

Research Article

Strategy for Building Customer Loyalty: The Role of Customer Relationship Marketing and Engagement in Mediating Satisfaction

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Received: 01-08-2025; Accepted: 26-08-2025

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of customer relationship marketing and customer engagement on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction serving as a mediating variable. The sample consisted of 97 service user companies, represented by company administrators working in the field. Hypothesis testing was carried out to examine both the direct and indirect effects, utilizing the mediation function of customer satisfaction. The findings reveal that customer relationship marketing has a direct, positive, and significant influence on customer satisfaction. Additionally, customer relationship marketing directly and positively affects customer loyalty, and customer engagement also has a direct, positive, and significant effect on customer loyalty. However, the results indicate that customer satisfaction does not have a direct, positive, and significant impact on customer loyalty. Furthermore, customer relationship marketing and customer engagement do not influence customer loyalty through the mediation of customer satisfaction. This study adds originality to the existing literature by concentrating on the port logistics service industry, specifically PT. IPC Terminal Petikemas Jakarta has been relatively underexplored in research about customer relationship marketing and engagement. For managerial implications, PT. IPC Terminal Petikemas Jakarta should focus on continually enhancing its customer relationship marketing strategies and actively fostering customer engagement to improve customer loyalty.

Keywords: Customer Relationship Marketing, Customer Engagement, Customer Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction

JEL Classification: M31, M10, L91

How to cite: Sumampouw, R. W., Kemenaung, D. S. A., Fahrudin, R. A., (2025). Strategy for Building Customer Loyalty: The Role of Customer Relationship Marketing and Engagement in Mediating Satisfaction. *Research of Business and Management*, 3(2), 85–97.

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1. Introduction

In an era of increasingly complex business competition, companies can no longer depend solely on products and pricing as their primary strategies. Establishing and nurturing long-term relationships with customers has emerged as one of the most effective means of gaining a competitive advantage. This approach is referred to as Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM), which seeks to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty through the management of continuous interactions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). CRM emphasizes not just transactions but also the creation of sustainable value between a company and its customers (Payne & Frow, 2015).

In addition to CRM, another widely adopted strategy is customer engagement a process whereby customers actively interact with a company or brand in various ways, both online and offline. Customer engagement transcends one-way communication; it highlights the importance of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral customer participation (Fauzi et al., 2023; Brodie et al., 2011). A high level of engagement is thought to foster positive experiences and strengthen customers' psychological connections with the company, ultimately influencing customer loyalty (Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

Meanwhile, customer satisfaction remains a central aspect of marketing studies. Satisfaction is the result of customers' evaluation of their experience after using a product or service, comparing expectations with perceived actual performance (Noviana & Oktavia, 2023; Oliver, 1999). If a company can meet or even exceed customer expectations, a deep sense of satisfaction will develop, which can form the basis for long-term loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 2009). In many cases, customer satisfaction also acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between marketing strategy and customer loyalty (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).

Several previous studies have demonstrated a significant relationship between CRM, customer engagement, and customer loyalty, both directly and through customer satisfaction. Research by Vivek et al. (2012) demonstrated that customer engagement increases loyalty through meaningful and participatory interactions. Furthermore, research by Zhafira et al. (2023) and Yuaniko & Caniago (2024) confirmed that customer engagement significantly influences loyalty, with customer satisfaction acting as a mediating variable that strengthens this influence. Another study by Rafiq et al. (2013) also showed that well-managed CRM can increase customer perceived value and extend the duration of business relationships.

However, research also suggests that satisfaction does not always act as a potent mediator. Several studies have shown that customer loyalty can be formed without prior satisfaction, especially in the context of long-term relationships based on trust and emotional commitment (Dick & Basu, 2014). This result demonstrates the importance of considering other dimensions in explaining customer loyalty, such as perceived value, brand image, and customer interaction.

PT IPC Terminal Petikemas Jakarta, a company operating in the port logistics services sector, operates in an industry that relies heavily on long-term relationships with corporate customers. In a state-owned enterprise (SOE) business environment that prioritizes efficiency and customer satisfaction, the implementation of CRM and customer engagement is highly relevant. Therefore, understanding how these two strategies influence customer loyalty and assessing whether customer satisfaction plays a mediating role in the port services context is crucial for an empirical study.

This study aims to analyze the direct and indirect effects of CRM and customer engagement on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. The findings of this study are expected to provide academic contributions to the development of relationship marketing literature and provide practical implications for companies in developing more effective strategies to maintain and increase service user loyalty.

