

Brand Strategy, Product Quality, and Customer Experience as Determinants of Loyalty

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ABSTRACT.

This study aims to determine the effect of simultaneously (simultaneously) or partially the variables of brand identity, brand communication, product quality and customer experience at Hotway's Chicken Solo. This research method uses a quantitative research design. The population in this study was 90 loyal customers of Hotway's Chicken Solo. The sampling technique used in this study is the survey approach technique with a sample of 90 respondents. Collecting data by using a questionnaire. The data analysis technique used was statistical analysis, namely multiple linear regression test, F test, t test, and the coefficient of determination. The results showed that brand identity, brand communication, product quality and customer experience simultaneously and significantly affected the customer loyalty at Hotway's Chicken Solo. Suggestions from this study are, for Hotway's Chicken Solo continues to improve Brand Identity, Brand Communication, Product Quality and Customer Experience so that it will make Customer Loyalty increase and be better than before.

Keywords: Customer Loyalty, Brand Identity, Brand Communication, Product Quality, Customer Experience

INTRODUCTION

The culinary industry in Indonesia is growing rapidly, with a growing number of new brands emerging. Fierce competition in this sector requires every brand to have the right strategy to survive and thrive. One crucial factor in maintaining a market position is brand loyalty, which can be influenced by several factors. Hotway's Chicken, as a new player in the culinary industry, faces the challenge of building and maintaining customer loyalty through effective branding, brand communication, product quality, and customer experience management.

In today's highly competitive environment, customer loyalty is a crucial indicator of a brand's ability to foster sustainable relationships with its consumers. Preliminary data from one of Hotway's Chicken's main outlets in Solo shows that, out of an average of 400 to 500 daily customer visits, only about 25 to 30 are recorded as making repeat purchases or participating in the loyalty program. This indicates that the customer-to-loyalty conversion rate remains very low, at less than 7% of total daily visits. This fact reflects that most consumers are transactional and have not demonstrated long-term brand engagement. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of the various factors that can potentially shape customer loyalty is necessary, including brand strategy, product quality, and the customer experience at the outlet.

Recent research confirms that brand image plays a vital role in shaping customer loyalty. (Bernarto et al. 2024) emphasized that increasing consumer

perceptions of value and trust can strengthen repurchase intentions and increase word-of-mouth recommendations as a manifestation of consumer loyalty. However, based on initial findings from Hotway's Chicken customers, it is known that this brand has not succeeded in building a strong positioning in the minds of its consumers. Most customers know the product only because of the location of the outlet or online promotions, not because of a complete understanding of the brand value that is intended to be communicated. This indicates that the implemented brand strategy has not yet succeeded in creating strong brand awareness and brand differentiation.

Meanwhile, the study (Nareswari and Thaib 2024) highlighted that experiential marketing and brand image have a greater influence on loyalty than mere product quality. However, field findings indicate that Hotway's Chicken still faces serious challenges in maintaining consistent product quality. Some customers stated that the taste, doneness, and spiciness of the chicken served are not always consistent across outlets. This inconsistency not only undermines customer satisfaction but also undermines consumer trust in the brand as a whole.

In terms of customer experience, positive experiences that consumers feel towards their interactions with brands have been shown to have a significant impact in forming satisfaction and trust, which in turn become the basis for long-term loyalty; quantitative research on smartphone users shows that brand experience increases consumer satisfaction as well as trust in the brand, and the positive values of both variables contribute directly to stronger brand loyalty. (Tarigan, Zeplin Jiwa Husada Yobeanto 2025) However, based on observations at several Hotway's Chicken branches, customer complaints persist regarding slow service, uncomfortable outlet environments, and poor hygiene. These situations create negative experiences that hinder the formation of positive brand perceptions.

