

CULTURAL EXPERIENCE AS MEDIATOR IN CONNECTION CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TO CUSTOMER LOYALTY: STUDIES CASE BRAND THE SPONGE HERBS MAKASSAR

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Abstract

The competitive business environment in Makassar, particularly in the local food retail and regional souvenir sectors, is the source of this study. The Bolu Rampah, which saw a sharp drop in both visitors and revenue in 2025, has been directly harmed by this situation. The Bolu Rampah, a traditional Makassar sponge cake known for its soft texture, cinnamon aroma, and unique sweetness of palm sugar, is the signature product of the Bolu Rampah, a native Makassar brand with rich cultural roots. The Bolu Rampah has responded to this issue by implementing innovations that are intended to improve customer pleasure and experience, ultimately cultivating loyalty among its dedicated clientele. In order to create a distinct point of differentiation, the company has included local cultural features into its customer service, such as using area greetings and having customer service employees wear traditional clothing (particularly, bodo clothes). This study aims to determine the influence of *customer experience* and customer satisfaction on *customer loyalty*, mediated by *cultural experience*, among customers of The Sponge Herbs Makassar. The population for this study comprises all membership customers of The Sponge Herbs in the Makassar region, who have made purchases either directly at outlets (offline stores) or through on line platforms (on line stores) at least twice in the last six months. A sample of 312 respondents was collected using a purposive sampling techniques. The data was analyzed using SEM-PLS using the Smart-PLS 2026 program. The outcomes of the study show that *cultural experience*, *customer satisfaction*, and *customer experience* all significantly impact *consumer loyalty*. Similarly, the *cultural experience* variable effectively mediates the connection between *customer loyalty*, *customer satisfaction*, and *customer experience* among The Sponge Herbs Makassar customers.

Keywords: *customer experience*, *customer satisfaction*, *cultural experience*, *customer loyalty*, *local food retail*, The Sponge Herbs

Introduction

The Indonesian food and beverage retail industry is currently experiencing rapid growth, but at the same time, competition is also increasing. Data from Credence Research (2024) shows that the value of the Indonesian food and beverage market in 2024 reached USD 309.7 billion and is projected to increase to USD 554.4 billion by 2032, with a compound annual growth rate of 7.61%. This increase is driven by improving consumer spending and changing consumer preferences that increasingly emphasize product authenticity and valuable consumption experiences. In this situation, local brands face a significant challenge in maintaining market share amid the entry of several modern and innovative national brands. Makassar, as a center of economic growth in Eastern Indonesia, has enormous potential for developing culinary products, especially those based on local culture. One local brand that consistently produces Makassar specialty products with a strong cultural touch is The Bolu Rampah. on date 28 November 2019 under shade **PT BLESSING TOGETHER BRILLIANT**, The Sponge Herbs born from love to culinary traditional Sulawesi South specifically cake Sponge Rampah. Sponge Herbs is Wrong One cake traditional typical Makassar, Sulawesi South, Which famous with texture gentle, aroma wood sweet Which fragrant, And flavor sweet legit typical sugar red. Formerly, sponge This more often found in village or made in a way home-based. Sponge Herbs Also often time become serving must in various program customs or meeting family in Makassar. Along time, its popularity increase And now become small gifts typical Makassar Which modern, Wrong the only one popularized

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Mustikawati et al

by outlet The Sponge Rampah. The Sponge Herbs present flavor typical village page in form small gifts modern Which comfortable brought traveling. With The tagline "*Bring Back Your Memory*" then development product we in the future will leading to product Which Can bring return memory about warmth family, tradition, And flavor authentic Archipelago And That is part from strategy business we. Where every 2 month very we will launching product new Which Can confirm positioning we in accordance with tagline Which Already we for. Based on survey Which we do, market share The Sponge Herbs in Makassar Enough big. Due to product Sponge Herbs Alone is pastry Which legendary And Have memory alone for inhabitant Makassar. But Not yet There is One shop cake even Which make Sponge Herbs as revenue stream main in shop the. By therefore we present as the only one shop Which own specification various variants Sponge Rampah. With additional *revenue* streams pastry traditional other. Product here No only perceived as food, but Also as representation identity culinary And symbol pride culture Bugis-Makassar. From side convenience access customer, The Sponge Herbs has own 19 outlet Which spread in all over region City Makassar And a number of Regency other in Sulawesi South Which Can seen in table 1.1 under This

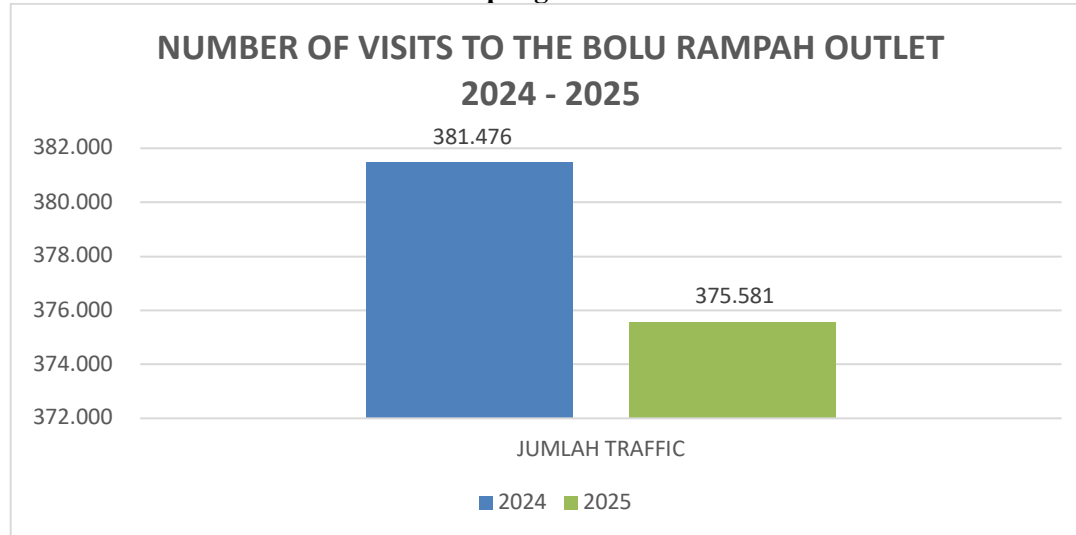
Table 1. Name And Location Outlet The Sponge Herbs

Name Outlet	Address	Location
The Sponge Herbs Pettarani	Jl. APPettarani No. 10 G Makassar	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Pioneer	Jl. Pioneer Independence Km 11 Makassar	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Hertasning	Jl. Lieutenant General Hertasning No 10D Makassar	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Ratulangi	Jl. DR Ratulangi No 82 Makassar	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Antang	Jl. Antang Raya No. 4 Makassar	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Dg. Eppe	Jl. Dg Eppe Makassar (Front Hospital Hajj Makassar)	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Express	Jl. Lieutenant General Hertasning Makassar	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Alauddin	Jl. Sultan Alauddin No 70 Makassar	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Yosda	Jl. Yos Sudarso Makassar	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Takalar	Jl. General Sudirman District Takalar	Regency Takalar
The Sponge Herbs Samata	Jl. HM Yasin Limpo No 59 District Gowa	Regency Gowa
The Sponge Herbs Sudiang	Jl. Pioneer Independence Km 19 Makassar	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Airport 1	Counter Check in B	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Airport 2	Terminal Existing side international Area	City Makassar
The Sponge Herbs Maros	Jl. General Sudirman District Maros	Regency Maros
The Sponge Herbs Pangkep	Jl. Sultan Hasanuddin District Pangkep	Regency Pangkep
The Sponge Herbs Gowa	Jl. Sultan Hasanuddin No. 52E, District Gowa	Regency Gowa
The Sponge Herbs Bulukumba	Jl. DR Sam Ratulangi District Bulukumba	Regency Bulukumba
The Sponge Herbs Karunrung	Jl. Karunrung No. 6 Makassar	City Makassar

Source: Internal data from The Bolu Rambah (2025)

However, data internal Company show existence phenomenon Which worrying on period 2024-2025. Has happen decline amount visit customer or *traffic* of 2% or as much as 5,895 person, from 381,476 visitors in year 2024 become 3,755,581 in year 2025.

