

## Factors that Influence University Students Toward Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty at Starbucks in Malaysia

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#### ABSTRACT

Malaysians are among Starbucks' most devoted customers. Customer satisfaction may appear to be an elusive term that is impossible to track. Yet, some factors influence whether customers are happy, and a variety of measurement tools consistently evaluate customer satisfaction and loyalty to Starbucks. This study examines the factors influencing customer satisfaction and customer loyalty at Starbucks in Malaysia. In this study, data was gathered using internet sources and questionnaires. This survey included a total of 150 university students who had visited Starbucks. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. This study's findings are expected to suggest the essential qualities to emulate and increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

**Keywords:** University Students, Customer Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction, Starbucks, Malaysia

## INTRODUCTION

The American company Starbucks operates the most widespread coffeehouse chain anywhere globally. The city of Seattle in Washington is home to its headquarters. Jerry Baldwin, Gordon Bowker, and Zev Siegl were the founders of Starbucks, and they opened the company's first store in 1971 in the region of Seattle's historic Pike Place Market. The three men who would go on to start Starbucks shared two things in common: a background in academia and a deep and abiding passion for both coffee and tea. Therefore, they made some investments and borrowed money to open the first store in Seattle, which they named "Starbucks" after the first mate, Starbuck, who appeared in the famous novel *Moby Dick* written by Herman Melville (Starbucks, 2022).

Our target company in this study is Starbucks in Malaysia, owned by Berjaya Starbucks Coffee Company Sdn Bhd, a Starbucks Coffee International Inc. licensee and controlled by Berjaya Food Berhad. Since launching its first store in Kuala Lumpur on 17 December 1998, Starbucks has spread to eleven states and all three federal territories in the United States. Currently, our country has approximately 320 locations, with 58 Drive-Thru outlets and 10 Reserve™ locations. Following over two decades of operation, Starbucks has evolved into not only Malaysians' preferred coffee location but also an integral part of the country's communities (Starbucks, 2022).

Apart from that, Starbucks offers a wide variety of food and beverages, such as coffee drinks, chocolate drinks, tea, cakes, sandwiches, etc. In addition, it has launched a large number of seasonal or regional products with a strong appeal to consumers. Starbucks consistently delivers high-quality food and service. Its coffee cup can inspire the human spirit of a person and a community. Starbucks also places great emphasis on ensuring its employees and consumers receive meaningful benefits from the company. Moreover, the company plans to expand continuously into a single location or region. In terms of location preference, Starbucks is a wonderful place for customers to relax with a cup of coffee and enjoy the charming atmosphere. It is not only a coffee shop but also a place where people gather.

Past studies have examined customer satisfaction for example (Kee et al., 2022; Pérez-Morón et al., 2022; Yo et al., 2021) and customer loyalty (for example, Pérez-Morón et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2020; Ruiz et al., 2020). This paper aims to look at the contributing factors influencing university students toward consumer satisfaction and loyalty at Starbucks in Malaysia. To keep a high level of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, five elements will significantly impact the evaluation of customers' purchase intention at Starbucks: Environment, Location Preference, Product Quality, Service Quality, and Pricing. Suppose our customers meet all these factors. In that case, we will have no trouble obtaining long-term customers, standing out from the intense competition, and maintaining high profits. However, due to a rapid increase in competitors in the coffee industry, retaining existing consumers and attracting new ones remains a formidable challenge. Therefore, Starbucks should concentrate on these five variables rather than growing its market (by adding more stores in Malaysia) and ignoring the significant aspects influencing consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Environment

The environment is described as the objects and physical aspects that businesses control that impact their staff and customers (Singh & Band, 2021). Customers' pre-purchase decisions are influenced by the environment, as are their post-purchase quality assessments and satisfaction with the related products and services. For example, Starbucks is used for more than just drinking coffee; they're also places to hang out and do other things like work on homework. As a result, a pleasant environment is likely to positively impact customers' desire

to purchase. In addition, the environment has a significant impact on developing an image that attempts to affect customer satisfaction.

H1: There is a positive relationship between Environment and Customer Satisfaction

### **Location Preference**

A business's location significantly impacts a person's or consumer's desire to come in and shop (Sholihuddin, Rivai, & Saragih, 2020). A site to serve customers, on the other hand, might equally be viewed as a location to display their goods. Therefore, the choice of location is a competitive component in attracting customers. A great place for a Starbucks, for instance, takes into account geographical, demographic, and psychological aspects. Changes in these variables can have a significant effect on site preference. In addition, the location of a café influences client satisfaction and loyalty positively.