Furthermore, (VIP Sari and Rahardani 2024) shows that a strong brand experience along with emotional attachment to the brand (brand love) are two main factors that drive long-term customer loyalty, because consumers who have a positive experience with the brand and feel a high emotional attachment tend to be more loyal and show loyal behavior both in attitudes and repeat purchasing actions compared to those who do not have a strong experience or emotional attachment to the brand. However, the reality faced by Hotway's Chicken shows that the emotional connection between customers and the brand has not been built strongly. The pattern of consumer behavior that tends to be opportunistic only comes when there is a promotion indicating that the loyalty that occurs is still transactional, not yet reaching affective loyalty.

This finding is reinforced by a study from Indomie, (Novia and Loisa 2024) Recent research shows that social media marketing and brand equity have a significant impact on customer loyalty, with customer experience acting as a key mediator in the relationship; consumer interaction with brand content and activities on social media enhances brand perception and creates positive experiences, which in turn strengthen loyalty through increased consumer loyalty to the brand. The results of a study on Indomie consumers revealed that social media marketing and

brand equity have a direct and significant effect on consumer loyalty, but the indirect effect of social media marketing on loyalty occurs through brand experience as a mediator. Although Hotway's Chicken has been quite active in digital promotions, the content delivered still focuses on sensational trends without reinforcing the brand's core values. This results in a lack of a deep emotional connection between the brand and customers.

Several previous studies have shown that the influence of brand strategy, product quality, and customer experience on customer loyalty does not always produce consistent results. Differences in context, industry type, and consumer characteristics often lead to varying findings. For example, one study found that a well-designed brand strategy can significantly increase customer loyalty by providing added emotional and rational value. However, other studies found that a brand strategy will be ineffective if it is not supported by adequate product quality, resulting in customers remaining reluctant to return.

A similar situation applies to product quality. Many studies have shown that consistent quality can increase satisfaction and encourage repeat purchases. However, in certain contexts, findings suggest that product quality is not the sole determinant of loyalty, as customers can remain loyal when they have a pleasant experience and feel emotionally connected to a brand, even if the product quality is not perfect.

Customer experience, theoretically believed to be key to building long-term relationships, also exhibits varying effects. In some studies, positive experiences at outlets have been shown to drive loyalty. However, in other studies, positive experiences do not necessarily lead to customer loyalty if they are not accompanied by consistent service or ongoing relationship programs.

Based on the differences in the findings, this study aims to re-examine the three variables, namely brand strategy, product quality, and customer experience in an empirical context at Hotway's Chicken, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that significantly influence customer loyalty in the fast food industry.

This research was conducted at the Hotway's Chicken Solo outlet, considering that this branch is one of the main representatives of the Hotway's brand in Indonesia, which faces high competition and dynamic customer characteristics. By selecting this location, it is hoped that the research results will provide a more relevant empirical picture of customer loyalty in the context of intense local competition.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach. The author chose to use a quantitative descriptive method to determine the magnitude of influence and significance between the variables of brand identity, brand communication, product quality and customer experience on Hotway's Chicken Solo. This study was conducted at Hotway's Chicken Solo, located at Jl. Kebangkitan Nasional Kelurahan No. 50, Penumping, Laweyan District, Surakarta City, Central Java 57141. The study was

conducted for 3 months. The author chose to conduct the study at Hotway's Chicken Solo because the author works at the institution and of course it will make it easier to obtain data for research purposes at the institution. The number of samples taken was 90 people or respondents. The sampling technique used in this study was stratified random sampling. This method is a determination technique where the population is separated into unique and homogeneous segments, and then a simple random sample is selected from each segment. The selected segments are based on age and domicile. The variables used in this study consist of 2 variables, namely the independent variable and the dependent variable. The independent variables consist of brand identity, brand communication, product quality and customer experience, while the dependent variable is customer loyalty. After the data was collected, an analysis was carried out by processing the research data using multiple linear regression analysis tools with the help of SPSS 25 software. The regression equation model used is as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Information:

Y = Customer Loyalty

X₁ = Brand

X₂ = Brand Communication

X₃ = Product Quality

X₄ = Customer Experience at the Outlet

α = Constant

β₁ - β₄ = Regression coefficient of independent variable

ε = Error term (residual error)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Multiple Linear Regression Results