The main issue in this study is how customer relationship marketing (CRM) and customer engagement strategies can build customer loyalty in the port logistics services industry, which is characterized by long-term relationships and a high level of dependence on inter-firm trust. In contrast to previous studies that generally emphasize customer satisfaction as a potent mediator between relationship marketing strategies and loyalty, this study finds that customer loyalty in the B2B context is not always formed through satisfaction but is more directly influenced by the quality of the relationship and the intensity of customer engagement. The novelty of this study lies in the testing of the model in the relatively rarely studied port services industry and the empirical finding that satisfaction does not play a significant role as a mediating variable, thus providing a new perspective for the relationship marketing management literature and practical implications for customer relationship management in the B2B services sector.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis

Literature Review

Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM)

Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM) is a strategic approach focused on a company's efforts to establish, maintain, and enhance long-term relationships with its customers. The primary goal of CRM is to create shared value between the company and its customers through ongoing interactions and tailored services (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Payne and Frow (2015) developed a strategic CRM framework that highlights the importance of integrating business processes and technology to enhance customer understanding.

Research by Sin et al. (2015) indicates that effective CRM implementation can enhance the quality of customer relationships, ultimately influencing loyalty and retention. In the context of B2B businesses and services, such as port logistics, CRM becomes essential as customers expect responsive, relationship-driven service. Ndubisi (2007) and Alifia & Deviastri (2025) further emphasizes that CRM dimensions such as trust, commitment, communication, and conflict management are critical in fostering loyal relationships.

Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is a customer's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement with a brand or company, reflected in the intensity of customer interaction and participation (Brodie et al., 2011). This concept reflects a paradigm shift from a passive customer relationship to an active one, where customers participate in the value creation process (Vivek et al., 2012).

Customer engagement has broad implications for company performance, including fostering loyalty. Pansari and Kumar (2017) and Maghfur et al. (2023) state that engagement impacts loyalty because it creates a psychological bond that encourages repeat purchases and positive recommendations. According to Hollebeek (2011), customer engagement involves affective, cognitive, and conative dimensions, all of which contribute to a positive and sustainable customer experience.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is an emotional response to a consumption experience compared to initial expectations (Oliver, 1999). Customers are satisfied when the service and product received meet or exceed their expectations. Zeithaml et al. (2009) emphasize that satisfaction is the result of an overall evaluation of service performance and is an important indicator of the success of a marketing strategy.

Research by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) shows that customer satisfaction is a result of the quality of relationships built through CRM. Furthermore, satisfaction also serves as a psychological mechanism that bridges customer engagement and loyalty (Bowden, 2019). In other words, customers who are emotionally and rationally engaged are more likely to feel satisfied, which in turn increases the likelihood of loyalty.

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a customer's deep commitment to repurchase or reuse the same service in the future despite pressure from competitors (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Loyalty is not only about repurchase behavior, but also about the customer's positive attitude, trust, and emotional attachment to the company.

Oliver (1999) suggests that customer loyalty develops through stages: cognitive, affective, conative, and action. Rafiq et al. (2013) found that perceptions of relationship quality, trust, and satisfaction strengthen customer loyalty. Zeithaml et al. (2009) added that loyal customers tend to provide added value in the form of brand advocacy, tolerance of mistakes, and reduced costs of acquiring new customers.

Hypothesis

Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM) and Customer Satisfaction

Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM) focuses on long-term customer engagement and building mutually beneficial relationships. It emphasizes understanding customer needs, fostering loyalty, and enhancing satisfaction through personalized services and effective communication (Kotler & Keller, 2016). According to Payne and Frow (2015), CRM implementation helps companies better identify and satisfy customer expectations, which leads to higher satisfaction levels.

Rafiq et al. (2013) found that well-structured CRM improves perceived service quality, resulting in increased customer satisfaction. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) also emphasized that relational benefits, such as confidence and social benefits from CRM, directly influence satisfaction. In the logistics sector, CRM is crucial due to the high customer contact and service customization involved.

H1: Customer Relationship Marketing has a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction.

Customer Engagement and Customer Satisfaction

Customer engagement refers to a customer's emotional, behavioral, and cognitive connection with a brand or company (Brodie et al., 2011). Highly engaged customers are more likely to express satisfaction because they feel involved and valued in the service experience. According to Vivek et al. (2012), engagement enhances the customer's perception of service quality, which fosters satisfaction.