H2: There is a positive relationship between Location Preferences and Customer Satisfaction

### **Service Quality**

Customer satisfaction and service quality are major elements of business since a company's success is heavily dependent on how well it retains consumers via service. Service quality is defined as everything that seems authentic offers quick service, and satisfies customers (Dewi & Putri, 2022). Customer satisfaction is expected to rise due to improved service quality, which will boost customer retention and loyalty. To measure service quality, customer expectations are contrasted to actual performance. Customer satisfaction results from high service quality, making businesses more competitive in the market. Identifying service issues and developing measurements for service performance, results, and customer satisfaction can improve service quality.

H3: There is a positive relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction.

### **Product Quality**

One of the essential aspects of the business world is giving clients value, which includes tangible and intangible items such as packaging, service qualities, brand name, and performance quality. Customer satisfaction and value are thus tied to the quality of a product, which has a substantial impact on service or product performance. Therefore, product quality is a crucial factor that a firm must address to survive and stay a customer's preferred option. For example, in a recent study by Han et al. (2018), there are markers for coffee quality, such as the taste of coffee, the smell of coffee, and the scent of coffee. Product quality includes a pleasant aroma, consistent freshness, delectable combinations, and a wide range of menu options. When a product fits the wants and desires of the consumer, it can boost customer satisfaction.

H4: There is a positive relationship between Product Quality and Customer Satisfaction.

### **Price**

Customers' perceptions of price fairness greatly impact their purchasing decisions. Customers always have their budgets in mind when purchasing coffee in coffee shops. Price is still the most important deciding factor, followed by quality, convenience, and brand. When it comes to client satisfaction, price is crucial. According to Singh and Band (2021), pricing strongly influences customer satisfaction because customer experiences would differ; significant human involvement in service delivery assures variances in experience. Product or service uniqueness may help price as a cue of anticipation, appraisal, and decision-making.

H5: There is a positive relationship between Price and Customer Satisfaction

### **Customer Satisfaction**

According to Minarti and Segoro (2014), the word satisfaction comes from the Latin words "satis", which means quite good, and "facio" which means adequate. Consumer satisfaction is the overall attitude indicated by a customer's evaluation after purchasing goods or services. After making special purchases and using the items or services, this evaluation judgment is made. Therefore, based on the definition, customer satisfaction can be defined as a

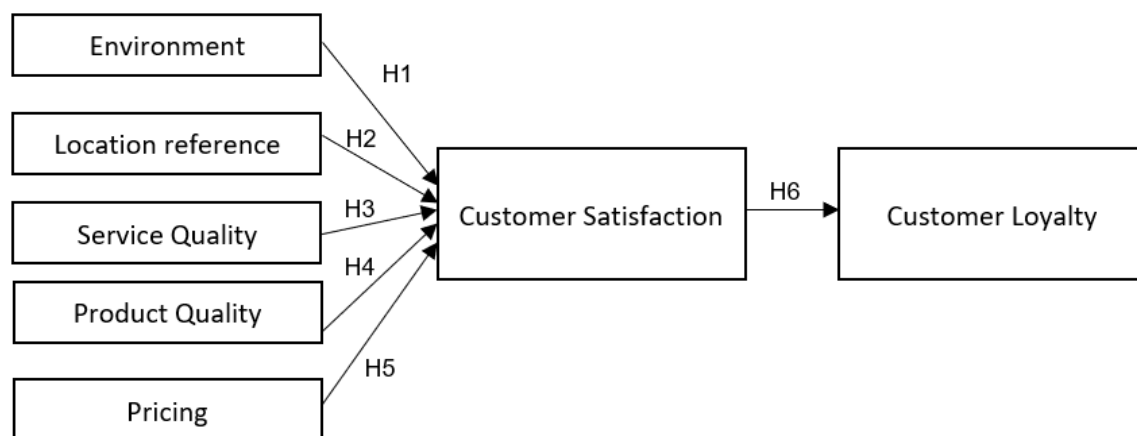
consumer's attitude, assessment, and emotional response following the purchase process. Consumption is the expectation and evaluation of a product's or service's experience compared to its actual performance.