No	Variables	Unstandardized B	Information
1	(Constant)	0.556	Positive
2	Brand Identity	0.179	Positive
3	Brand Communication	0.247	Positive
4	Product Quality	0.407	Positive
5	Customer Experience	0.149	Positive

Source: data processing

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the regression equation formed is:

$$Y = 0.556 + 0.179 X_1 + 0.247 X_2 + 0.407 X_3 + 0.149 X_4$$

From this equation it can be explained that:

a. Constant (a)

This means that if brand identity, brand communication, product quality and customer experience are considered constant, then customer loyalty is positive.

b. Brand Identity Coefficient (b1)

This means that if Brand Identity increases, then Customer Loyalty will increase.

c. Brand Communication Coefficient (b2)

This means that if Brand Communication increases, then Customer Loyalty will increase.

d. Product Quality Coefficient (b3)

This means that if product quality increases, customer loyalty will increase.

e. Customer Experience Coefficient (b4)

This means that if Customer Experience improves, then Customer Loyalty will increase.

Model Feasibility Test

Table 2

Model Testing Results

Model	F count	Ftable	Sig.	Standard	Information
Regression	36,603	2.48	0,000	0.05	Eligible Model

Source: data processing

From the results of the model feasibility test, $F_{hitung} > F_{tabel}$ of $36.603 > 2.53$ was obtained with a significance of 0.00, meaning that this analysis is significant with a significance level of less than 0.05, so H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. In other words, there is an intermediate influence brand identity, brand communication, product quality, and customer experiences simultaneously and significantly on customer loyalty in Hotway's Chicken Solo and meets the model feasibility test.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 3 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	thitung	table	Sig.	Standard	Information
H1	2,603	>1,987	0.011	0.05	Ha Accepted
H2	2,821	>1,987	0.006	0.05	Ha Accepted
H3	4,117	>1,987	0,000	0.05	Ha Accepted
H4	2,508	>1,987	0.014	0.05	Ha Accepted

Source: data processing

Based on the results of the t-test in the table above, it can be explained in the following form:

a. The Influence of Brand Identity on Customer Loyalty

The brand identity variable has a value $t_{hitung} > t_{table}$ ($2,603 > 1,987$) and significance $0.011 < 0.05$ then H_0 is rejected and H_a accepted. It can be concluded that there is a positive and significant influence of brand identity on customer loyalty at Hotway Chicken Solo.

b. The Influence of Brand Communication on Customer Loyalty

The competency variable has a value $t_{hitung} > t_{table}$ ($2,821 > 1,987$) and significance $0.006 < 0.05$ then H_0 is rejected and H_a accepted. It can be concluded that there is a positive and significant influence of brand communication on customer loyalty at Hotway Chicken Solo.

- c. The Influence of Product Quality on Customer Loyalty
The customer quality variable has a $t_{hitung} > t_{table}(4,117 > 1,987)$ and significance $0.000 < 0.05$ then H_0 is rejected and H_a accepted. It can be concluded that there is a positive and significant influence on product quality on customer loyalty at Hotway Chicken Solo.
- d. The Influence of Customer Experience on Customer Loyalty.
Customer experience variables have $t_{hitung} > t_{table}(2,508 > 1,987)$ and significance $0.014 < 0.05$ then H_0 is rejected and H_a accepted. It can be concluded that there is a positive and significant influence on customer experience on customer loyalty at Hotway Chicken Solo.

Coefficient of Determination Test (R²)

Table 4 Results of the Determination Coefficient

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Standard Error of the Estimate</i>
1	0.795	0.633	0.615	1.48875

Source: data processing

Based on the calculation results, the adjusted R square value was obtained at 0.615. This means that the variables of brand identity, brand communication, product quality, and customer experience contributed 61.5% to customer loyalty, while the remaining 28.5% was explained by other variables not proposed in this study, such as: price, company image, after-sales service, and other external factors not examined in this study.