Further, Pansari and Kumar (2017) argue that engagement drives a sense of commitment and co-creation of value, both of which enhance satisfaction. Hollebeek (2011) also found that engagement significantly correlates with positive emotional responses, which translate to satisfaction. Bowden (2019) showed that emotional and cognitive engagement lead to attitudinal outcomes such as satisfaction and loyalty.

H2: Customer Engagement has a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Customer satisfaction is often seen as the primary antecedent of customer loyalty. According to Oliver (1999), satisfied customers develop positive attitudes and behavioral intentions, including repeat purchases and advocacy. Zeithaml et al. (2009) explain that satisfaction reduces the likelihood of switching to competitors and strengthens loyalty.

In the service industry, the relationship is robust due to intangibility and perceived risk (Hallowell, 2016). Studies by Anderson and Sullivan (2022) and Caruana (2022) also confirm that higher satisfaction levels directly increase customer retention and loyalty. Thus, satisfied customers are more likely to remain loyal and maintain a long-term relationship with the service provider.

H3: Customer Satisfaction has a significant effect on Customer Loyalty.

Customer Relationship Marketing and Customer Loyalty

CRM aims not only to satisfy but also to retain customers through consistent interaction and value delivery (Kotler & Keller, 2016). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), trust and commitment two key outcomes of CRM are central to customer loyalty. Rafiq et al. (2013) found that customers who perceive high CRM quality tend to stay loyal due to increased relational value.

Other research, such as that by Ndubisi (2007) and Sin et al. (2015), supports the notion that relationship marketing strategies significantly affect customer loyalty by improving communication, trust, and service reliability. Especially in B2B settings like logistics, loyalty is essential due to the long-term nature of contracts and interactions.

H4: Customer Relationship Marketing has a significant effect on Customer Loyalty.

Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty

Engaged customers are more likely to develop a strong bond with the brand, increasing the

likelihood of loyalty (Vivek et al., 2012). According to Kumar et al. (2010), engagement drives positive word-of-mouth and repeat usage both indicators of loyalty. Pansari and Kumar (2017) also noted that customers who feel emotionally and cognitively connected to a brand exhibit higher brand loyalty.

Hollebeek (2011) argues that engagement, particularly emotional engagement, enhances attachment and commitment, which lead to increased loyalty. Bowden (2019) emphasizes that engaged customers are more likely to form psychological contracts with companies, which reinforce loyalty behaviors.

H5: Customer Engagement has a significant effect on Customer Loyalty.

Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator

The mediating role of customer satisfaction between CRM/customer engagement and loyalty has been well documented. Satisfaction serves as a transitional state between positive relational strategies and long-term loyalty (Oliver, 1999; Zeithaml et al., 2009). According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002), CRM enhances relationship quality, which first results in satisfaction, and then in loyalty.

Similarly, Pansari and Kumar (2017) assert that engagement influences loyalty indirectly through satisfaction. Empirical evidence from Bowden (2019) and Hollebeek (2011) supports the idea that the effects of engagement and relationship marketing on loyalty are partially or fully mediated by satisfaction.

H6: Customer Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Customer Relationship Marketing and Customer Loyalty.

H7: Customer Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty.

Research Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a model that explains the relationship between a theory and key factors in a particular problem. The conceptual framework will theoretically connect the variables.