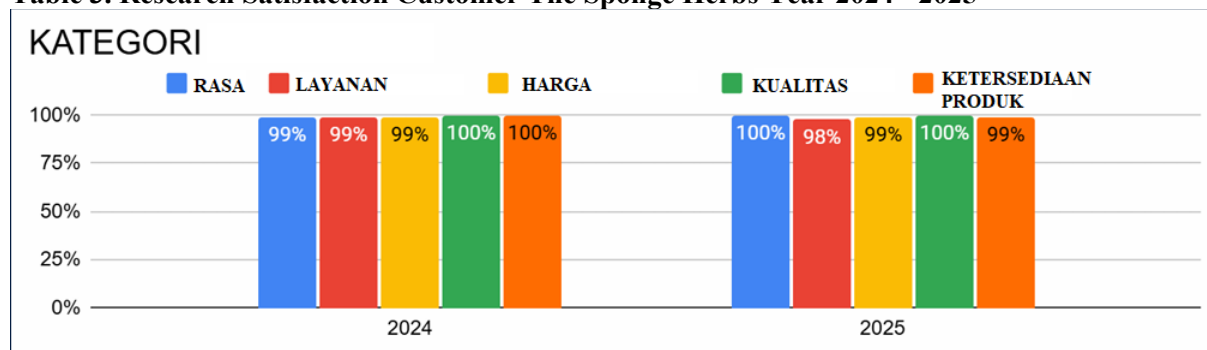
Table 2. Amount Visit to Outlet The Sponge Herbs Year 2024 - 2025



Source : Data Internal The Sponge Herbs

Decline This compared straight with decline level satisfaction customer in six month final, Which decline down from 99.9% become 98.8%.

Table 3. Research Satisfaction Customer The Sponge Herbs Year 2024 - 2025



Source : Data Research Internal The Sponge Herbs

Condition This indicates that strategy marketing conventional Which only depend on quality product start lost its effectiveness in build loyalty customers (*customer loyalty*).

In literature marketing modern, *customer experience* and *customer satisfaction* have long recognized as driver main loyalty. However for brand Which the basis there is identity regional, There is side emotional And psychological Which more in, namely *cultural experience* . The Sponge Herbs try give response to phenomenon decline performance Aini with try For integrate element culture to in service customer, like use clothes customs Bugis-Makassar (Dress (Idiot) And greeting typical area. Strategy This expected capable create differentiation Which strong And tighten bond emotional with customer, Which on Finally will restore And increase loyalty they.

Study about connection between *customer experience* , satisfaction, And loyalty has Lots done in various sector. However, there is a number of gap research (*research gap*) that become runway urgency on study This. First, existence limitations context industry. Part big study regarding *cultural experience* still in domination by sector tourist And hospitality (Ogunnaike et al., 2022; Zhang, Chen, & Hu, 2019). Still very A little study Which in a way specific study How experience culture integrated in operational retail food local For build loyalty customer still (No just traveler). Second, role mediation Which Not yet consistent. Although *customer experience* and *satisfaction* are general influential positive to loyalty, findings empirical about mechanism psychology Which bridge connection the in context culture local Still limited . Study This propose *cultural experience* as variables mediation For explain How

interaction Which loaded mark culture can strengthen satisfaction become loyalty Which sustainable. Third, Lots *cross-cultural* studies focus on How consumer global respond brand international. There is need For understand How consumer local respond effort “re-culturalization” service by brand original area they Alone in the middle modernization retail.

Based on background behind And problem Which has described on, study This aim For analyze And explain (1) The influence of *customer experience* on *customer loyalty* in customer The Sponge Herbs Makassar, (2) The influence of *customer satisfaction* on *customer loyalty* customer The Sponge Herbs Makassar, (3) The influence of *customer experience* on *cultural experience* in customer The Sponge Herbs Makassar, (4) The influence of *customer satisfaction* on *cultural experience* customer The Sponge Herbs Makassar, (5) The influence of *cultural experience* on *customer loyalty* customer The Sponge Herbs Makassar, (6) The role of *cultural experience* in mediate the influence of *customer experience* on *customer loyalty*, as well (7) The role of *cultural experience* in mediate the influence of *customer satisfaction* on *customer loyalty*.

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding marketing management, particularly in relation to *service marketing* and *cultural branding* . In a way practical, results study This will become guide strategic for management The Sponge Herbs in optimize integration culture local as tool differentiation For increase loyalty customer And restore performance business in time front. In a way personal, I as writer own desire For give contribution for place I Work For increase Power pull outlet, No only past quality And product authentic, but also *cultural experience* . Besides That, I Also want to show support to preservation culture local “Bugis – Makassar” through integration mark culture into the business retail modern.

Literature Review

Theoretical Basis: Theory of Planned Behavior

Study This using *the Theory of Planned Behavior* as a *grand theory* . Theory of Planned Behavior developed by Ajzen (1991) as development from Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Theory This explain that behavior individual influenced by behavioral intention, Which formed from three component main. First, *Attitude toward the behavior* , that is attitude positive or negative individual to something behavior. Attitude formed through evaluation on experience or results Which obtained. In context study In this case, *customer experience* and *customer satisfaction* are positioned as factor former attitude customer. The more positive experience And satisfaction Which felt, the more strong attitude positive customer to The Sponge Rampah. Second, *Subjective norms* , that is norm or influence social Which push individual For do something behavior. Norm This can in the form of pressure social, mark culture, and expectation group. In study In this case, *cultural experience* is positioned as representation norm social And culture, Which strengthen identity self customer to brand (Mucha, 2024; Sharma, 2025). Third, *Perceived behavioral control* , that is as far as where individual feel own control on behavior Which will done. In context retail food, factor This related with price, convenience access, availability product, And service digital. Customer Which feel easy in access product The Sponge Herbs will more tend realize intention his loyalty. (*Communication Theories*, University of Twente – Matter. 189–191 (*Theory of Planned Behavior/Reasoned Action*)). Integration of *the Theory of Planned Behavior* in *customer loyalty* has been validated by Zheng et al. (2025) Which show that perception mark based culture in a way significant influence intention purchase repeat.\

Customer Experience

Customer experience understood as response internal And subjective consumer to all over interaction Which happen throughout journey customer (*customer journey*) with something brand or provider service. According to Becker and Jaakkola (2020), *customer experience* encompasses sensory, emotional, cognitive, and social reactions resulting from various interactions between customers and businesses. This suggests that customer emotional engagement, retail atmosphere, and service interactions all influence the experience in addition to product quality. Findings This strengthened by Shobeiri, Mazaheri, And Laroche (2020) Which confirm that *customer experience* is construct multidimensional Which influence evaluation overall customer to brand.

Therefore, the findings of the study published in the journal Sofie Audyanova, Jul Aidil Fadli (2025) show that customer satisfaction and loyalty are greatly influenced by customer experience features, especially the emotional and contact aspects of service. Studies the emphasize that experience Which consistent And positive in context service capable strengthen perception mark as well as increase commitment customer to brand. With thus, in context study on Brand The Bolu Rampah, *customer experience* is not only understood as experience functional to product, but as

experience holistic Which potential form satisfaction, attachment culture, And loyalty term long customer. Like Which noted by Becker & Jaakkola (2020), *customer experience* can evaluated use indicator ***sensory experience*** (related appearance product, packaging, aroma), ***affective experience*** (emotion positive Which felt moment interact with brand), ***behavioral experience*** convenience transaction (purchase, payment, taking), And ***relational/social experience*** (interaction And connectedness social with staff/community brand)

Customer Satisfaction

According to Konuk (2021), customer satisfaction is conceptually defined as a consumer's subjective assessment of how well a product or service meets or even exceeds their initial expectations. The study latest confirm that level satisfaction customer or *customer satisfaction* has role crucial in trigger intensity purchase repeat, as well as push behavior advocacy customer through distribution experience positive, Han & Hyun (2020). Despite thus, satisfaction functional solely often Not yet adequate For ensure loyalty term Long, remember consumer modern tend look for attachment emotional And mark personal Which more meaningful in every decision consumption they, Rather (2021) in line with thinking Konuk (2021), *customer satisfaction* construct can measured through a number of dimensions main, between other o ***verall satisfaction*** (satisfaction comprehensive to brand), ***expectation confirmation*** (conformity expectation with reality), ***perceived quality/value*** (evaluation quality relatively to price), And ***satisfaction with service/atmosphere*** (satisfied on interaction staff or atmosphere shop), Silitonga, A. Y. et al. (2024)

Cultural Experience

Cultural experience refers to on perception And learning Which obtained customer moment they interact with values culture, customs customs as well as aspect original moment do transaction. Studies Cho, Bonn, And Li (2020) find that emergence feeling nostalgia through *cultural experience* you can strengthening *customer loyalty* in particular on sector culinary traditional. In sector consumption food local, Li And Qiu (2023) confirm presence of attachment close between motivation, satisfaction, And loyalty based culture. Matter This strengthened by findings Yoon, Lee, And Song (2022) Which Also mention that originality culture is element important For ensure customer feel satisfied And loyal. With Thus, *cultural experience* is not just complement service, but approach fundamental For grow loyalty term long. Zhang, Chen, And Hu (2019), supported by Li And Qiu (2023) put forward, *cultural experience* indicators include ***perceived authenticity*** (perception that product truly represent tradition/taste original), ***affective pride*** (flavor proud Because consume product culture), And ***cultural learning*** (push For learn more carry on about traditions/stories in come back product).

