UDC 332

# THE EFFECT OF EXPERIENTIAL VALUE ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY MODERATED BY CONTEXT-BASED CUSTOMER EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT**
Customer loyalty has become one of the main objectives of research in the marketing domain in both product and service industries. The purpose of this study was to analyze the effect of physical context and relational context on experiential value, experiential value on customer loyalty, and experiential value on customer loyalty moderated by context-based customer education at English course institutions which offer special classes for Elementary School students in Palembang. The samples in this study were 261 parents assisted by the students obtained through Simple Random Sampling technique. The data collection method used a questionnaire in the form of Google Form. The data was processed by using Multiple Linear Regression Equation Analysis Technique and Sobel Test. The results of this study indicated that: (1) the direct effect of physical context is positive but not significant, while relational context has a positive and significant effect on experiential value, (2) relational context, experiential value, context-based customer education have a positive and significant effect on customers loyalty, while physical context have a positive but not significant effect on customer loyalty, (3) indirect effect of physical context on customer loyalty through experiential value is not significant while relational context has significant effect, and (4) context-based customer education weakens the effect of the relationship between experiential value and customer loyalty.

**KEY WORDS**
Physical context, relational context, experiential value, context-based customer education, customer loyalty

Customer loyalty has become one of the main objectives in the domain of marketing research. Academics and practitioners agreed that loyalty is an integral part of doing business. Hardly any business can survive without building loyal customers. According to Kotler (2003) customer loyalty is a repeat purchase made by a customer because of a commitment to a brand or company. The concept of customer loyalty is more directed to behavior than attitude (Griffin, 1995).

Various studies have proven that customers will be loyal to a company as long as the company offers higher value than its competitors (Khalifa, 2004). However, only few studies which have directly addressed the idea that experiential value has a positive and important impact on increasing customer loyalty (Musa et al., 2013; Klaus and Maklan, 2013).

Gupta and Vajic (1999) stated that an experience occurs when a customer feels a sensation or acquisition of knowledge as a result of several levels of interaction with different context elements created by the service provider. Context is the most important thing in experiential management and design. Gupta and Vajic (1999) also defined context as the physical and relational setting where customers consume services and everything that customers interact with in that setting.

From various previous studies, it can be concluded that there is still a research gap on the effect of experiential value on customer loyalty. Some researchers such as Brakus et al. (2009), Obonyo (2011), Wang et al. (2018) and Wulandari and Sari (2016) stated that experiential value has a positive and significant relationship to customer loyalty, while other researchers such as Lin et al. (2009), Sobari, Usman and Prasetia (2019) and Hee-Souk (2018) stated that there is no positive relationship between experiential value obtained by

customers and loyalty. This phenomenon reveals that research on the effect of experiential value on customer loyalty still needs to be done further as recommended by the researchers. Therefore, the researchers consider it is very important to conduct a further research on the effect of experiential value on customer loyalty, including what factors can moderate the relationship between the two variables.

Customer education has been seen as a way to create value for customers. It helps customers to realize the whole potential of a product they are buying, solve any problems that may arise, and move on to new or more sophisticated versions of the product over time (Bell and Eisingerich, 2007). Educating customers can also increase customer loyalty (Burton, 2002), (Xue and Harker, 2001), strengthen customer perception (Burton, 2002).

Context-Based Customer Education is an activity designed by a business that aims to provide customers or potential customers with information about experiential design contexts to help customers to realize the whole potential of experiential design contexts, thereby creating value for customers. The use of context-based customer education term in this study refers to the terminology of customer education about the contexts in experience design elements.

This research was conducted on customers of English courses in Palembang, considering that English courses are one of the educational service businesses where research on experience marketing and customer loyalty is rarely done. An English course is a type of business that has a low entry barrier. The high level of competition in English courses, where the market is already crowded with players, makes customer loyalty as a key factor of success for English courses. English course organizers must develop marketing techniques that can make customers and potential customers interested and loyal to the services provided. Implementing experiential marketing is one of the best solutions to make educational services more enjoyable and build loyal customers. All factors that influence loyalty must be the main focus of any research in education field. The findings of research on loyalty in English courses will be a valuable reference, not only for English education institutions and marketing field in general, but more to contribute to all efforts to educate the nation's life.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Oliver (1996), customer loyalty is a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour. Furthermore, Oliver (1999) stated that customer loyalty and customer satisfaction are something that cannot be separated.