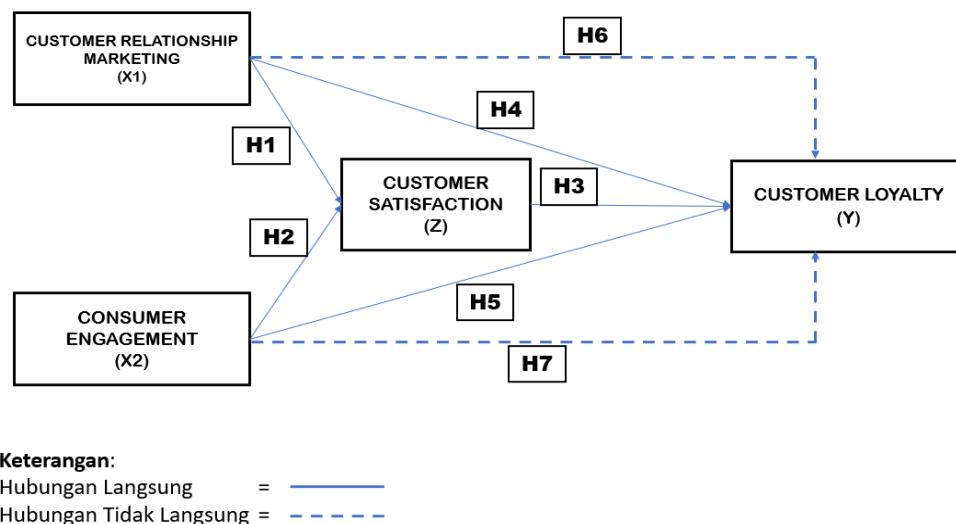


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

3. Data and Method

Research Strategy

This research employs a quantitative strategy consistent with the perspective outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2017). The primary aim of this approach is to analyze the impact of measurable variables. According to Leavy (2017), quantitative research is grounded in a positivist philosophy, which asserts that reality, independent of the research process, can be objectively measured using

scientific methods. The data collected is subsequently analyzed through statistical techniques to test hypotheses or theories. This type of research prioritizes objectivity, data reliability, and standardized procedures. The variables examined in this study are categorized as follows: Customer Relationship Marketing, Customer Engagement, Customer Satisfaction, and Customer Loyalty.

The use of Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) in this study is based on several key considerations. First, SEM-PLS is suitable for research with a relatively small sample size of 97 respondents, as this method does not place strict data distribution assumptions. Second, SEM-PLS allows for the analysis of complex relationships between latent variables, both direct and indirect through mediating variables, making it suitable for research models involving CRM, customer engagement, satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Third, SEM-PLS is more oriented towards prediction and theory development, thus aligning with the objectives of this study, which seeks to provide new empirical contributions in the context of the port logistics services industry.

Research Population and Sample

Research Population

A population is the entirety of the subjects or objects that will be the target of the research. Sekaran & Bougie (2016) state that a population is a collection of people, incidents, or things that interest the researcher to explore. The population in this research is unknown or infinite in size.

Research Sample

The sample in this study used a non-probability sampling technique with a purposive sampling approach. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique used by researchers when they have specific considerations in selecting a sample. The purpose of sampling is to save costs, time, and effort.

Data and Data Collection Methods

This study used primary data, namely data collected directly by the researcher. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires. The type of data in this study is primary data, namely data collected directly by the researcher (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

4. Results

Multicollinearity

In structural model analysis, the first step reported is to evaluate the presence or absence of collinearity issues between the independent variables. Multicollinearity is a situation where there is a strong correlation or relationship between two or more independent variables in a model. Models with large multicollinearity have significant standard errors and therefore reduce the model's precision.

Table 1. Inner VIF Values

	Cust RM	Cust Engagement	Cust Satisfaction	Cust Loyalty
Cust RM			3.797	3.378
Cust Engagement			4.597	3.144
Cust Satisfaction				3.378
Cust Loyalty				

Source: processed data (2025)

The results of the inner VIF evaluation were found to be within a range still below 5, indicating that the suggested value in the multicollinearity test is within the tolerable or acceptable limits.

Effect Size (f-squared)

The f-squared test provides a value for the effect size, which is used to evaluate the substantial impact of the predictor variables in the research model. According to Cohen (1988), an f-squared value of 0.02 indicates a small effect size for a latent variable, a value of 0.15 indicates a medium effect size for a latent variable, and a value greater than 0.35 indicates a large effect size for a latent variable.

Table 2. F-Square Values

	Nilai F-Square	Category
Cust Engagement (X2) -> Cust Loyalty (Y)	0.300	High Impact
Cust Engagement (X2) -> Cust Satisfaction (Z)	0.340	High Impact
Cust RM (X1) -> Cust Loyalty (Y)	0.156	Moderate Impact
Cust RM (X1) -> Cust Satisfaction (Z)	0.537	High Impact
Cust Satisfaction (Z) -> Cust Loyalty (Y)	0.009	No Impact

Source: processed data (2025)

R-Square Value

The R-squared value, or coefficient of determination, can be viewed from two aspects. The first is how well the independent variables in the research model explain the dependent variable. The second is how accurately the independent variables in the research model predict the dependent variable, ranging from weak to strong.

Table 3. R-Square Value

	R Square	Category
Customer Loyalty (Y)	0.820	Strong
Customer Satisfaction (Z)	0.728	Approaching Strong

Source: processed data (2025)

Based on the observed R-square values, it can be concluded that the current research model is strong in predicting the correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable, as the values range from >0.75 , and is also close to strong in predicting the correlation between 0.50 and <0.75 . The remaining values were not included or examined in this study.