Customer Loyalty

In a way simple, customer *loyalty* is Decision And or commitment customer For do purchase repetitive on something brand in a way consistent And ignore alternative other although, there is various offer promotion from competitors. According to Massoudi (2020), loyalty can assessed with see how much big possibility customer For buy Again, how much big they promote brand the, how much resistant they to change brand, And connection emotional they with brand the. Nguyen, Simkin, And Canhoto (2020) show that cost switch to brand other play role important in maintain *customer loyalty* . Konuk (2021) show that loyalty to restaurant Which serve food organic influenced by quality food And how much satisfied customer. Rather (2021) emphasize that satisfaction is connection important between experience customer as well as loyalty customer to a brand. So, *customer loyalty* comes from from combination between satisfaction practical, connection emotional, And obstacle mental to change brand. Massoudi (2020) take notes that signs of *customer loyalty* include ***repurchase intention*** (intention buy Again in time near), ***advocacy/word of mouth*** (trend recommend brand to person other), ***resistance to switching*** (trend still choose brand although There is alternative), And ***emotional attachment*** (pride And attachment emotional to brand).

Connection Between Variables And Formulation Hypothesis

The Influence of Customer Experience on Customer Loyalty

It has been empirically proven that *customer experience* is... positive capable strengthen loyalty consumer through formation bond emotional And commitment term long. In line with view Rather (2020), *customer experience* can increase involvement customer, Which on Finally impact on strengthening loyalty. Becker And Jaakkola (2020) participate confirm that *customer experience* that strong is factor key in maintain loyalty customer. More carry on,

Bustamante And Rubio (2021) put forward that atmosphere shopping Which pleasant Also give contribution on improvement loyalty through intensity interaction Which more Good. Findings Shobeiri et al. (2020) Also show that experience Which experienced customer in every point contact (*touchpoint*) very influence decision For buy back. This view is in line with Konuk's (2021) emphasis that, in the culinary sector, *customer experience* creates optimal satisfaction and value perception, which in turn fosters loyalty.

H1: *Customer experience* has an influence positive towards *customer* loyalty customer The Sponge Herbs

The Influence of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

Increasing interest in making repeat purchases, *customer satisfaction* directly affects loyalty , desire For recommend brand, And strengthening Power competitive. According to Han And Hyun (2020) show that quality food And service Which Good contribute in build loyalty Which sustainable. In line with That, Konuk (2021) state that satisfaction to quality food And price Which reasonable push loyalty in restaurant organic. In sector hospitality, Rather (2021) Also emphasize that satisfaction is element crucial in guard retention customer. Interesting, Ogunnaike et al. (2022) take notes that satisfaction Which rooted on values culture participate increase loyalty customer in a way significant. Matter This strengthened by Li And Qiu (2023) Which show that satisfaction to culinary local influence loyalty through connection culture Which more in. Besides That, studies latest by Silitonga, A. Y,. et al. (2024) show that atmosphere restaurant And quality service is factor determinant Which influence level satisfaction customer.

H2: *Customer satisfaction* in general positive influence towards *customer* loyalty customer The Sponge Herbs

Influence Customer Experience towards Cultural Experience

Customer Experience that positive Can enhance *cultural experience* , Where interaction Which Good capable trigger customer For linking purchase they with values culture Which offered. Findings Cho, Bonn, And Li (2020) show that experience in restaurant traditional can awaken nostalgia as well as flavor own to something culture certain. In line with That Yoon, Lee, And Song (2022) emphasize that experience customer Which nature authentic will deepen knowledge they about tradition local. Becker And Jaakkola (2020) Also mention that experience Which meaningful for customer will build bond emotional Which on his turn will push involvement culture Which more active. Bustamante And Rubio (2021) take notes that experience shop Which display symbols culture can strengthen identity self customer. Matter This strengthened by studies Li And Qiu (2023) Which highlight that experience consume dish local in a way direct influence connection culture through participation active customer in activity culture the.

H3: *Customer* experience positive influence towards *Cultural experience* on customer The Sponge Herbs

The Influence of Customer Satisfaction on Cultural Experience

Customer satisfaction that felt capable strengthen method view they towards *cultural experience* . Rather (2021) emphasize that satisfaction play role important in promote involvement Which more deep on aspects culture. Li And Qiu (2023) show that satisfaction from enjoy food local strengthen meaning culture Which experienced by customer. Besides that, Ogunnaike et al. (2022) Also disclose that satisfaction from service Which own element culture increase awareness culture customer. Cho, Bonn, And Li (2020) add that satisfaction to restaurant traditional awaken memory as Wrong One form of *cultural experience* . Yoon, Lee, And Song (2022) emphasize that *customer satisfaction* can strengthen view authenticity culture Which related with A product

H4: *Customer* satisfaction positive influence towards *Cultural experience* on customer The Sponge Herbs

The Influence of Cultural Experience on Customer Loyalty

Cultural Experience too own influence direct to customer *loyalty* . Because experience Which Good can grow bond emotional as well as pride social. Cho et al. (2020) show that memory as Wrong One form experience culture strengthen Power pull customer in restaurant traditional. Yoon et al. (2022) emphasize that authenticity culture play a role in increase flavor satisfied And loyalty traveler. Ogunnaike et al. (2022) disclose that experience culture strengthen loyalty through satisfaction customer. Li And Qiu (2023) Also put forward that consumption food traditional with mark culture can strengthen loyalty. Rather (2021) add that experience culture functioning as element strategic Which deepen attachment customer to brand in term long.

H5: *Cultural experience* in positive influence towards *customer* loyalty customer The Sponge Herbs

Cultural Experience mediates influence between Customer Experience and Customer Loyalty

Cultural experience as intermediary between *customer experience* and *customer loyalty*. Positive *experience* customer No only contribute on satisfaction Which nature functional, but aim present experience Which more emotional And symbolic, so that strengthen meaning in consumption culture (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Bustamante & Rubio, 2021). Through interaction Which rich meaning, customer can feel values culture like authenticity, memory, And flavor proud social Which on Finally create bond emotional with brand (Cho, Bonn, & Li, 2020; Yoon, Lee, & Song, 2022). On product Which sourced from culture local, like food local, *customer experience* enriches *cultural experience* because customer No only get goods, but Also interact with culture Which underlying it (Li & Qiu, 2023). Offering a *cultural experience*, so increase loyalty through improvement identification And bond social, difficult For imitated by for competitors (Ogunnaike et al., 2022; Rather, 2021). By Because That is, *cultural experience* works as connector emotional And symbolic Which convert experience customer become loyalty Which sustainable, specifically For brands Which keep mark culture like The Sponge Rampah.

H6: *Cultural experience* mediates the influence of *customer experience* on *customer loyalty* customer The Sponge Herbs

Cultural Experience mediates influence between Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Cultural experience holds role crucial as variable mediation Which strengthen connection between *customer satisfaction* and *customer loyalty*. Consumers Which feel satisfied tend own openness Which more tall to meaning culture Which contained in something product, so that experience culture the transform become element emotional Which increase retention customer (Rather, 2021; Ogunnaike et al., 2022). In context industry based culture, satisfaction No Again only rely on on aspect functional like quality or price, but Also on experience symbolic Which represent mark And identity culture (Cho, Bonn, & Li, 2020; Yoon, Lee, & Song, 2022). In line with itun Li And Qiu (2023) confirm that satisfaction to culinary local capable deepen involvement culture, Which on his turn escalate loyalty customer through flavor proud And interaction social. Findings Han And Hyun (2020) participate support matter This with state that experience emotional based culture can strengthen intensity purchase repeat as well as recommendation positive. With Thus, *cultural experience* provides mark plus on relatedness between *customer satisfaction* and *customer loyalty* with include dimensions emotional, social, And symbolic Which motivating customer For still loyal on brand Which own identity culture Which strong as Which implemented by the Sponge Rampah.

H7: *Cultural experience* mediates influence customer *satisfaction* towards *customer loyalty* on customer The Sponge Herbs

Framework Conceptual

Customer loyalty (Y) is the dependent variable, *customer experience* (X1) and *customer satisfaction* (X2) are the independent variables, and *cultural experience* (Z) is the mediating variable in the conceptual framework of this study. The framework used in this study is as follows:

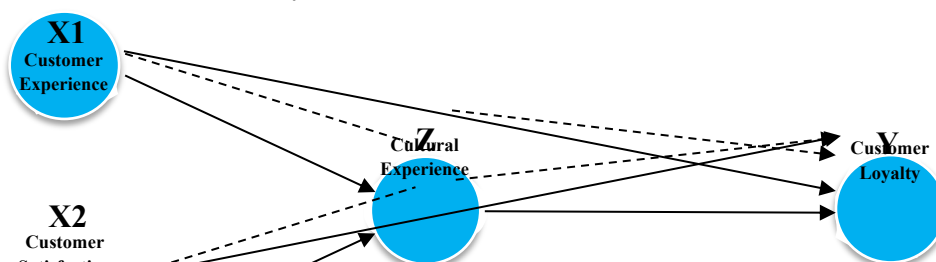


Figure 1. Research Model

**Research method
Types of research**

This study uses an explanatory research design and quantitative methodology. The purpose of selecting this method is to explain the causal relationship between the dependent variable (*customer loyalty*), the mediating variable (*cultural experience*), and the independent variable (*customer experience*) . and *customer satisfaction*) for The Bolu Rampah Makassar customers .