Loyal customers are an important asset for the company. Griffin (1995) suggested 4 characteristics of loyal customers; (1) make regular repeat purchases, (2) purchase across product and service lines, (3) refers other, and (4) demonstrates an immunity from the attraction of similar products from competitors.

Kotler (2003) stated that customer loyalty is a repeat purchase made by a customer because of a commitment to a brand or company. Customer loyalty is the commitment that customers have to make repeat purchases and be loyal to a particular company or brand compared to competitors in the same industry.

### Experiential Marketing

Schmitt (1999) defined experiential marketing as a thing where customers develop recognition and purchase of products or services from a company or brand after they experience the activity and feel the stimulus. These experiences increase the value of a product, brand or company. However, experiential marketing does not neglect the quality and functionality of products and services, but rather enhances customer emotions and taste stimuli.

In detail, Schmitt (1999) said that the experience gained by customers involves the following approaches:

1. Sense: Relates to styles and verbal and visual symbols that are able to create a whole impression;

2. Feel: The feeling here is very different from the sensory impression because it is related to the mood and emotions of one's soul;

3. Think: Thinking can stimulate one's intellectual abilities and creativity;

4. Act: Relates to one's actual behavior and lifestyle;

5. Relate: Relate to a one's culture and reference group that can create social identity.

**Experience Design**

Pullman and Gross (2004) wrote that experience design is an approach to create an emotional connection with guests or customers through careful planning of tangible and intangible service elements. Due to the increasing competition, service providers seek to develop loyalty by aggressively designing, continuously innovating, and managing their customer experiences.

Context is the most important thing in experience design and management. Carbone and Haeckel (1994) distinguished the context of service performance by the design of the symbols or elements reflected by the service and the environment. Similarly, Gupta and Vajic (1999) defined context as the physical and relational setting in which the customer consumes the service and everything that the customer interacts with in that setting.

Pullman and Gross (2004) proposed two main components for context: the physical context and the relational context. The physical context includes the visible aspects of service design. Analogously to the benefits package for the customer (Collier, 1994), the design of the physical context is concerned with supporting facilities, the provision of products and the sensual and psychological benefits of services that are derived from these objects. These benefits can include sensory things such as sight, smell and sound or a sense of status, privacy or security. The relational context refers to two important types of interactions: (1) between customers and service providers and (2) between customers and other customers. Although previous experience design research has recognized these two important relationships, the mechanism of their impact on customer loyalty has not been explicit. This interaction is important for experiencing design results as it fosters identification with the service provider and with other guests. Identification is the perception of unity with or ownership of a collective (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). When a customer identifies with a service provider and other customers, that customer takes the interest of the service provider and accepts that interest as his or her own, thereby creating loyalty behavior.

**Experiential Value**

Experiential value refers to the customer's perception of a product or service through direct use or indirect observation (Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, 2001). This value gives internal and external benefits to customers (intrinsic/extrinsic value) (Babin and Darden, 1995; Batra and Ahtola, 1991; Mano and Oliver, 1993). Internal benefits are gained when starting and completing tasks or work, while external benefits consist of pleasure and happiness in completing a process (Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994).

Experiential value comes directly from the interaction of consumers, products, services and the environment. This conceptualization is in line with that for art consumption which is "characterized as emotional and mental pulling" (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003). Emotional value referred to the utility acquired as a result of a product's or a service's ability to arouse feelings or affective states (Seth, Newman and Gross 1991). In particular, this value reflects the emotional outcome of a person's interaction with the environment, which is an internal experience full of emotion. Intellectual value refers to the utility obtained as a result of the ability of a product, service or experience to generate intellectual use.

**Context-Based Customer Education**

Meer (1984) defined customer education as: any purposeful, supportive and organized learning activity designed to impart behavior, knowledge or expertise to customers

or potential customers by a business or industry. These activities can range from individual instructional materials for specific products to formal classes related to products or services. Customer education has been seen as a way to create value for customers. It helps customers to realize the whole potential of a product they are buying, solve any problems that may arise, and move on to new or more sophisticated versions of the product over time (Bell and Eisingerich, 2007). However, when customers no longer need help to understand the complexities of a product, they gain the flexibility to look at competing alternatives.