Model Goodness of Fit Evaluation

The predictive ability of the research model can be assessed by the SRMR value, which is the difference between the data correlation matrix and the model-estimated correlation matrix. The SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) is presented in Table 4. States that SRMR is a measure of model fit, namely the difference between the data correlation matrix and the model-estimated correlation matrix, because the SEMPLS model must have predictive accuracy.

Table 4. Model Fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.086	0.086
NFI	0.867	0.877

Source: processed data (2025)

NFI values range from 0 to 1 and are considered to have a good fit if the value is close to 1. Based on Table 4 above, the NFI value is 0.754, indicating a good model fit.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is conducted to determine whether the hypothesis is supported and to examine the path analysis through the results of the specific indirect effects test. Below is a diagram of the inner model from the PLS-SEM bootstrapping results, along with a description:

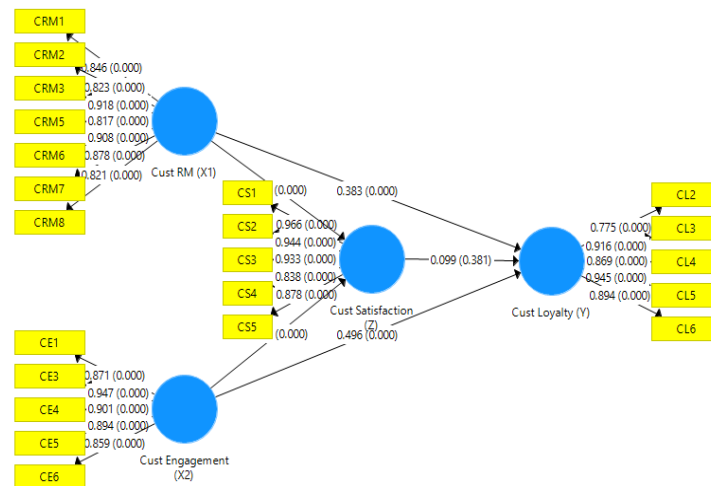


Figure 2. Inner Model Results

Direct Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 below shows the results of PLS-SEM data processing to determine the results of direct hypothesis testing.

Table 5. Direct Hypothesis Testing Results

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Result
Customer RM (X1) -> Customer Satisfaction (Z)	0.546	8.550	0.000	Accepted
Customer Engagement (X2) -> Customer Satisfaction (Z)	0.434	7.074	0.000	Accepted
Customer Satisfaction (Z) -> Customer Loyalty (Y)	0.099	0.877	0.381	Rejected
Customer RM (X1) -> Customer Loyalty (Y)	0.383	4.142	0.000	Accepted
Customer Engagement (X2) -> Customer Loyalty (Y)	0.496	6.537	0.000	Accepted

Source: processed data (2025)

Based on the results of direct hypothesis testing shown in Table 5, it is known that Customer Relationship Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction with a p-value of 0.000 and a T-statistic of 8.550, as well as on Customer Loyalty with a p-value of 0.000 and a T-statistic of 4.142, so that both hypotheses are accepted. Similarly, Customer Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction ($p = 0.000$; $T = 7.074$) and on Customer Loyalty (Y) ($p = 0.000$; $T = 6.537$), which indicates that both hypotheses are also accepted. However, the effect of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty is not significant with a p-value of 0.381 and a T-statistic of 0.877, so this hypothesis is rejected. This finding indicates that customer loyalty in the context of this study is more directly influenced by customer relationships and engagement than by customer satisfaction.

5. Discussion

The Influence of Customer Relationship Marketing on Customer Satisfaction

The results of this study indicate that Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM) has a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction. This result indicates that the better a company manages customer relationships through effective communication, personalized service, and understanding customer needs, the higher the level of customer satisfaction.

These results align with research conducted by Kotler and Keller (2016), which states that an integrated CRM strategy will generate positive customer perceptions and impact satisfaction.

Research by Ndubisi (2007) and Sin et al. (2015) also demonstrates that CRM based on trust, empathy, and commitment has a significant impact on increasing customer satisfaction. Furthermore, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) added that quality relationships create a sense of comfort and satisfaction in customers.

The Influence of Customer Engagement on Customer Satisfaction

Statistical test results indicate that Customer Engagement has a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction. This finding suggests that the higher the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement of customers, the higher the level of satisfaction with a company's services.

