic | Category    | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender         | Male        | 53        | 42.4           |
|                | Female      | 72        | 57.6           |
| Age            | 17-25 years | 23        | 18.4           |
|                | 26-35 years | 55        | 44.0           |
|                | 36-45 years | 27        | 21.6           |
|                | 46-55 years | 13        | 10.4           |
|                | >55 years   | 7         | 5.6            |
| Stay frequency | First time  | 52        | 41.6           |
|                | 2-3 times   | 48        | 38.4           |
|                | 4-5 times   | 18        | 14.4           |
|                | >5 times    | 7         | 5.6            |

Table 2 presents the demographic and stay-experience profile of the 125 respondents. Female respondents dominated the sample with 72 people (57.6%), while male respondents numbered 53 (42.4%). The largest age group was 26-35 years (44.0%), followed by 36-45 years (21.6%) and 17-25 years (18.4%). This composition indicates a dominance of guests of productive age who travel relatively actively and have many accommodation alternatives.

In terms of stay experience, 41.6% of respondents were staying at the same hotel for the first time and 38.4% had stayed two to three times. Only 20.0% of respondents had stayed four times or more. This distribution matters for interpreting the results because most of the sample is still at the relationship-formation stage. In other words, the loyalty measured mainly reflects the intention and preference to continue the relationship after an initial experience, rather than purely long-established repeat-purchase behavior.

### 4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation

Table 3. Reliability and convergent validity

| Construct             | Cronbach $\alpha$ | rho_A | rho_C | AVE   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Service quality       | 0.954             | 0.956 | 0.959 | 0.625 |
| Customer value        | 0.950             | 0.951 | 0.956 | 0.624 |
| Trust                 | 0.951             | 0.952 | 0.956 | 0.611 |
| Customer satisfaction | 0.968             | 0.968 | 0.971 | 0.722 |
| Customer loyalty      | 0.974             | 0.975 | 0.977 | 0.766 |

As shown in Table 3, all constructs meet the requirements for internal reliability and convergent validity. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.950 to 0.974, rho\_A from 0.951 to 0.975, composite reliability (rho\_C) from 0.956 to 0.977, and AVE from 0.611 to 0.766. All AVE values exceed 0.50, meaning each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators. The very high reliability coefficients indicate strong internal consistency, although in follow-up research checking indicator wording overlap remains important so that high reliability does not simply reflect redundant items.

Discriminant validity based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT was also satisfied in the analysis output, so service quality, customer value, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty can be treated as distinct constructs. Meeting the measurement-model requirements is an important precondition before interpreting structural relationships, because path coefficients are only meaningful when constructs are measured reliably and possess adequate discriminant validity ([Henseler et al., 2015](#); [Hair et al., 2022](#)).

#### 4.3 Structural Model Evaluation

Table 4. Summary of model fit and explanatory power

| Indicator                            | Value       | Interpretation                                        |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| SRMR                                 | 0.054       | Relatively low standardized residual                  |
| NFI                                  | 0.724       | Supplementary model-fit information                   |
| VIF                                  | 1.204-3.120 | No critical collinearity                              |
| R <sup>2</sup> Customer satisfaction | 0.680       | 68.0% of satisfaction variance explained by the model |
| R <sup>2</sup> Customer loyalty      | 0.730       | 73.0% of loyalty variance explained by the model      |

As summarized in Table 4, all VIF values range from 1.204 to 3.120, well below the threshold of 5, indicating no critical collinearity among predictors. The SRMR value of 0.054 indicates a relatively low standardized residual. The NFI value of 0.724 is treated as supplementary information on model fit rather than a stand-alone acceptance criterion. Overall, these results support the model's adequacy for interpreting structural relationships.