Research Variables and Measurement

To examine the causal relationships between four key variables in depth, this study incorporates them into a structural model. This research framework consists of two independent variables, one mediating (*intervening*) variable, and one dependent variable, which is the primary subject of analysis:

Table 4. Definition Operational Variables

Variables Independent (X)	Customer Experience (X1)	1. Sensory Experience (Becker, L., & Jaakkola, E., (2020)
		2. Affective Experience (Becker, L., & Jaakkola, E., (2020)
		3. Behavioral Experience (Bustamante, J. C., & Rubio, N., (2021)
		4. Relational/Social Experience (Rather, R. A., (2021)
	Customer Satisfaction (X2)	1. Overall Satisfaction (Han, H., & Hyun, S. S., (2020)
		2. Expectation Confirmation (Konuk, F. A., (2021)
		3. Perceived Value/Quality (Konuk, F. A., (2021)
		4. Satisfaction with Service/Atmosphere (Silitonga, A. Y et al., 2024)
Variables Dependent (Y)	Customer Loyalty (Y)	1. Repurchase Intention (Shobeiri et al., (2020)
		2. Advocacy / Word of Mouth (Shobeiri et al., (2020)
		3. Resistance to Switching (Han, H., & Hyun, S. S., (2020)
		4. Emotional Attachment (Li & Qiu, 2023)
Variables Mediation (Z)	Cultural Experience (Z)	1. Perceived Authenticity (Cho, M., Bonn, M., & Li, J., (2020)
		2. Affective Pride (Yoon, S., Lee, J., & Song, H., 2022)
		3. Cultural Learning (Li & Qiu, 2023)

A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 5 indicating “strongly agree”, was used for each dimension to measure respondents’ opinions and attitudes quantitatively and methodically.

Population, Research Sample and Data Collection Techniques

Study This set all over customer The Sponge Herbs in region Sulawesi South as population, Which covers buyer in a way direct in outlet Good through platform online (on line). Researchers used purposive sampling methodology *in conjunction with non-probability sampling methods* to determine the sample. This method was used to ensure that the selected respondents truly met the predetermined criteria. that is :

1. Is a membership member of The Bolu Rampah
2. Have purchased The Bolu Rampah products at least twice in the last six months
3. Members come from The Bolu Rampah Pettarani, The Bolu Rampah Perintis, The Bolu Rampah Ratulangi and The Bolu Rampah Hertasning Outlets

Size sample determined use formula Slovin with :

- $N = 1403$ (amount population/members The Sponge Herbs period January - September 2025)
- $e = 0.05$ (level error 5%)

$$n = \frac{1403}{1 + 1403(0.05)^2} = \frac{1403}{1 + 1403(0.0025)} = \frac{1403}{4.5075} = 311.15$$

With population 1,403 respondents And level error 5%, based on formula Slovin obtained amount sample as much as **312** respondents .

Process collection data done through distribution questionnaire structured to The *membership* members Sponge Herbs Which fulfil criteria through *Google Forms* platform . Researchers focus taking sample on four outlet with traffic visit highest, namely Outlet Pioneer, Ratulangi, Pettarani, And Hertasning, as well as utilise platform media social official The Sponge Herbs For reach consumer online. Strategy election location And channel This aim

For get data Which representative from consumer Which active, Good in a way direct and on line, so that pattern behavior purchase repeat on population target can depicted in a way accurate.

In process data, study This apply *Structural Equation Modeling* (SEM) technique *Partial Least Square* (PLS) based with support device soft SmartPLS version 4.0. use technique This viewed very relevant Because his abilities in analyze connection causality Good in a way direct And No direct, including in test role *Cultural experience* mediation (Hair et al., 2021). Procedure analysis includes:

1. Test validity convergent And discriminant,
2. Test reliability construct,
3. Test connection direct between variables, And
4. Test effect mediation using *bootstrapping* .

For study This, methodology quantitative Which use design explanatory along with analysis Structural Equation Partial Modeling Least Squares (SEM-PLS) assessed most appropriate Because allows understanding deep about connection cause and effect between variables Which researched. With Experience Culture as variables mediation, technique This can evaluate impact direct And No direct from Experience Customer and *customer satisfaction* towards *customer loyalty* in general empirical And measurable, No only depends on assumptions hypothetical. Through data Which obtained from respondents, strategy explanatory Also allows testing hypothesis in a way systematic, so that allows explanation scientific about connection between variable. Besides That, use SEM-PLS offer benefit in evaluate effect mediation with level accuracy Which tall Because can handle model structural Which advanced And accommodate variables latent Which assessed use various indicator. Remember studies This No only measure connection direct, But Also investigate *cultural experience* tasks as mediator psychological And emotional Which strengthen *customer loyalty* towards brand local based culture like The Sponge Rampah, benefit This become important. Technique This Also own significance academic Which substantial, Because strategy Which comparable has used in various studies previously in sector hospitality And related product based culture, including studies by Becker And Jaakkola (2020), Rather (2021), Yoon et al. (2022), Li And Qiu (2023), And Ogunnaike et al. (2022). By Because That, implementation strategy explanation based SEM-PLS No only solid in a way methodological, but Also strengthen position studies This in literature scientific latest .

Results

Test instrument data

a. Data Quality Test (*Measurement Model*)

In implementing data analysis techniques using SmartPLS, the evaluation of the measurement model (*Outer Model*) is based on three essential main criteria, namely convergent validity , discriminant validity , and *composite reliability* . These criteria serve to ensure that the measurement instrument used in the study has adequate quality. In the context of this study, the measurement model testing was conducted on 312 respondent data that had successfully passed the screening and profiling stages of all collected main-test data . The following is a schematic of the SmartPLS program model with the *Outer Model assessment* below:

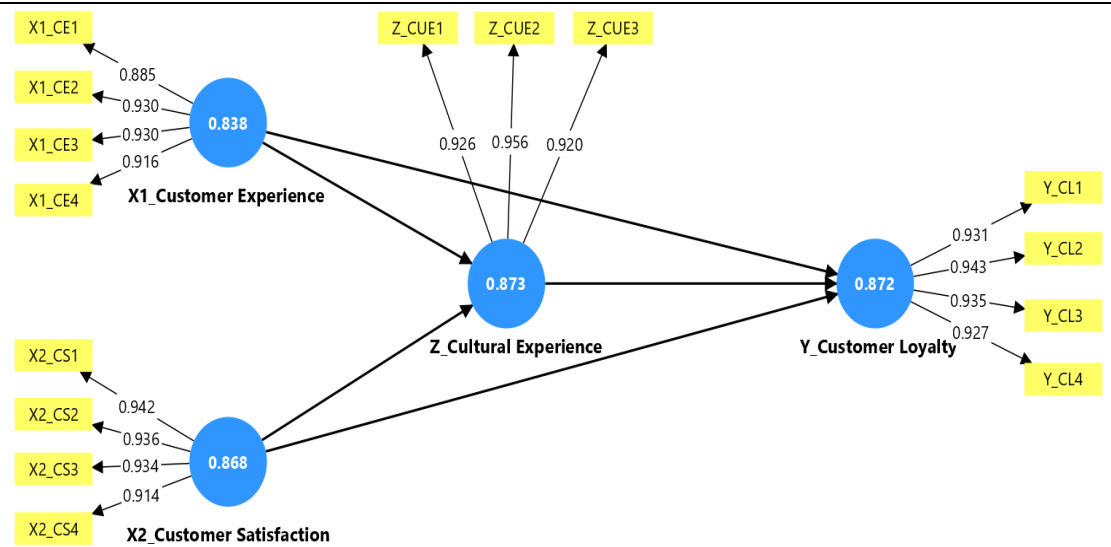


Figure 2. Measurement Model Test Results

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

1) Convergent Validity Test

Test validity convergent implemented For verify that indicators Which used has represent variables latent in a way adequate. Focus main from testing This is For review as far as where correlation between indicator with construct Which formed, use ensure consistency measurement draft *The outer loading or loading factor* value is a parameter used in SEM-PLS analysis. If *the loading factor* value of an indicator is ≥ 0.70 , then the indicator is considered convergently valid. Which reflect ability indicator in explain variables latent Which represented by him. In a way theoretical, size proportional *loading factor* values straight with contribution indicator in build construct study. Results testing read more served on table in lower This:

Table 5. Outer Loading

Code	X1	X2	Y	Z	Information
X1 CE1	0.885				All Valid
X1 CE2	0.930				
X1 CE3	0.930				
X1 CE4	0.916				
X2 CS1		0.942			All Valid
X2 CS2		0.936			
X2 CS3		0.934			
X2 CS4		0.914			
Y CL1			0.931		All Valid
Y CL2			0.943		
Y CL3			0.935		
Y CL4			0.927		
Z CUE1				0.926	All Valid
Z CUE2				0.956	
Z CUE3				0.920	

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

Results *outer loading* analysis shows that all over indicator on every variables own mark Which significant And beyond threshold limit Which recommended, so that instrument study This stated own

validity convergent Which very Good. In a way specific, *Customer experience* variable (X1) own *loading* value between 0.885 until 0.930, *Customer Satisfaction* (X2) range between 0.914 until 0.942, and *Customer Loyalty* (Y) range 0.927 until 0.943, this shows representation construct Which very strong. Temporary That, *Cultural experience* variable (Z) record *loading* value between 0.920 until 0.956, with indicator Z_CUE2 as factor most dominant (0.956) in form perception experience culture customer in The Sponge Rampah. With thus, all over indicator stated valid And fulfil condition For used For analysis more carry on.

The *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)* value is then examined as an assessment of convergent validity. The parameters This functioning For measure ability something framework in define variance from indicators the former compared to with variance Which originate from error measurement (*measurement error*). In a way theoretical, mark AVE reflect average proportion variance indicator Which capable explained by variables latent; so that the more big its value, the more strong also representation construct to the indicators. In framework SEM-PLS, criteria validity convergent Which ideal fulfilled if mark $AVE \geq 0,50$, Which indicates that construct the capable explain more from 50% variance the indicators. By Because That, testing AVE become stages crucial For ensure that *Customer experience*, *Customer Satisfaction*, *Cultural experience*, and *Customer Loyalty* variables have represented in a way adequate in model study. As for details mark AVE For every variables served on table under :

Table 6. AVE (Average Variance Extracted)

Variables	Mark AVE
X1_ <i>Customer Experience</i>	0.838
X2_ <i>Customer Satisfaction</i>	0.868
Y_ <i>Customer Loyalty</i>	0.872
Z_ <i>Cultural Experience</i>	0.873

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

Referring on results *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)* testing Which served on Table 6, all over variables in study This record mark Which beyond threshold limit minimum as big as 0.50. In a way specific, mark AVE For *Customer experience* variables are 0.838, *Customer Satisfaction* of 0.868, *Customer Loyalty* of 0.872, and *Cultural experience* achieved 0.873. These results indicate that each construct is able to explain more than 50% of the variation of its component indicators; thus, it is convincingly proven that all variables meet the requirements for convergent validity.

More carry on, height achievements mark AVE on all over construct confirm that indicators Which used own capacity Which very Good in represent variables latent Which measured. With thus, can concluded that instrument study Which used For measuring *Customer experience*, *Customer Satisfaction*, *Customer Loyalty*, and *Cultural experience* has own level validity Which optimal. By Because That, model This can be said to be worthy For further analysis was carried out, that is *inner model* testing

2) **Discriminant Validity Test**

Test validity discriminant (*discriminant validity*) implemented For ensure that every construct in model study own characteristics Which unique And truly represent draft Which measured in a way specific. Basically, a construct is required to be more capable of explaining the indicators that form it more strongly than the indicators in a different construct. In analysis SEM-PLS, evaluation validity discriminant done through two approach main, namely *cross loading* value and *Fornell-Larcker Criterion* . If an indicator has the highest correlation value for the construct it measures, then the indicator is considered valid using the *cross-loading approach* . According to the *Fornell-Larcker criteria* , a construct is said to have excellent discriminatory validity if the correlation value between other constructs is less than the square root of the *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)*. Fulfillment second criteria This has proven that *customer experience*, *customer satisfaction*, *cultural experience*, and *customer loyalty* variables have level discrimination optimal which can provide empirical representation of various concepts. As for details results *cross loading* test is presented on table following :

Table 7. Test Cross Loading

Code	X1	X2	Y	Z
X1_CE1	0.885	0.733	0.723	0.708
X1_CE2	0.93	0.791	0.695	0.751
X1_CE3	0.93	0.809	0.721	0.798
X1_CE4	0.916	0.849	0.755	0.785
X2_CS1	0.806	0.942	0.83	0.823
X2_CS2	0.829	0.936	0.808	0.835
X2_CS3	0.821	0.934	0.854	0.846
X2_CS4	0.787	0.914	0.744	0.81
Y_CL1	0.771	0.83	0.931	0.826
Y_CL2	0.796	0.842	0.943	0.838
Y_CL3	0.69	0.778	0.935	0.768
Y_CL4	0.69	0.795	0.927	0.752
Z_CUE1	0.784	0.866	0.778	0.926
Z_CUE2	0.8	0.849	0.816	0.956
Z_CUE3	0.746	0.776	0.8	0.92

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

The exogenous construct in this study is completely different from other constructs, has uniqueness, and can capture the events being studied, according to the table above. So, it can be said that the instrument in this study has passed the discriminant validity test without any significant problems. Following This results *Fornell Larcker* Criterion test obtained in results study This.

Table 8. Fornell Larcker Criterion

Variables	X1	X2	Y	Z
X1_ Customer Experience	0.915			
X2_ Customer Satisfaction	0.87	0.932		
Y_ Customer Loyalty	0.791	0.869	0.934	
Z_ Cultural Experience	0.832	0.889	0.854	0.934

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

Based on results test validity discriminant with *Fornell-Larcker* criteria , can concluded that all over variables in study This has fulfil criteria Which set Because own mark root *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) squared Which more tall compared to mark the correlation with construct other. Matter This seen from mark root square AVE for *Customer Experience* (X1) as big as 0.915, *Customer Satisfaction* (X2) as big as 0.932, and *Customer Loyalty* (Y) and *Cultural experience* (Z) Which each reach 0.934, in where numbers the in a way consistent beyond mark correlation intervariable in model. With thus, every construct proven capable measure draft Which different in a way specific without existence overlapping overlap intervariable, so that validity discriminant in model study This stated very Good And worthy For analyzed more carry on.

3) Reliability Test

To ensure the reliability of the research instrument used, a reliability test is necessary. This step serves to assess the extent to which the measuring instrument has a good level of stability in measuring the variables or constructs being studied . When the same object is measured repeatedly under comparable conditions, an instrument is considered reliable if it can produce stable and consistent data. Within the

Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis framework, these reliability parameters are generally reviewed through Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha values . Referring to Ghozali's (2021) view, the Composite Reliability value $\geq 0,70$ indicates an adequate level of reliability for confirmatory research, while a value range of 0.60 to 0.70 is still tolerable for exploratory studies . In addition, because the Cronbach's Alpha value is above or equal to 0.70, this strengthens the evidence that the research indicators have a solid level of internal consistency . Fulfillment of these criteria provides assurance that the instrument used is able to measure customer experience, customer satisfaction, cultural experience , and customer loyalty accurately and consistently. The details of the CR and Cronbach's Alpha test results are presented in the following table:

Table 9. Construct Reliability

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Information
X1_ Customer Experience	0.935	0.936	0.954	Reliable
X2_ Customer Satisfaction	0.949	0.95	0.963	
Y_ Customer Loyalty	0.951	0.953	0.965	
Z_ Cultural Experience	0.927	0.928	0.954	

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

The table shows that all reliable constructs exhibit composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70. This indicates that internal consistency reliability exists for each variable in this research model. The previous tables clearly demonstrate strong internal consistency reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity.

b. Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

Based on this model, internal model analysis explains how the latent variables are interrelated. The *R-square value* for the dependent construct and the *F-square test* for predictive relevance can be used to assess the internal model analysis. The *R-square value* for each dependent latent variable is the first step in using PLS to evaluate the internal model. In this study, 312 primary test respondents who successfully completed the screening and profiling phases were tested using a structural model. The graph below displays the results of this structural model test:

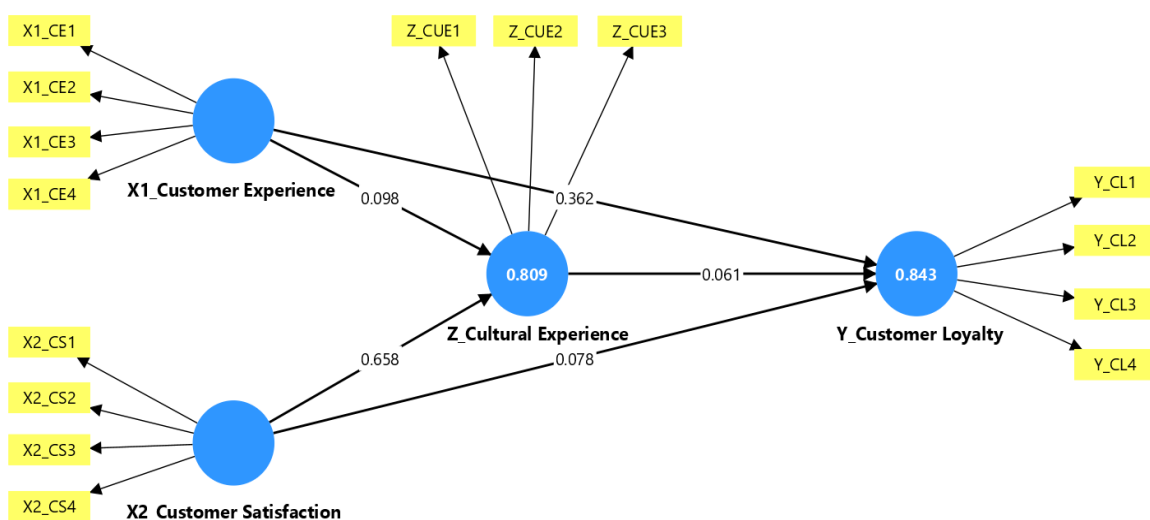


Figure 3. Structural Model Test

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing, 2026

1) *R-Square Test*

Test coefficient *R-squared* determination is applied use evaluate as far as where variables exogenous capable explain variability on variables endogen in model structural. *The R-squared* value represents proportion variance variables dependent Which can predicted through variables independent Which integrated to in model; so that the more tall achievements *R-squared* value , then the more optimal also Power prediction model the. In analysis SEM-PLS, Hair et al. (2022) categorize *R-squared* value into three levels quality, namely 0.75 as model Which strong (*substantial*), 0.50 as model moderate (*moderate*), And 0.25 as model Which weak (*weak*). By Because That, *R-squared* test becomes parameter crucial in evaluate quality model structural (*inner model*) in explain phenomenon Which researched. On studies This, *R-squared* value is used For measure capacity *customer experience* and *customer satisfaction* variables , Good in a way direct and through *Cultural experience* mediation , in explain variation on *customer loyalty* . As for details results testing R^2 served on table following :

Table 10. Test R-Square

Variables	R- Square
Y_ <i>Customer Loyalty</i>	0.843
Z_ <i>Cultural Experience</i>	0.809

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

Based on table on, several conclusions were found:

- customer loyalty* variable in this study showed an R- Square value of 0.843 . This figure indicates that 84.3% of *customer loyalty* can be explained simultaneously by *the customer experience* , *customer satisfaction* , and *cultural experience variables* integrated into the research model. The high coefficient of determination confirms that *customer loyalty* is not solely influenced by *customer experience*. and *customer satisfaction* , but also strengthened by *the cultural experience* felt by customers during their interactions with The Bolu Rampah. This finding implies that the culture-based service strategy implemented by the company has succeeded in building essential emotional bonds, contributing to an increase in the number of repeat purchases from customers, providing product recommendations to others, and maintaining preference for The Bolu Rampah despite the presence of various alternative similar products in the market. Meanwhile, 15.7% of *customer loyalty* is explained by external factors that are not accommodated in the research model. These factors include *brand trust* , *brand image* , *customer engagement* and other situational factors that have the potential to influence *customer loyalty* . This observation indicates that although the research model has demonstrated competent data estimation competency, there is a substantial opportunity for further research to expand the research variables by including other relevant factors to explain *customer loyalty* more holistically.
- The Cultural experience* variable shows mark R-Square as big as 0.809, indicates that 80.9% variation in experience culture explained in a way simultaneous by *Customer experience* (Experience Customer) And Customer Satisfaction (Satisfaction Customer). Matter This confirm existence connection significant between experience And satisfaction customer with perception they to culture Which offered, in where improvement experience And satisfaction correlated positive with formation experience culture Which positive. Remainder 19.1% *Cultural experience* variations occur due to external influences on related variables that are not included in the research model, like values personal customer, background behind sociocultural, influence media mass, or strategy communication culture company. By Because That, study in time upcoming recommended For identify And integrate variables addition This use reach understanding Which more comprehensive about formation experience culture customer.

2) *f*-Square Test

Table 11. Test F-Square

Variables	<i>f</i> -Square	Information
X1 -> Y	0.362	Moderate Influence
X1 -> Z	0.098	Little Influence
X2 -> Y	0.078	Influence Small
X2 -> Z	0.658	Influence Big
Z -> Y	0.061	Little Influence

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

Based on Table in on, can withdrawn conclusion as following:

- The Customer Experience variable has a moderate influence on the Customer Loyalty variable. ($f^2 = 0.362$).
- The Customer Experience variable has a small influence on the Cultural Experience variable. ($f^2 = 0.098$).
- The Customer Satisfaction variable has a small influence on the Customer Loyalty variable. ($f^2 = 0.078$).
- The Customer Satisfaction variable has a large influence on the Cultural Experience variable. ($f^2 = 0.658$).
- Cultural experience variables has little influence on the Customer loyalty variable ($f^2 = 0.061$).

c. Hypothesis Testing

bootstrapping technique can be used to determine hypotheses in this study based on model calculations. Partial t-values and associated probability values are obtained from the *bootstrapping calculation results*. In this study, data from 312 *main-test respondents who had gone through the filtering and profiling* phases were used to test the model's hypotheses. The following graph displays the calculation results for this research's hypothesis testing.

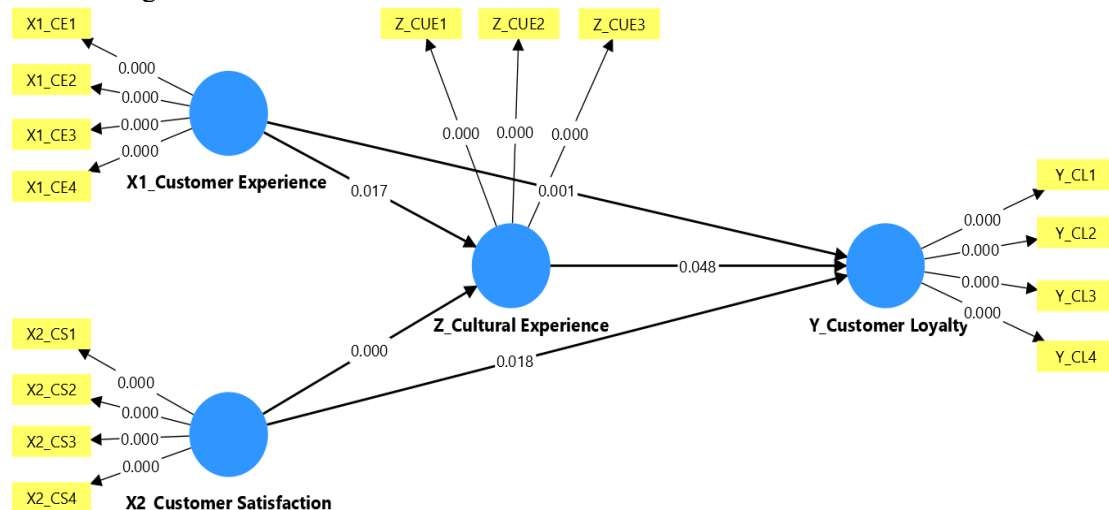


Figure 4. Hypothesis Testing

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

1) *Direct Effect Analysis (Path Coefficient)*

Direct effect analysis is carried out to measure the magnitude of the direct influence of a *variable. exogenous latent variables to endogenous latent variables* in the model under study. In this test, the path coefficient (t) generated from SEM-PLS (*Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares*) analysis is used. This coefficient indicates the positive or negative direction and strength of the influence between variables. The significance criteria for the relationship between variables are determined based on a t -statistic value > 1.96 and a p -value < 0.05 at the 5% significance level. If these criteria are met, the

research hypothesis is accepted, indicating a significant influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The estimated *path coefficients* that form the basis for the hypothesis testing are shown in the following table:

Table 1. Test Direct Effect Analysis

Variables	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Note:
X1 -> Y	0.472	3,348	0.001	Sig.
X1 -> Z	0.258	2,379	0.017	Sig.
X2 -> Y	0.27	2,374	0.018	Sig.
X2 -> Z	0.67	7,067	0	Sig.
Z -> Y	0.224	4.64	0	Sig.

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

In SmartPLS, *Bootstrapping* simulations using sample data were used to statistically test each assumed relationship. The goal of this testing process was to reduce the impact of anomalies in the research data. The results of the PLS analysis tested using the *bootstrapping method* are listed below.