These results align with a study by Brodie et al. (2011), which stated that customer engagement creates a pleasant experience and increases satisfaction. Pansari and Kumar (2017) also stated that engagement creates shared value and strengthens customers' emotional connection to the company, leading to satisfaction. Similarly, research by Vivek et al. (2012) and Bowden (2019) found that engagement can drive positive service perceptions.

The Influence of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

The analysis shows that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty. This result means that customers who are satisfied with a company's service are more likely to maintain long-term relationships, make repeat purchases, and recommend the service to others.

This finding is consistent with Oliver's (1999) consumer loyalty theory, which states that satisfaction is the initial stage in the formation of loyalty. Zeithaml et al. (2009) assert that satisfaction increases perceived value and decreases the likelihood of switching to competitors. Research by Anderson and Sullivan (2022) and Hallowell (2016) also concluded that satisfied customers are more loyal and become a source of long-term revenue for the company.

The Influence of Customer Relationship Marketing on Customer Loyalty

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, it was found that Customer Relationship Marketing has a positive and significant influence on Customer Loyalty. This finding indicates that well-managed relationships with customers can build emotional bonds and increase loyalty.

These results align with the findings of Morgan and Hunt (1994), who stated that trust and commitment are key elements of CRM that directly impact loyalty. Rafiq et al. (2013) also found that relationship quality in CRM significantly drives customer loyalty. Ndubisi (2007) added that the elements of communication, openness, and trust in CRM can create strong bonds.

The Influence of Customer Engagement on Customer Loyalty

The test results show that Customer Engagement has a significant influence on Customer Loyalty. This result means that customers who actively interact and engage with a company's services tend to be more loyal and support the company in the long term.

These findings align with research by Hollebeek (2011), which states that customers' emotional and cognitive involvement with a brand drives brand loyalty. Vivek et al. (2012) and Kumar et al. (2010) also revealed that engagement drives loyal behaviors such as repeat purchases and word-of-mouth promotion.

The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

The analysis shows that Customer Satisfaction does not significantly mediate the relationship between CRM and Customer Loyalty, or Customer Engagement and Customer Loyalty. This result indicates that the influence of CRM and engagement on loyalty can occur directly without necessarily going through customer satisfaction.

This finding is inconsistent with several previous studies, such as those by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) and Bowden (2019), which stated that satisfaction is an important pathway to loyalty. However, these results align with a study by Dick and Basu (2014), which stated that in some

contexts, loyalty can form without satisfaction if the relationship is emotionally established and based on trust.

6. Conclusion

Based on the research findings and empirical analysis, it was concluded that Customer Relationship Marketing and Customer Engagement have a direct, positive, and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty. This indicates that a more effective implementation of customer relationship and engagement strategies correlates with higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. However, the research also revealed that Customer Satisfaction does not exert a significant direct influence on Customer Loyalty, nor does it serve as a mediating variable between Customer Relationship Marketing and Customer Engagement in relation to Customer Loyalty. Therefore, in this context, customer loyalty is more directly influenced by the quality of the relationship and the degree of customer engagement, rather than by customer satisfaction itself.

The managerial implication of these findings is that companies, particularly PT IPC Terminal Petikemas Jakarta, need to place greater emphasis on strengthening Customer Relationship Marketing strategies and improving Customer Engagement to build customer loyalty directly. Efforts such as personalized communication, leveraging technology for responsive customer service, and active interaction-based loyalty programs should be prioritized. Because customer satisfaction has not been proven to be a significant mediator in increasing loyalty, companies should focus on creating added value through relationship experiences and emotional engagement, rather than simply meeting service expectations. This approach is expected to create loyal customers on an ongoing basis in a competitive port services business environment.

Recommendation

PT IPC Terminal Petikemas Jakarta should enhance its personalized customer relationship management (CRM) by implementing dedicated account managers and loyalty programs specifically designed to meet client needs. The development of digital platforms for two-way interaction and real-time service tracking will further boost customer engagement. Organizing regular customer forums and collaborative problem-solving workshops can help strengthen trust and foster collaboration. Given that customer satisfaction is not a significant mediator, the company should prioritize building emotional connections through proactive communication, transparency, and consistent reliability. Ongoing monitoring of relationship quality and customer engagement metrics will be essential in ensuring long-term loyalty and maintaining a competitive edge in the port logistics sector.

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