### Customer Loyalty

Loyalty is defined as the amount of money spent and the frequency with which a customer purchases from a specific brand. Customer loyalty is described as a customer's devotion to a brand, shop, or supplier that is founded on a positive attitude and is demonstrated by consistent repeat purchases. When consumers are satisfied with a product or service, they will purchase the same product or brand again because they trust the shop can provide the same high-quality product that can satisfy them every time when they buy it (Dam & Dam, 2021). This will encourage people to remain loyal to the brand or product. Pérez-Morón et al. (2022) reported a positive link between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Satisfying customers can lead to better customer loyalty. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H6: There is a positive relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

**Figure 1.** Our Research Model



## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a convenient sampling method in which the researchers choose their sample from a readily available pool of respondents (Simkus, 2022). The research population targets university students who have visited Starbucks in Malaysia, and the sample size is 150 respondents. This research examines the five variables that impact the satisfaction and loyalty of university students at Starbucks located in Malaysia. These variables are Environment, Location Preference, Service Quality, Product Quality, and Pricing of Starbucks. This research applied the quantitative research method through an online survey to collect primary data. A pilot test with 30 responses is also undertaken to analyze the weaknesses of the questions or methodologies (Bhandari, 2020).

### Online Survey

Online surveys are structured questionnaires intended to collect data from a specified target group through the Internet. An adapted approach is used in the survey question-forming procedures. The questionnaires are adapted from Aryani et al. (2021), Pérez-Morón et al. (2022); Oh et al. (2021); Yu (2021); Ng, Sek, Teow, and Wong (2016); and Kumar (2016).

Besides, the survey was designed with clearly stated questions, and 5-point Likert Scale response options whereby scale (1) refers to Strongly Disagree and scale (5) represents Strongly Agree. This Likert Scale measures how much the five factors stated above influence

the satisfaction and loyalty of university students towards Starbucks Malaysia. Besides, the questionnaire is created using Google Forms.

The online survey is carried out by distributing the Google Form using social media. In addition, the survey form has also been restricted to Malaysia University Students' only by asking the question, 'Are you a university student?' A total of 150 university students participated in the survey. The data was analyzed using SPSS.

## RESULTS

**Table 1.** Respondent Demographics (N=150)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
• Male	56	37.3
• Female	94	62.7
Nationality		
• Malaysian	140	93.3
• Non-Malaysian	10	6.7
Ethnicity		
• Malay	32	21.3
• Chinese	91	60.7
• Indian	25	16.7
• Others	2	1.3
Have you ever heard of Starbucks?		
• Yes	149	99.3
• No	1	0.7
Have you purchased any products from Starbucks before?		
• Yes	145	96.7
• No	5	3.3
How often do you purchase at Starbucks?		
• At least once per day	0	0
• Several times a week	3	2
• Once a week	13	8.7
• Once a month or less	58	38.7
• It varies	72	48
• Others	4	2.6
What are the factors that make you purchase products from Starbucks? (You may pick more than one option)		
• Environment	62	41.3
• Location Preference	52	34.7
• Service Quality	73	48.7
• Product Quality	119	79.3
• Pricing	16	10.7
• Others	4	2.7
	150	100.0

Table 1 shows that our responders are majority female, 62.7% female and 37.3% male. Malaysians outnumber all other nationalities, with 140 out of 150 respondents. The rest are from China (6%) and India (0.7%). Our respondents are mostly Chinese (60.7%), followed by Malay (21.3%) and Indian (16.7%). Punjabi and Siamese also represented 0.67%, respectively. 149 out of 150 respondents had heard of Starbucks before, while only one had never heard of it. Next, 96.7% of respondents had purchased from Starbucks before, while 3.3% had never purchased it. Also, 72 out of 150 respondents bought from Starbucks on a varied basis. Then, 58 respondents said they only purchase once a month or less. After that, 13 respondents said they bought Starbucks once a week, and three said they purchased it several times a week. In the end, we identified the factors that influence our respondents' purchase of Starbucks items. Product Quality received the most votes (119), followed by Service Quality (73). Besides, 62 respondents preferred Starbucks for the environment, while 52 chose Starbucks for the location preference. Lastly, our respondents (16 in all) preferred Starbucks based on price.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Analysis, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, and Zero Order Correlation All Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Environment	<b>0.748</b>						
2. Location Preference	.557**	<b>0.713</b>					
3. Service Quality	.449**	.471**	<b>0.870</b>				
4. Product Quality	.570**	.497**	.595**	<b>0.809</b>			
5. Pricing	.449**	.470**	.216**	.391**	<b>0.873</b>		
6. Customer Satisfaction	.563**	.587**	.556**	.659**	.548**	<b>0.767</b>	
7. Customer Loyalty	.528**	.438**	.335**	.506**	.704**	.546**	<b>0.868</b>
Number of Items	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	4.1040	4.0200	4.4040	4.3453	3.3707	4.1707	3.5853
Standard Deviation	.55259	.59562	.55052	.55170	.89694	.55919	.88843