- a. Testing hypothesis H1, can indicated that *customer experience* has influence Which positive And significant towards *customer loyalty* . Validity findings This supported by mark p- value of 0.001 And t- statistic of 3,348. Remember mark t- statistic > 1.96 And p- value < 0.05, so hypothesis H1 legally accepted. Implications from results This is customers feel that improvement quality experience during interact with The Sponge Rampah, seen from dimensions sensory, emotional, behavior, as well as connection social, will in a way proportional increase *customer loyalty* level . With Thus, *customer experience* plays a role as factor fundamental Which push decision purchase repeat, recommendation product to party other, as well as preference sustainable to The Sponge Herbs compared to with competitors.
- b. Testing hypothesis H2 indicates that *customer satisfaction* has influence Which positive And significant to customer *loyalty* . Confirmation to hypothesis This based on on mark p- value of 0.018 And t- statistic of 2,374, Which fulfil criteria testing statistics with t- statistic > 1.96 And p- value < 0.05. With thus, hypothesis H2 in a way official accepted. Findings This confirm that *customer* satisfaction level tall, Which covers quality product, quality service, atmosphere outlets, as well as harmony between expectation And reality experience, in a way direct correlated with improvement trend customer For maintain faithfulness they to The Sponge Rampah. In addition, it has been shown that customer satisfaction serves as a catalyst for the development of long-term relationships between consumers and businesses, as seen in higher repurchase intentions and the desire to recommend goods to potential customers.
- c. Testing of hypothesis H3 shows that *customer experience* has influence Which positive And significant towards *cultural experience* . Validity findings This supported by mark p- value of 0.017 And t- statistic of 2,379. With mark t- statistic > 1.96 And p- value >0.05, criteria testing fulfilled, so that hypothesis H3 stated accepted. Implications from results This is that experience positive Which felt customer during interact with The Sponge Herbs in a way effective increase experience culture Which they feel. The more optimal experience Which provided by company, Good through design outlets, quality service, interaction with employee, and presentation product Which reflect riches culture local, so the more tall also perception customer to authenticity culture, pride to inheritance area, as well as understanding they about history Sponge Herbs as product typical Makassar.
- d. Testing of the H4 hypothesis shows that *customer satisfaction* has an effect positive And significant towards *cultural experience* . Matter This proven with mark p- value of 0,000 And t- statistic of 7,067, Which means mark t- statistic > 1.96 And p-value < 0.05. With thus, hypothesis H4 stated accepted. Findings This indicates that the more tall *customer* satisfaction level product And service Which given by The Sponge Rampah, so the more strong also *cultural experience* felt during process consumption. Satisfaction the make customer more easy appreciate elements culture Which presented company, like use attribute traditional, atmosphere outlet Which nuanced local, as well

as delivery story about history And philosophy Sponge Rampah, so that experience culture become more meaningful And impressive

- e. Hypothesis testing H5 show that *Cultural experience* has influence Which positive And significant towards *customer loyalty* . Validity findings This supported by mark p-value as big as 0,000 And t-statistic as big as 4,640. The statistical test is said to be strong if the t- *statistic* is <1.96. while the value p- *value* > 0.05. So H5 legitimate accepted. Implications the result is that the more strong experience culture Which felt customer during interact with The Sponge Rampah, so the more tall also level of *customer loyalty* towards brand said. *Cultural experience* that authentic And impressive This created through integration identity local, like use clothes customs Dress Stupid, greeting typical Makassar, delivery history Sponge Rampah, as well as creation atmosphere outlet Which reflect culture Sulawesi South. Customer appreciation of regional cultural values is enhanced through this integration, which also fosters strong emotional bonds, repeat purchases, product recommendations, and preference for The Bolu Rampah over competing brands. With Thus, *cultural experience* is proven become Wrong One factor strategic in building *customer loyalty* , Because capable create mark plus the nature of which is not only on functional, However Also emotional And symbolic through enrichment culture local in experience shop.

2) *Ind i rect Effect Analysis (Mediation Effect)*

Indirect effect analysis is useful for testing hypotheses regarding the indirect impact of a predictor (independent) variable on a predictor (dependent) variable, mediated by a moderator variable. Hypothesis testing is based on the results of the indirect effect analysis, where a *P-value* <0.05 indicates significance and indicates that the moderator acts as a mediator. The following are the research findings:

Table 13. Test Indirect Effect Analysis

Variables	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Note:
X1 -> Z -> Y	0.088	2.29	0.022	Sig.
X2 -> Z -> Y	0.253	2.43	0.015	Sig.

Source: Smart PLS Data Processing Results, 2026

- f. The H6 hypothesis test shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between *customer experience* and *customer loyalty* , with *cultural experience* as a mediating variable. Statistical data supports this finding, namely a p- *value* of 0.022 and a t- *statistic* of 2.290, which meets the criteria for acceptance of the hypothesis (t- *statistic* > 1.96 and p- *value* < 0.05). This means that the H6 hypothesis is accepted. The implication is that the experience customers get at The Bolu Rampah not only directly increases loyalty, but is also strengthened by the cultural aspects they experience while shopping. In other words, local cultural elements such as Baju Bodo, typical Makassar greetings, the culturally nuanced store atmosphere, and the historical narrative of Bolu Rampah all contribute to strengthening the impact of customer experience on loyalty. Thus, *cultural experience* functions as a link that transforms ordinary experiences into strong emotional bonds, encouraging customers to make repeat purchases, recommend products, and maintain their loyalty to The Bolu Rampah.
- g. The H7 hypothesis test shows that *customer satisfaction* has a positive and significant influence on *customer loyalty* , and here *cultural experience* plays a role as a mediating variable. The statistical figures also support this, namely with a p-value of 0.015 and a t-statistic of 2.430 (where the t- *statistic* > 1.96 and p- *value* < 0.05), so that the H7 hypothesis is validly accepted. In detail, these results indicate that *customer satisfaction* with The Bolu Rampah will be more effective in making them loyal if there is a *cultural experience* that is also felt. So, their satisfaction does not only come from the quality of the product or service, but is strengthened by the cultural experience that provides emotional closeness. They feel proud of the local culture and better understand the history of Bolu Rampah as a Makassar specialty. In essence, *cultural experience* has proven successful as a mediator that strengthens the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. This proves that a service strategy that involves cultural elements is very important for creating sustainable customer loyalty.

Discussion

1. The Influence of *Customer Experience* Towards *Customer Loyalty*

Results study show that *customer experience* has an impact positive And significant on *customer loyalty* (H1 accepted). Matter This can seen from p - value of 0.001 And t - statistic of 3,348. Because t - statistic > 1.96 and p -value < 0.05 . Findings This emphasize that experience comprehensive Which felt consumer moment interact with brand The Sponge Rampah, start from aroma wood sweet Which typical, appearance product Which authentic, until friendliness staff, is factor crucial Which push faithfulness they. Experience This No just nature functional related transaction, However Also touch side emotional And social customer, so that created bond Which more strong between consumer with The Sponge Rampah.

In a way theoretical, findings This strengthen argument Anshu et al. (2022) Which state that in industry retail, experience customer hold role vital in form perception positive, Which on his turn trigger intention purchase repeat as well as recommendation positive (*word of mouth*). In line with That, Anastassova (2026) Also emphasize that company Which capable serve experience unique will own superiority competitive in maintain base its customers. Matter This prove that management experience customer is not just element supporters, but driving force strategic (*strategic driver*) For create loyalty term long.

If reviewed more in, every dimensions in *customer experience* , Good That aspect sensory, affective, behavior, and relational, give contribution real to loyalty. As example, stimulation sensory through aroma And flavor product can awaken attachment emotional, temporary quality service Which warm strengthen trust customer. If all over dimensions This managed in a way consistent in every outlets, customer tend will own preference Which strong And No easy switch to brand competitors.

Related with phenomenon decline traffic in The Sponge Herbs on year 2025, results study This show that improvement on every *touchpoint* of experience customer is Step strategic Which very urge. Experience Which impressive in a way psychological will create obstacle for customer For move (*switching barrier*), Because they feel has own proximity emotional And mark plus Which difficult found on competitors. With thus, optimization experience customer No only aim increase satisfaction moment, but become foundation main for sustainability loyalty customer in time front.

2. The Influence of *Customer Satisfaction* on *Customer Loyalty*

Customer satisfaction has been shown to have a positive and significant impact on *customer loyalty* (H2 accepted). Customers who feel their expectations are met by the quality of Bolu Rampah products are more likely to make repeat purchases.

Research by Ahmed et al. (2022) supports this finding by stating that satisfaction is the foundation of customer brand identification. However, in the context of The Bolu Rampah, the effect of satisfaction (f -square = 0.078) is smaller than that of experience (f -square = 0.362). Rather's (2021) argument states that in the modern service and retail industries, functional satisfaction is merely a prerequisite, while emotional experience is a stronger driver of loyalty. This means that The Bolu Rampah customers are not only looking for delicious taste (satisfaction), but also for a memorable atmosphere and interaction (experience).