Customer education initiatives will increase loyalty for several reasons. First, efforts to educate customers will be perceived as a very valuable addition to the service process (Buttle and Burton, 2002). Second, efforts to educate customers also contribute to increase customer efficiency, which is associated with higher customer repurchase rates (Xue and Harker, 2001). With the increasing perception of service quality at a given price level, customers are likely to have the intention to remain loyal to the organization. Context-Based Customer Education is an activity designed by a business that aims to provide customers or potential customers with information about experience design contexts to help customers to realize the whole potential of experience design contexts, thereby creating value for customers.

Based on the literature review above, this study focuses on the effect of experiential value on customer loyalty moderated by context-based customer education. The conceptual framework of this study as follow in Figure 1:
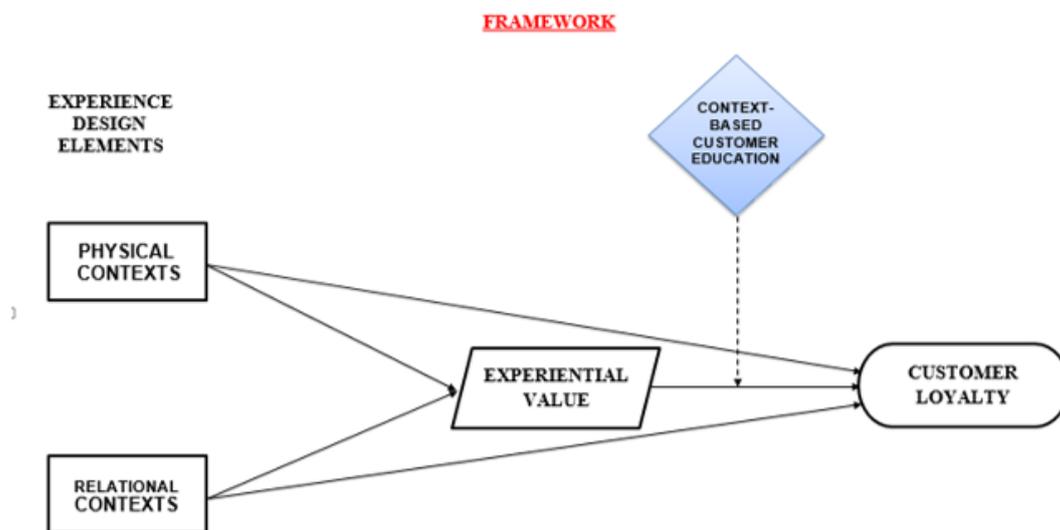


Figure 1 – Conceptual Framework

**Research Hypotheses:**

1. There is a positive effect of Physical Context on Experiential Value;
2. There is a positive effect of Relational Context on Experiential Value;
3. There is a positive influence of Physical Context on Customer Loyalty;
4. There is a positive influence of Relational Context on Customer Loyalty;
5. There is a positive influence of Experiential Value on Customer Loyalty;
6. There is a positive influence of Context-Based Customer Education on Customer Loyalty;
7. There is an indirect effect of Physical Context on Customer Loyalty through Experiential Value;
8. There is an indirect effect of Relational Context on Customer Loyalty through Experiential Value;
9. Context-Based Customer Education moderates the relationship between Experiential Value and Customer Loyalty.

## METHODS OF RESEARCH

The population in this study was 750 people who were taken from 5 (five) English courses that offer special classes for Elementary School students in Ilir Barat 1 District, Palembang. The number of samples was 261 samples. The sampling technique used was a simple random sampling where everyone had the same opportunity as the others to be selected as a member of the sample. The data source in this study was the primary data source which means the data source directly provides data to the data collectors. Questionnaire with a Google Form format that was delivered via WhatsApp was used as the data collection technique in this study. The variable measurement scale in the questionnaire used was the Semantic Differential scale with a score interval of 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree).

The validity test in this study was carried out using the Pearson Product Moment correlation in SPSS for windows version 22 program package. While the reliability test was tested using the Cronbach Alpha technique. The analytical technique used was quantitative analysis of multiple linear regression equations to answer the first problem, namely the direct influence of physical context, relational context, experiential value, context-based customer education on customer loyalty together or partially. While the Sobel Test was conducted to test the mediation hypothesis, namely the influence strength of physical context, relational context, experiential value on customer loyalty mediated by context-based customer education.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the instrument validity test showed that all statement items used as indicators on the variables of Physical Context (PC), Relational Context (RC), Experiential Value (EV), Context-Based Customer Education (CBCE), and Customer Loyalty (CL) were valid to be used as a measuring tool for these variables. While the results of the instrument reliability test for each variable in this study indicated that the statement items used as indicators on the variable of Physical Context (PC), Relational Context (RC), Experiential Value (EV), Context-Based Customer Education (CBCE), and Customer Loyalty (CL) were reliable.