*N=150. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001. Diagonal entries indicate Cronbach's coefficient alpha.*

Table 2 displays Cronbach's coefficients alpha, correlations, and descriptive statistics. Cronbach's alpha is a measurement of the reliability of statistics. The original Cronbach's alpha for all factors ranges from 0.713 to 0.873, indicating that the questions asked in these five factors had a high degree of internal consistency. According to a generally acknowledged guideline, an alpha between 0.6 and 0.7 suggests acceptable reliability, while an alpha of 0.8 or higher implies extraordinary excellent reliability. As a result, no item from these five factors will be eliminated due to the Cronbach's coefficient alpha is greater than 0.7.

Furthermore, Table 2 also presents the correlation between independent and dependent variables, with each variable being positively correlated. From a descriptive statistics perspective, the mean for all variables ranges from 3.3707 to 4.4040; in other words, most respondents chose neutral or agreed with the statements. Furthermore, the standard deviation of the five variables ranges from 0.55052 to 0.89694, which is less than half the mean (3.3707 to 4.4040); therefore, data are considered normal (Mishra et al., 2019).

**Table 3.** Summary of Regression Analysis

Variables	Customer Satisfaction	Customer Loyalty
Environment	.088	
Location Preferences	.168*	
Service Quality	.200**	
Product Quality	.301***	
Pricing	.269***	
Customer Satisfaction		.546*
R <sup>2</sup>	.591	.293
F Value	44.079	62.855
Durbin-Watson Statistic	1.975	2.262

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

A regression analysis was employed to determine the factors that influence university students toward customer satisfaction and customer loyalty at Starbucks in Malaysia. As demonstrated in Table 3, it is positively correlated with Location Preferences, Service Quality, Product Quality and Pricing, with beta values of 0.168, 0.200, 0.301, and 0.269, respectively. Moreover, the p-value is less than 0.05, revealing that the values are very significant. It indicates that the probability that the difference between samples is attributable to sampling error is less than five per cent. As a result, we could conclude that H2, H3, H4, and H5 were supported.

The value of R<sup>2</sup> was 0.591, showing that Location Preference, Service Quality, Product Quality, and Pricing explain 59.1% of the variation in the factors influencing university students' customer satisfaction. Based on the obtained beta values, we can conclude that Product Quality is the most influential factor (0.301), followed by Pricing (0.269), Service Quality (0.200), and lastly Location Preferences (0.168). However, it was determined that the Environment variable did not influence university students' customer satisfaction; thus, H1 is not supported by its beta value of 0.088. Finally, we determined that the Durbin-Watson statistic had a value of 1.975, within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5. Therefore, there is no autocorrelation concern. We can therefore conclude that residuals are independent of one another.

Additionally, a regression analysis was undertaken to examine the relationship between consumer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The beta value of 0.546 was statistically significant, indicating a positive association and validating our hypothesis (H6). As indicated in Table 3, the regression analysis yields an R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.293, indicating that 29.3 per cent of the dependent variable, customer loyalty, is supported by the statistically significant independent variable, customer satisfaction (F-value = 62.855,  $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, the Durbin-Watson score of 2.262 indicates a positive autocorrelation between the variables. In other words, if university students are satisfied with the elements impacting customer satisfaction, they will visit Starbucks more frequently and make repeat purchases. Therefore, we may conclude that Customer Satisfaction has a substantial effect on Customer Loyalty, and Starbucks must take this relationship into account.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, location preferences, service quality, product quality, and pricing are significant predictors of customer satisfaction, except for the environmental factor. Of all these predictors, product quality is the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction, followed by pricing, service quality, and location preferences.

Firstly, our respondents disregard the significance of environmental protection, as some of the questionnaires are worded as follows: The Starbucks product minimizes waste production and protects the environment, etc. In fact, Starbucks Malaysia should not neglect this variable; the company should continue its efforts to safeguard the environment by adopting more reusable packaging and effectively managing waste. Furthermore, since most Starbucks customers visit the cafe to study or work, it would be a priority for Starbucks to upgrade its facilities (Aryani et al., 2021). For example, Starbucks should strengthen its internet connectivity, provide additional seating and tables, and provide some private space for customers.