3. The Influence of *Customer Experience* and *Satisfaction* on *Cultural Experience*

Results study show influence significant CX (H3) And CS (H4) towards *cultural experience* . Interestingly, satisfaction customer own influence Which very big to experience culture (f - square = 0.658).

Findings This in harmony with studies Croitoru (2024) Which disclose that mark emotional is determinant most significant from satisfaction in context culture. The connection is when customer feel satisfied with quality authentic Sponge Rampah, they become more receptive And appreciate element culture Which offered, like use Dress Stupid by staff. Mgiba & Ndlazi (2025) Also take notes that satisfaction act as door enter for customer For involved more in with values brand, including identity culture local.

4. The Influence of *Cultural Experience* on *Customer Loyalty*

Cultural experience proven influential positive And significant to loyalty (H5 accepted). Interaction Which touch aspect identity culture Bugis-Makassar create bond emotional Which deep.

Studies by Ogunnaike et al. (2022) confirm that experience culture in a way significant contribute on variance loyalty consumer. Besides That, Happy et al. (2026) emphasize that mark emotional And social Which embedded in culture local strengthen attachment customer in economy relational like Indonesia. For The Sponge

Rampah, This means use greeting area And clothes customs No just cosmetics, but strategy core Which build flavor customer pride (*affective pride*) , Which in a way direct lock loyalty they.

5. Role Cultural Experience Mediation

Study This prove that *cultural experience* mediates connection between CX (H6) And CS (H7) to loyalty. This is contribution important Which explain mechanism "Why" customer still loyal.

In line with Tjokrosaputro et al. (2026) show that quality experience aesthetics And culture mediate connection between novelty service And loyalty. Rachmadanty et al. (2025) Also recommend that factor moderation or mediation like influence culture very important For give understanding comprehensive about intention loyalty. In The Sponge Rampah, experience culture functioning as "adhesive emotional" Which change satisfaction functional become loyalty Which sustainable, give reason for customer For choose brand local compared to competitors national Which more modern However not enough own depth culture.

Novelty, Contribution Study And Comparison with Study Previously

Novelty main in study This located on integration *cultural experience* variables as mediator strategic Which bridge connection between *customer experience* and *customer satisfaction* towards *customer loyalty* in sector retail food local. Different with studies previously Which majority put aspect culture in context tourist or just variables background behind, study This prove that involvement culture Which managed in a way active through strategy service, like use attribute traditional And greeting area capable become instrument marketing dynamic. Model This in a way original explain mechanism psychological How satisfaction functional transform become loyalty emotional Which deep through experience culture Which authentic.

In a way practical, study This give response empirical to phenomenon decline traffic customer on brand The Sponge Herbs in middle competition with brand national Which more modern. Novelty This confirmed through validation strategy "re-culturalization" service as step differentiation Which tough for brand local in maintain share the market. Results from study This Also strengthen findings Cho et al. (2020) about importance nostalgia And authenticity in push loyalty on restaurant traditional. However, study This give perspective new that in retail food, satisfaction functional (flavor And price) is door enter main for customer For can appreciate values culture Which more in (*cultural learning*). Different with studies Jarrar (2026) Which focus on retail modern in a way general, study This confirm that on product heritage *products* , dimensions culture own weight Which more big in form loyalty.

Implications Study

Implications Theoretical

This research is expected to provide a contribution substantial in literature And development study behavior customers. The focus of this contribution is specifically directed at the context industry retail Which integrate wisdom local. Studies This expand application of *the Theory of Planned Behavior* (TPB) with positioning *cultural experience* as variables mediation Which represent norm subjective as well as identity social in process formation loyalty. Loyalty customer No solely born from evaluation cognitive Which nature rational, like satisfaction to quality product, but Also Because attachment emotional And experience culture Which experienced by customers during process consumption. With thus, dimensions culture proven own role strategic in strengthen behavior loyal, especially on brand local Which make identity area as mark plus in experience consumer.

More carry on, study This enrich literature about relatedness between *customer experience* , *customer satisfaction* , and *customer loyalty* with prove the role of *cultural experience* in strengthen connection the. Results study show that impact experience sensory, emotional, And social to loyalty will become Far more significant if combined with element culture Which authentic. By Because That, study This expected can become reference academic Which relevant for studies furthermore Which study dynamics loyalty customer on sector retail, *hospitality* , and industry creative based culture local.

Implications Practical

Findings from study This also provide guide strategically for management The Sponge Herbs in formulate model marketing And service Which oriented on experience culture. Results studies confirm that differentiation based culture is superiority competitive main in build loyalty consumer. By because That, company need optimize integration element local to in system service in a way consistent, like use dress customs or dress Stupid by staff sale,

CULTURAL EXPERIENCE AS MEDIATOR IN CONNECTION CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TO CUSTOMER LOYALTY: STUDIES CASE BRAND THE SPONGE HERBS MAKASSAR

Mustikawati et al

implementation greeting area, as well as installation mural Which shaped narrative history product and history outlet. Approach This proven effective in create proposition mark Which unique, so that customer No just do transaction, but Also feel connectedness emotional Which strong with identity culture Makassar.

In side That, improvement quality of *customer experience* on every point touch (*touchpoints*) become matter Which crucial, specifically on dimensions sensory And interaction service. Consistency aroma spice Which typical wood sweet (*cinnamon*) , appearance product traditional, as well as friendliness staff must guarded as identity brand Which capable give impression deep for customer. Management Also recommended For develop program loyalty innovative, like the membership *experience* covers education history on media *platforms* social The Sponge Herbs Which themed culture local use improve *cultural learning* . Strategy This will help company in transform connection customer from Which back to the beginning nature transactional become connection emotional And symbolic Which sustainable.

Implementation system service with touch culture This Also proven get response positive from customer. Based on results observation, consumer feel more comfortable And satisfied moment shop Because atmosphere outlet assessed more warm, authentic, And own character local Which strong. Presence element culture in service give mark plus in the form of experience educative about history And philosophy product. Matter This on Finally increase understanding customer to values in come back product Which they consumption, Which Then trigger creation attachment emotional (*emotional attachment*) Which more deep to brand The Sponge Rampah.

Reviewed from perspective managerial, implementation draft service based culture has give contribution positive to performance business company. Improvement turnover Which recorded on a number of outlet The Sponge Herbs post strengthening element culture in interaction service become proof empirical effectiveness strategy This. Matter the indicates that strategy "re-culturalization" service No only play a role in fertilize loyalty consumer, However Also impact direct on strengthening performance financial company. By Because That, integration values local to in experience customer can positioned as strategy competitive Which sustainable for The Sponge Herbs in navigate competition in industry retail food typical area.

Conclusion

Based on results analysis data And discussion about connection between *customer experience* and *customer satisfaction* towards *customer loyalty* , with *cultural experience* as variables mediation, study This produce a number of conclusion main. In a way overall, all over hypothesis Which submitted proven significant And each other strengthen in model study.

First, *customer experience* has impact positive Which real to loyalty customer. Matter This indicates that experience holistic Which felt consumer start from stimulation sensory like aroma And visual product, until comfort emotional And interaction social with staff, become factor key Which push intention purchase repeat. In side other, satisfaction customer (*customer satisfaction*) Also proven contribute positive to loyalty. Although satisfaction to quality product And service is foundation Which important, However on results study This show that its influence relatively more small If compared to with experience customer in a way comprehensive

Second, Good experience and satisfaction customer proven capable enhance *cultural experience* . Findings This explain that when customer feel comfortable And satisfied, they tend more appreciate values culture local Which integrated by The Sponge Herbs to in its services. Attachment emotional And flavor proud to identity area This Then impact direct on loyalty. Integration element culture, like use attribute traditional And style service typical Makassar, proven become strategy differentiation Which effective For strengthen commitment customer so that still choose brand This in middle competition retail Which strict..

Third, study This confirm the role of *cultural experience* as variables mediation Which significant. Experience culture functioning as bridge emotional Which strengthen influence experience physique And satisfaction functional become loyalty term long. With say other, loyalty customer No only formed from aspect technical solely, but will become Far more sturdy if customer feel involvement culture Which authentic And meaningful during process transaction.

As closing, results study This confirm that strategy "re-culturalization" service Which implemented by The Sponge Herbs is step strategic Which appropriate For overcome phenomenon decline traffic customer. With blend quality experience customer And satisfaction Which consistent with values culture local, company succeed create bond emotional Which deep. Matter This become superiority competitive Which unique And difficult For replicated by competitors other.

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CULTURAL EXPERIENCE AS MEDIATOR IN CONNECTION CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TO CUSTOMER LOYALTY: STUDIES CASE BRAND THE SPONGE HERBS MAKASSAR

Mustikawati et al

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