The coefficient of determination for customer satisfaction of 0.680 indicates that service quality, customer value, and trust jointly explain 68.0% of the variance in satisfaction. Customer loyalty has an R<sup>2</sup> of 0.730, meaning the combination of the three antecedents and satisfaction explains 73.0% of the variance in loyalty. This explanatory power indicates strong model fit within the study sample. However, R<sup>2</sup> does not imply absolute causality, because the design is cross-sectional and all variables were measured at approximately the same time.

#### 4.4 Direct-Effect Hypothesis Testing

Table 5. Direct-effect hypothesis testing results

| Hypothesis / Relationship                     | $\beta$ | t     | p      | Decision      |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|-------|--------|---------------|
| H <sub>1</sub> Service quality → Satisfaction | 0.386   | 6.141 | <0.001 | Supported     |
| H <sub>2</sub> Customer value → Satisfaction  | 0.376   | 7.603 | <0.001 | Supported     |
| H <sub>3</sub> Trust → Satisfaction           | 0.336   | 6.182 | <0.001 | Supported     |
| H <sub>4</sub> Service quality → Loyalty      | 0.166   | 2.801 | 0.005  | Supported     |
| H <sub>5</sub> Customer value → Loyalty       | 0.042   | 0.700 | 0.484  | Not supported |
| H <sub>6</sub> Trust → Loyalty                | 0.235   | 4.436 | <0.001 | Supported     |
| H <sub>7</sub> Satisfaction → Loyalty         | 0.553   | 7.528 | <0.001 | Supported     |

Table 5 reports the results for the seven direct paths tested; six paths are significant and one is not significant. Satisfaction is the strongest direct predictor of loyalty ( $\beta=0.553$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). In forming satisfaction, service quality has the largest coefficient ( $\beta=0.386$ ), followed by customer value ( $\beta=0.376$ ) and trust ( $\beta=0.336$ ). The three antecedents therefore contribute in a relatively balanced way to the satisfaction evaluation.

For loyalty, trust has a larger direct effect ( $\beta=0.235$ ) than service quality ( $\beta=0.166$ ). In contrast, customer value has no significant direct effect on loyalty ( $\beta=0.042$ ;  $p=0.484$ ). This pattern is an important finding because it shows that a perceived proportionate benefit-to-price ratio is not, by itself, sufficient to build commitment to a specific hotel.

#### **4.5 Service Quality as a Driver of Satisfaction and Loyalty**

Service quality has a positive effect on satisfaction ( $\beta=0.386$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), so  $H_1$  is supported. This is the largest coefficient among the antecedents of satisfaction, indicating that the tangible service experience during a stay forms a very strong basis for evaluation. Room cleanliness, functioning facilities, information accuracy, response speed, sense of security, and staff ability to handle needs are not processed by guests as separate attributes; all are combined into a judgement of whether the stay unfolded as promised. This result supports SERVQUAL and is consistent with the literature positioning service quality as a primary antecedent of satisfaction ([Parasuraman et al., 1988](#); [Cronin et al., 2000](#)).

Service quality also has a direct effect on loyalty ( $\beta=0.166$ ;  $p=0.005$ ), so  $H_4$  is supported. Although significant, its coefficient is smaller than the effect of quality on satisfaction. This indicates that quality is not only a direct reason to return, but is stronger once translated into a satisfying experience evaluation. The indirect effect of quality through satisfaction, at 0.213, is even larger than its direct effect. Substantively, it is not enough for guests to know that a hotel has a service standard; they need to feel that the standard genuinely produces comfort and need fulfilment.

This finding extends the practical implications of SERVQUAL. Management should not stop at SOP compliance, because guests evaluate the outcome of that SOP. For example, a check-in time standard only has value if guests genuinely experience a brief process; a complaint-handling procedure is only effective if it produces a fast and fair resolution. Operational indicators therefore need to be linked to guest-experience indicators.