Characteristics of respondents revealed in this study were: gender, education level, occupation, income and age for parents' identity. Meanwhile, for students' identity, the characteristics of the respondents used were gender, age and education level.

After doing the estimation by using the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) technique with classical assumptions was done, it was known that the models whose parameters estimated were inefficient due to heteroscedasticity and abnormality or the probability value was less than 0.05, therefore, to correct this problem, the model was re-estimated using Generalized Least Square (GLS).

Table 1 – Estimation Results of the Experiential Value Model

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | Z-statistic | Probability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | 2.483969 | 1.380607 | 1.799186 | 0.0720 |
| PC | 0.055286 | 0.036701 | 1.506393 | 0.1320 |
| RC | 0.717436 | 0.045408 | 15.79973 | 0.0000 |
| The mean value of the dependent variable | 43.82707 | S.D. Dependent Variable | | 4.904386 |
| Deviance Statistic | 5.417298 | Restr. Deviance | | 6374.045 |
| LR Statistic | 913.6097 | Probability ( LR Statistic) | | 0.000000 |
| SSR Pearson | 1424.749 | Pearson Statistic | | 5.417298 |
| Disperson | 5.417298 | | | |

*Source: Primary data is processed, 2020.*

Based on the estimation results of experiential value model (EV) using the Generalized Least Square (GLS) estimation technique above, it showed that PC had a positive but not

significant effect on EV because the probability value is greater than 0.05. This means that theoretically it supported the hypothesis, but empirically did not support the hypothesis, while RC had a positive and significant effect on EV because the probability value is 0.00 or less than 0.05.

Table 2 – Estimation Results of Customer Loyalty Model (CL)

| Variable | Coefficience | Std. Error | Z-statistic | Probability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | -0.246677 | 0.979760 | -0.251773 | 0.8012 |
| EV | 0.206690 | 0.051301 | 4.028933 | 0.0001 |
| CBCE | 0.191707 | 0.057818 | 3.315683 | 0.0009 |
| PC | 0.039795 | 0.026395 | 1.507652 | 0.1316 |
| RC | 0.158276 | 0.045848 | 3.452181 | 0.0006 |
| The mean value of the dependent variable | 26.14286 | S.D. Dependen Variable | | 3.238082 |
| Deviance Statistic | 2.684584 | Restr. Deviance | | 2778.571 |
| LR Statistic | 774.0102 | Probabilitas (LR Statistic) | | 0.000000 |
| SSR Pearson | 700.6763 | Pearson Statistic | | 2.684584 |
| Disperson | 2.684584 | | | |

*Source: Primary data is processed, 2020.*

The estimation results of customer loyalty model (CL) without moderating variables estimated using the Generalized Linear Model technique above showed that the EV, CBCE, and RC variables had a positive and significant effect on CL because the probability was smaller than 0.05, while the PC variable had a positive effect but not significant to CL because the probability is 0.13 or greater than 0.05.

Table 3 – Estimation Results of the Customer Loyalty Model (CL) with Moderating Variables

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | Z-statistic | Probability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | -16.72606 | 5.494703 | -3.044034 | 0.0023 |
| EV | 0.206690 | 0.135844 | 4.028933 | 0.0000 |
| CBCE | 0.729165 | 0.185377 | 3.933421 | 0.0001 |
| PC | 0.051692 | 0.026278 | 1.967104 | 0.0492 |
| RC | 0.128730 | 0.046168 | 2.788308 | 0.0053 |
| CBCE*EV | -0.011788 | 0.003870 | -3.046448 | 0.0023 |
| The mean value of the dependent variable | 26.14286 | S.D. Dependent Variable | | 3.238082 |
| Deviance Statistic | 2.602028 | Restr. Deviance | | 2778.571 |
| LR Statistic | 807.8483 | Probability (Statistic LR) | | 0.000000 |
| SSR Pearson | 676.5273 | Pearson Statistic | | 2.602028 |
| Disperson | 2.602028 | | | |

*Source: Primary data is processed, 2020.*

From table 3 above, the estimation results of the customer loyalty model (CL) with moderating variables estimated using the Generalized Linear Model technique showed that EV, CBCE, PC and RC had a positive and significant effect on CL because the probability was smaller than 0.05, while CBCE*EV had a negative effect which means CBCE as a moderating variable weakened the effect of EV on CL.