Secondly, our respondents believe that location preference is positively correlated with customer satisfaction. Therefore, Starbucks should ensure that sufficient parking is available at each location so that customers do not have to spend excessive time seeking parking. In addition, Starbucks may develop more drive-thru services, which would benefit consumers who are on their way to work by allowing them to purchase coffee without having to exit their vehicles (The Malaysian Reserve, 2021). Enabling additional drive-thru services on highways will allow drivers who have suffered from long-distance driving to readily have a cup of coffee to stay sober. Starbucks might also expand its presence in leisure areas, as this would allow customers to enjoy a slice of cake and a cup of coffee in the café.

Thirdly, our respondents agreed that Service Quality is positively correlated with Customer Satisfaction. Therefore, Starbucks should provide their employees with further training to ensure that they are well-trained, knowledgeable, and experienced (Panopto, 2018). In addition, Starbucks should increase the number of employees in each location during peak hours, such as the morning and afternoon shifts, as many employees purchase a coffee before work. Moreover, even when the cafe is crowded with customers, the employees should remain friendly and welcoming. Finally, Starbucks should also ensure that its employees provide prompt and efficient service to customers to prevent them from waiting longer (Kee et al., 2022).

Fourthly, our respondents deemed that Product Quality is an essential variable and positively correlated with Customer Satisfaction. As a result, Starbucks is responsible for ensuring that the food and beverages are high quality. Many customers like Starbucks coffees to be served in convenient grab-and-go packaging that they can bring to work. Aside from that, Starbucks should continue to develop menus that are both visually appealing and delicious to meet their customers' needs (Salim, 2020). Also, seasonal menus should be sold more frequently to avoid customers craving seasonal drinks like Peppermint Mocha Frappuccino, which is often requested.

Fifthly, pricing is positively correlated with Customer Satisfaction. Therefore, Starbucks is obligated to reduce the price to a reasonable level because customers have always desired to purchase a product at a lower price (Aryani et al., 2021). However, some people are of the opinion that Starbucks' prices are appropriate for the quality given. As a result, Starbucks could present some coupons to their loyal customers to retain them supporting their business. Aside from that, some respondents argue that Starbucks' pricing is higher than those of other coffee shops; this is because Starbucks is well-known for its branding and high-quality coffee. Finally, Starbucks is strongly advised to create new campaigns or promotions, such as buy one get one free, on a regular basis to constantly boost their customers, whether existing or new.

Lastly, Customer Satisfaction is positively correlated with Customer Loyalty. When customers are satisfied with the environment, location preference, service quality, product quality, and pricing, their customer loyalty level increases. Satisfied customers will patronize Starbucks more frequently and even make repeat purchases of food and beverages (Pérez-Morón et al., 2022). Customers will also recommend Starbucks' food and beverages to



others if they are satisfied with the product quality. Finally, Starbucks' most committed customers will not consider alternative coffee shops.

## CONCLUSION

In essence, by elucidating the variables such as environment, location preference, service quality, product quality, and pricing, the study intends to understand better the factors that influence the satisfaction and loyalty of university students at Starbucks in Malaysia. As per the analysis result, four out of five of the variables strongly and positively impacted the satisfaction of Malaysia's university students towards Starbucks, where the satisfaction of university students has a significant impact on their loyalty to Starbucks. Indeed, the relationship between the satisfaction and loyalty of university students is crucial for Starbucks to consider. This will directly impact the company's ability to retain this set of clients.

To further clarify antecedents and potential outcomes, as well as broaden the conceptual scope of factors that influence university students' perceptions toward customer satisfaction and loyalty as a construct, additional research will need to be conducted in the future. This will allow the concept to be applied to other fields of study. The authors acknowledge that there are certain limitations to the study, such as the fact that it was conducted only at Starbucks locations in Malaysia. Therefore, future research should broaden the scope of the context in which factors influence university students' satisfaction and loyalty. For instance, expanding the geographical scope of the work to include other countries as well as other food and beverage-related brands would be an example of how this could be accomplished. The authors acknowledge that the study is based on a sample that is reasonably similar to one another. Therefore, there is no representative of the overall population.

## LIMITATION

Since the research must be finished within one month, the time required to collect data is limited, as is the sample size collected. As a result, various constraints emerge in the study process. First, the survey contains a modest number of respondents (150), resulting in a tiny amount of data being acquired. Then, due to the limitation of the medium to approach the public, the study is only able to focus on university students in Malaysia, which will be a smaller study range. Nevertheless, this study is still appropriate to be used as a source of reference for further research on the topic of customer satisfaction and loyalty in the food and beverage industry as it provides valuable insights into the relationship between the five variables and customers' satisfaction and the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty of the university students towards Starbucks.

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N/A

## DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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