#### **4.6 Customer Value: Important for Satisfaction but Not a Direct Driver of Loyalty**

Customer value has a positive effect on satisfaction ( $\beta=0.376$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), so  $H_2$  is supported. This shows that three-star hotel guests base their satisfaction on how worthwhile the benefits received are relative to the price, time, effort, and risk incurred. In the midscale segment, value for money matters because guests expect a hotel's basic functions to work well without having to pay for premium attributes irrelevant to their needs.

In contrast, the direct effect of customer value on loyalty is not significant ( $\beta=0.042$ ;  $p=0.484$ ), so  $H_5$  is not supported. This finding does not mean value is unimportant; rather, it shows the difference between "*this hotel is worth its price*" and "*I will choose this hotel again.*" Value evaluation is comparative and relatively easy for another hotel to match through price, packages, or similar facilities. Value can therefore produce satisfaction with the current transaction without automatically creating long-term commitment.

The significant indirect effect of value through satisfaction, at 0.208, confirms that satisfaction is the primary conversion mechanism. This pattern deepens [Kusumawati \(2020\)](#) finding on the relationship among hotel perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty: value becomes strategic once the perceived benefit-price ratio ultimately produces a positive experience. For three-star hotels in Batam, aggressive discounting without consistent experience quality may increase acquisition but does not guarantee retention ([Ashiq, & Hussain, 2024](#); [Khoerunisa, Astuti, & Mardiatmi, 2025](#); [Riswanda, & Millanyani, 2025](#)).

#### **4.7 Trust as the Foundation of Long-Term Relationships**

Trust has a positive effect on both satisfaction ( $\beta=0.336$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and loyalty ( $\beta=0.235$ ;  $p<0.001$ ), so  $H_3$  and  $H_6$  are supported. These findings support commitment-trust theory, which positions trust as the basis of a sustainable relationship ([Morgan & Hunt, 1994](#)). In hotels, guests assess trust through the consistency between information and reality: room photos must match actual conditions, prices and additional fees must be transparent, promised facilities must be available, and transaction policies must be consistently enforced.

The direct effect of trust on loyalty is larger than the direct effect of service quality. This can be explained by the fact that trust reduces uncertainty and search costs; guests who already trust a hotel

do not need to re-verify it intensively every time they travel, an effect consistent with evidence that switching costs and relational bonds convert satisfied customers into loyal ones by [Ha, Nguyen, and Doan \(2023\)](#), because they already believe the hotel will meet important minimum standards. [Hapsari, Hussein, Ghofar, and Hanafiah \(2024\)](#) similarly show the importance of trust and satisfaction as part of the relationship-quality mechanism forming loyalty in Indonesia's hospitality sector, echoing broader service findings that CSR-driven trust and identification strengthen customer loyalty ([Jiddi, 2023](#)).

The total effect of trust on loyalty reaches 0.421, consisting of a direct effect of 0.235 and an indirect effect through satisfaction of 0.186. Trust therefore creates two forms of value at once: a sense of security before or during the transaction, and satisfaction once the promise is proven to be fulfilled. Management needs to treat every promotional claim as an operational promise, because even small inconsistencies can damage trust even when the physical facilities are relatively good.

#### 4.8 Satisfaction as the Primary Mechanism of Loyalty Formation

Satisfaction has a positive effect on loyalty with a coefficient of 0.553 ( $p < 0.001$ ), so  $H_7$  is supported. This is the largest path coefficient in the model. The result shows that three-star hotel guest loyalty is primarily formed through an overall evaluation of the experience, not through a single attribute in isolation. Guests combine perceptions of service, benefit-cost, and hotel reliability into a satisfied-or-dissatisfied judgement; this evaluation then becomes the basis for returning, recommending, and making the hotel the first choice.