In this study, the indirect effect hypothesis was tested using the Sobel test.

Table 4 – Sobel Test Results of PC and RC on CL mediated by EV

| Effect | PC | Prob | RC | Prob |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Direct Effect | 0.055 | 1.506 | 0.717 | 15.799 |
| Indirect Effect | 0.011 | 1.360 | 0.147 | 2.838 |
| Total Effect | 0.066 | | 0.8864 | |

*Source: Primary data is processed, 2020.*

From the table above, it can be seen that PC did not have a significant effect on customer loyalty mediated experiential value. This was indicated by the value of the Sobel test results where the Z value was less than 1.96, while RC had a significant effect on

customer loyalty which was indicated by the Sobel test results with a Z value of 2.838 or greater than 1.96.

The indirect effect of Physical Context on Customer Loyalty mediated by Experiential Value had a positive but not significant effect. This can be explained by several reasons. First, the design of the Physical Context is concerned with supporting facilities, the provision of products and the sense and psychological benefits of services derived from objects (Collier, 1994). Customers still see the Physical Context designed by the English course as something that is not crucial, especially regarding to the building shape design and the layout of the room. Customers still perceive the humanist symbols represented by the Relational Context as the most important thing in choosing an English course. Customers of English courses see the interaction process between customers and teaching staffs, administrative staffs, security staffs as the most important thing to create Customer Loyalty through Experiential Value. Second, this research was conducted in December 2020 where the Covid-19 pandemic was still on going. All schools and courses had been eliminating face-to-face learning system (in person class) since March 2020, so that the students did not interact directly with elements of the Physical Context at the English course for almost 10 (ten) months. Physical Context Design plays an important role in arousing positive emotional responses from customers. By not having direct interaction between the customers and the elements of the Physical Context, the whole sensory connection between the Physical Context and the customer could not happen, so that the customers could not be fully engaged.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of calculations and analyzes that have been carried out in the previous chapter, the following conclusions are obtained:
1. The direct effect of physical context is positive but not significant, while the relational context has a positive and significant effect on experiential value. This means that customers see the interaction process between customers and service providers as the most important factor in growing experiential value than the shape and layout of the building. By focusing on the relational context, the service provider creates an emotional connection for future interactions when service providers rely on their employees to create shared identity and emotional support in the customer experience;
2. Relational context, experiential value, context-based customer education have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, except physical context. Experiential value refers to the customer's perception of the product or service, this value in consumption is the psychological benefit that is felt by the customer as a result of interaction with the service provider's environment. The relational context which is the relationship between the customer and the staff at the service provider is seen as the most dominant thing in creating emotional value in the customer's mind so as to increase the experiential value for the customers;
3. The indirect effect of physical context on customer loyalty through experiential value is not significant while relational context has a significant effect. The proper physical context cannot always increase customer loyalty. The considerable cost incurred by the customer to be able to access a good physical environment from the service provider can sometimes reduce the experiential value which indirectly reduces the level of customer loyalty. Customers still view the support from service provider staff as the most important factor. Good physical facilities if not supported by good staff performance and service in the interaction process will reduce customer loyalty;
4. Context-based customer education weakens the influence of the relationship between experiential value and customer loyalty. Many factors can cause this to happen, including weaknesses in the content and methods of delivering customer education, so that customers misperceive the information provided by service providers. Time is also a determining factor in the customer education process which means the customer

education is a continuous process for as long as the customer consumes the service. Customer understanding of customer education delivered by service providers requires continuous stages, not just one time delivery.

## SUGGESTIONS

Based on the conclusions that have been presented previously, the following are suggested:

1. English Course Institutions should focus on improving services through a relational context with customers so that they can create a good experiential value for customers and will subsequently be able to increase customer loyalty. Physical context must also be a concern by continuing to explore the design of the physical context desired by the customers which in the end will significantly affect both the experiential value and customer loyalty.
2. English Course Institutions should improve relational context, experiential value and context-based customer education to increase customer loyalty.
3. English Course Institutions should continue striving to design higher quality relational contexts by improving the ability of their staffs to build relationships with customers so as to increase customer loyalty through the creation of a good experiential value.
4. English Course Institutions should not only use one method in conducting context-based customer education but must use several methods such as Instructor-Centered Methods, Interactive Methods, Individualized Learning Methods and Experiential Learning Methods so that the results can strengthen the relationship between the experiential value and customer loyalty.

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