DISCUSSION

- 1. The influence of brand identity on customer loyalty at Hotway's Chicken Solo.

The test results presented in Table IV.20 show that brand identity has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. These results demonstrate that the stronger the brand identity, the higher the level of customer loyalty to Hotway's Chicken.

This finding is in line with research by Rizki and Tuti (2025), Rizieq et al. (2025) which emphasized that a consistent and easily recognizable brand identity can create positive perceptions and increase customer trust.

In the context of Hotway's Chicken Solo, brand identity is demonstrated through visual elements such as the signature red logo, the Nashville Hot Chicken concept, product packaging, and the simple yet modern outlet design. However, some customers recognize the brand primarily for its location or digital promotions, rather than for its strong brand value. Therefore, strengthening the brand's identity needs to focus on its value proposition: authentic, distinctive spicy flavor, premium chicken quality, and unique presentation style, so that the brand has a clear distinction among other fast-food fried chicken competitors.

2. The influence of brand communication on customer loyalty at Hotway's Chicken Solo.

The test results presented in Table IV.20 show that brand communication has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. This means that the more effective the communication, the greater the level of customer engagement and loyalty to the brand.

These results align with research by Larasati et al. (2025) and Kusumawardhani et al. (2023), which states that interactive, consistent, and narrative-based brand communication can increase customer engagement and strengthen emotional connections with the brand.

At Hotway's Chicken Solo, brand communication is primarily conducted through social media (Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business). However, the messages conveyed tend to be promotional (discounts, new menu items) and don't sufficiently emphasize brand values such as product quality, store atmosphere, or customer care. Moving forward, Hotway's needs to develop more personalized brand storytelling, such as featuring stories about the production process, employee profiles, or loyal customers, to create a more authentic communication experience and foster emotional connection.

3. The influence of product quality on customer loyalty at Hotway's Chicken Solo.

The test results presented in Table IV.20 show that product quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. These results demonstrate that the better the product quality customers receive, the greater their likelihood of repurchasing and recommending the product to others.

This research is consistent with the findings of Utami and Handrito (2023) and Suriani and Rahmidani (2025) which emphasized that the perception of quality in food products greatly determines customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In the context of Hotway's Chicken Solo, key factors such as the delicious, distinctive spicy flavor, crispy chicken texture, and consistency of taste between visits remain top customer concerns. Some customers complain that the taste varies from day to day or from branch to branch, making quality control and production staff training a top priority. Maintaining consistent taste and presentation standards is crucial to strengthening customer trust.

4. The influence of customer experience on customer loyalty at Hotway's Chicken Solo.

The test results presented in Table IV.20 show that customer experience has a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty. This means that the more positive a customer's experience interacting with an outlet, the more likely they are to repurchase Hotway's Chicken products.

This finding is in line with research by Indriyani and Azahra (2025), Hidayah and Zaini (2024) which states that customer experience is an important emotional factor in creating long-term loyalty.

At Hotway's Chicken Solo, customer experience encompasses the outlet's ambiance, the cleanliness of the dining area, the friendliness of the staff, the speed

of service, and the comfort of the facilities. Observations indicate that customers desire a cleaner environment, faster service, and a consistent experience across shifts. Therefore, the implementation of standard service procedures (SOPs) and regular customer service training need to be strengthened to ensure a pleasant and consistent experience for every customer.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The research was conducted to determine the influence brand identity, brand communication, product quality, and customer experience on customer loyalty at Hotway's Chicken Solo. Using the census method, a sample of 90 respondents was obtained and the data analysis used was multiple linear regression test. Based on the results of hypothesis testing and the discussion that has been done, it can be concluded as follows: Brand Identity, Brand Communication, Product Quality, Customer Experience have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. Based on the calculation results, the adjusted R square value is 0.615. This means that the variables of brand identity, brand communication, product quality, and customer experience contribute to customer loyalty by 61.5% while the remaining 28.5% is explained by other variables not proposed in this study such as: price, company image, after-sales service, and other external factors not examined in this study.

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