The magnitude of satisfaction's effect should also be read alongside respondent composition. Most guests have only one to three prior stays. At this stage, preference is not yet fully stable, so satisfaction after the initial experience plays a large role in determining whether the relationship continues. This finding is consistent with [Oliver \(1999\)](#), who argues that satisfaction is a necessary condition before loyalty develops into a stronger commitment that is more resistant to alternatives. It also aligns with recent international hospitality evidence that experience-based satisfaction is the dominant proximal driver of loyalty and revisit intention across cultural settings ([Hapsari et al., 2024](#); [Nazarian et al., 2024](#)). Reinforcing that the satisfaction-centred mechanism observed in Batam is not context-idiosyncratic but consistent with the broader contemporary literature.

#### 4.9 The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

Table 6. Mediation testing results for customer satisfaction

| Hypothesis / Indirect Path                                             | $\beta$ | t     | p      | Mediation Type       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|--------|----------------------|
| $H_8$ Service quality $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Loyalty | 0.213   | 4.804 | <0.001 | Partial              |
| $H_9$ Customer value $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Loyalty  | 0.208   | 5.606 | <0.001 | Full / indirect-only |
| $H_{10}$ Trust $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Loyalty        | 0.186   | 4.533 | <0.001 | Partial              |

All indirect effects through satisfaction are significant, as shown in Table 6. Satisfaction mediates the effect of service quality on loyalty by 0.213, customer value by 0.208, and trust by 0.186. Because the direct paths of service quality and trust to loyalty remain significant, satisfaction functions as a partial mediator for both relationships. In contrast, the direct path of customer value to loyalty is not significant while its indirect effect is significant, so satisfaction acts as a full or indirect-only mediator for the value-loyalty relationship ([Zhao et al., 2010](#)).

This differing mediation pattern is the study's main empirical contribution. Quality and trust can be direct reasons to return because both reduce the risk of the next service use. Customer value has a different character: value for money is evaluative and easily compared with alternatives. Value therefore only has loyalty consequences once guests interpret it as a satisfying experience. This finding helps explain why price strategies and promotional packages often generate transactions but do not always generate repeat customers.

Overall, the mediation results show that satisfaction is not merely an additional variable but the central conversion mechanism through which discrete experience attributes become relational commitment. The reason satisfaction occupies this role is that loyalty in the three-star segment is an evaluative judgement rather than a reflex to any single cue: guests aggregate service performance, benefit-cost, and reliability into one affective-cognitive appraisal, and it is this appraisal, not the raw attributes, that they carry into the decision to return, recommend, and resist switching. Satisfaction thus supplies the psychological bridge that expectancy-disconfirmation and relationship-marketing theory jointly predict. From a managerial perspective, efforts to improve quality, add benefits, or build trust should be evaluated against the same question: does the change genuinely improve customer satisfaction?

#### ***4.10 Theoretical Contribution***

This study offers three theoretical contributions. First, the results support the view that loyalty in hotel services is a layered outcome shaped by service attributes and relationship evaluation. Service quality, customer value, and trust do not play identical roles: quality mainly shapes the experience evaluation, trust reduces relational uncertainty, while value represents the benefit-sacrifice exchange.

Second, the study clarifies satisfaction's position as the central mechanism. The path from satisfaction to loyalty is the largest coefficient in the model, and every antecedent has a significant indirect effect. This means loyalty models that test only direct effects risk oversimplifying the mechanism of guest behavior. For customer value specifically, full mediation shows that value has no independent loyalty consequence in this context.

Third, the findings enrich the hospitality literature in the context of midscale hotels in a border city and business-tourism destination. The results show that the loyalty mechanism in three-star hotels needs to be understood through the integration of value-for-money and relationship quality, not merely facility quality. This context differs from premium or resort accommodation, whose differentiation relies more heavily on a unique experience.

#### ***4.11 Managerial Implications***

First, hotels need to prioritize consistency in the basic services guests experience most frequently. Room cleanliness, facility function, reservation accuracy, check-in/check-out speed, and complaint response must meet a standard maintained across every shift. Consistency matters more than adding facilities that guests do not always need.

Second, value strategy should be directed toward tangible benefits rather than low price alone. Hotel packages can combine consistent breakfast, reliable internet, flexible timing, convenient parking or transport, and cost transparency. Because value has no direct effect on loyalty, the success of a value program should be measured through increased satisfaction and return intention, not merely room-sales volume.

Third, trust must be managed as consistency between communication and operations. Information on online travel agents, websites, social media, front-desk staff, and promotional materials must be aligned. Photos, room types, facilities, deposits, check-in times, refund policies, and additional fees need to be disclosed openly. Service recovery must also be part of strengthening trust, because how a hotel handles a failure is often the clearest evidence of its integrity and accountability.

Fourth, satisfaction needs to be treated as a cross-departmental performance indicator. Hotels can monitor satisfaction at several touchpoints, for example after check-in, during the stay, and after check-out. Complaint and review data should be classified by guest-journey stage so that management can identify which service points most affect loyalty.

Fifth, because most respondents are still on their first to third visit, retention programs should focus on the early relationship phase. Post-stay follow-up, second-visit benefits, simple personalization based on need history, and responsiveness to feedback can be used to convert initial satisfaction into a habit of choosing the hotel.

## **5. Conclusions**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This section separates the main findings, their theoretical and practical implications, and the study's limitations and future directions. On the main findings, this study shows that service quality, customer value, and trust are significant antecedents of customer satisfaction among three-star hotel guests in Batam City, and that satisfaction is the strongest direct predictor of loyalty. Service quality and trust also have a direct effect on loyalty, while customer value does not. Guests can therefore acknowledge that a hotel offers good value for money without this automatically creating a commitment to return.

The mediating role of satisfaction differs across antecedents. Satisfaction partially mediates the effects of service quality and trust on loyalty, while it fully mediates the relationship between customer value and loyalty. This finding confirms that value must first be converted into a satisfying experience before it develops into loyalty. Practically, hotels need to integrate service quality, the value proposition, and promise fulfilment into a consistent guest-experience system.

### **5.2 Research Limitations**

Several limitations should be considered when generalizing these results. The study is cross-sectional and relies on self-reported perceptions, so it cannot fully capture how loyalty changes over time or eliminate the potential for common method bias. The sample is confined to three-star hotels in a single city, and loyalty is measured mainly as intention/perception rather than actual repeat transactions. The  $R^2$  values, while high within this sample, should not be read as evidence of deterministic causality given the design. In addition, several variables that may be relevant to guest retention in the Batam market, such as switching cost, hotel image, price fairness, and digital engagement, were not measured in this study because the corresponding primary data were not collected; their omission is a limitation rather than an oversight in interpretation, and no results regarding them are reported here.

### **5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research**

Future research can adopt a longitudinal design, use actual booking data, involve samples from different hotel categories, and incorporate additional variables such as switching costs, hotel image, customer experience, price fairness, digital engagement, and service recovery to extend the current model. Multigroup analysis based on travel purpose or stay frequency may also clarify whether customer loyalty differs among business, leisure, and transit guests. Considering the growing role of online travel agents and guest reviews, future studies may further examine electronic trust and e-service quality as determinants of satisfaction and loyalty. Research on hotels with sustainability positioning may also incorporate green service quality, electronic word of mouth, price fairness, and green brand attitudes. These directions can complement the present findings by providing a broader understanding of the factors that strengthen customer loyalty in the hotel industry.

## **Acknowledgement**

The authors would like to thank the management and staff of the three-star hotels in Batam City for their cooperation during data collection, and all respondents who willingly participated in this study. The authors also thank the editor and the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments, which substantially improved the quality of this article. Any remaining errors are the responsibility of the authors.

## **Author Contributions**

RR responsible for the conceptualization of the study, formulation of the research problem, development of the research framework, data collection, and preparation of the manuscript draft. BS contributed to the research design, methodological refinement, data analysis and interpretation, and critical revision of the manuscript. SS provided academic supervision, theoretical refinement, validation of the results, and final approval of the manuscript. All authors have read, reviewed, and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.

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