



Examining the Key Drivers of Customer Loyalty in the Coffee Retail Industry

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ABSTRACT

In the highly competitive global coffeehouse market, Starbucks is a leading chain known for its strong brand presence and customer-centric approach, yet maintaining customer loyalty and encouraging repeat purchases remain major challenges. This study examines the key factors influencing customer loyalty in the coffee retail industry by analyzing service quality, perceived value, product quality, and price among 150 Starbucks customers. A quantitative survey was administered through Google Forms and analyzed using SPSS. The results show that perceived value ($\beta = 0.275$, $p < 0.001$), product quality ($\beta = 0.186$, $p < 0.05$), and price ($\beta = 0.437$, $p < 0.001$) have significant positive effects on customer loyalty, whereas service quality has a negative and non-significant effect ($\beta = -0.041$). The model explains 56.4% of the variance in customer loyalty. The results of this study will provide valuable managerial insights to enhance marketing strategies, strengthen customer engagement, and maintain long-term loyalty. This study also contributes to the understanding of customer behavior in the food and beverage industry, particularly within international coffeehouse brands.

Keywords: Customer Loyalty; Perceived Value; Price; Product Quality; Service Quality

JEL Classification: M31; L81

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the international coffee shop sector has seen significant expansion, largely due to shifts in modern living habits, increased urban density, and the growing trend of social café environments. This rapid expansion has intensified competition among major coffee brands, making customer loyalty a critical factor for long-term business sustainability. In such a competitive landscape, companies like Starbucks must continually explore what influences customer loyalty to remain relevant and maintain their leading position. Modern consumers no longer base their purchasing decisions solely on taste or convenience; instead, they increasingly value high-quality products, personalized interactions, emotional connection, and a unique brand experience. As a result, identifying the determinants that strengthen customer loyalty has become an essential area of research for businesses operating in this sector.

Previous studies emphasize that product-related attributes significantly impact customers' attitudes toward Starbucks. For instance, the quality of coffee, such as its flavor profile, freshness, healthiness, and ability to be personalized, has been found to greatly influence how much customers appreciate and stay loyal to the brand (Lee et al., 2022). In addition to product quality, customer experience plays a crucial role. Research conducted in Starbucks Vietnam revealed that customer experiences (service quality) increase satisfaction, which subsequently contributes to higher levels of loyalty (Ha, 2021). Previous studies highlight that service quality, perceived value, and fair pricing are key factors in shaping the coffee shop experience (Zacqualine et al., 2025). These findings emphasize the importance of ensuring not only good products but also consistent service interactions that enhance customers' perceptions of the brand.

In the Malaysian context, service quality has been repeatedly recognized as a central factor of customer loyalty. Chan et al. (2024) found that tangible elements such as store ambiance, cleanliness, and product presentation, as well as empathetic employee behavior, directly influence the manner in which customers appraise their overall experience with Starbucks. Previous research in Malaysia's food and beverage industry shows that food quality, price, and value are fundamental determinants that drive customer loyalty (Ganatra et al., 2021). Research in Starbucks Malaysia also shows that service quality is a crucial factor in shaping Starbucks customers' loyalty, with consistent and reliable service strengthening customers' intention to return (Pérez-Morón et al., 2022).

Despite these valuable contributions, current literature often examines these factors independently rather than considering how they collectively influence customer loyalty. This creates a gap in understanding the integrated effects of service quality, perceived value, product quality, and price fairness, the factors that are highly interconnected in shaping modern consumer behavior. Furthermore, limited research specifically examines how these elements operate simultaneously within the Starbucks context, even though Starbucks customers around the world may respond differently based on brand experience, expectations, and consumption patterns.

Hence, this research intends to offer a comprehensive analysis of the critical determinants that impact customer loyalty within the specialized coffee sector. By investigating how service quality, perceived value, product quality, and price fairness jointly affect loyalty among Starbucks customers, this research offers valuable insights that may assist both academics and practitioners in understanding the complex factors that contribute to sustained customer retention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality

In the service sector, the excellence of provision is frequently identified as a primary catalyst for securing long-term consumer commitment. According to [Parasuraman et al. \(1988\)](#), service quality is fundamentally defined by the gap between what customers expect and their actual experience of the service provided. The SERVQUAL model assesses service quality across five core dimensions, which are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, which collectively determine customers' evaluation of a company's service performance. Within the Starbucks environment, the standard of service extends beyond the flavor profile of the drinks offered but also in the attentiveness of baristas, cleanliness of outlets, and comfort of the café environment, which together create a distinctive and consistent customer experience.

Perceived Value

Perceived value represents the customer's comprehensive evaluation of a product's worth by comparing the benefits received with the sacrifices made ([Zeithaml, 1988](#)). It represents the trade-off between the advantages gained from a product or service and the sacrifices, such as price, time, and effort, involved in obtaining it. According to consumer choice theory, consumers evaluate alternatives by comparing perceived benefits and costs when making purchase decisions ([Monroe, 1990](#)). They perceive greater value when the benefits effectively outweigh the disadvantages, which affects their satisfaction, loyalty, and perception of brand image.

Product Quality

Product quality is a primary determinant in securing consumer retention, especially in a service-oriented environment like Starbucks. According to [Zeithaml \(1988\)](#), perceived product quality is represented by the customer's subjective judgement of a product's comprehensive standard and merit, and this perception directly influences satisfaction and future purchasing behavior. [Kotler and Keller \(2016\)](#) suggest that superior product quality contributes to greater perceived value and enables organizations to secure a durable market position by reinforcing consumer confidence and brand loyalty. Empirical studies by [Kuek et al. \(2024\)](#) have shown that Starbucks customers across various Asian markets considered product quality, including taste consistency, ingredient freshness, and beverage innovation, as a critical determinant of brand loyalty.

Price

Price is a key factor influencing customer loyalty, particularly in premium service industries such as Starbucks. According to [Monroe \(1990\)](#), price refers to the monetary amount a consumer pays to obtain a product or service, reflecting both the product's perceived value and the firm's goal of achieving profitability. Perceived price fairness has been shown to significantly impact customer loyalty. For example, when customers view product price as consistent with quality and perceived benefits, they are more likely to retain loyalty, whereas unfair or excessive pricing can drive them toward competitors ([Pinaraswati et al., 2024](#)).

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is viewed as a consumer's intention to continue purchasing a specific brand consistently over time, even when confronted with external factors and competitive promotional tactics to switch brands ([Kotler & Keller, 2016](#)). Loyalty is conceptualized as a dual-layered construct: the attitudinal component encompasses emotional attachment and trust toward a brand, whereas the behavioral component is manifested through repeat purchases, the number of visits, and willingness to provide favorable recommendations. In the coffee retail industry, customer loyalty is considered a critical

competitive advantage because loyal customers generate higher purchase frequency, exhibit stronger brand advocacy, and are less sensitive to price changes. Customer loyalty is a complex construct shaped by customers' overall impressions of a brand. A study by [Kee et al. \(2021\)](#) showed that customer loyalty is manifested through persistent selection of a company's products and services over rival market options. Brand-committed consumers tend to be less sensitive to price fluctuations, indicating a willingness to spend a premium to maintain the perceived quality and experience offered by the brand. According to [Blut et al. \(2024\)](#), loyalty develops when customers form positive long-term evaluations and trust toward a brand. Within the coffee retail industry, loyalty is influenced by how well the brand fits customers' preferences, lifestyle, and perceived brand identity.

In a study of local coffee shops in Indonesia, [Widhy et al. \(2025\)](#) showed that product quality and service quality both positively affect customer loyalty, with product quality being the stronger factor. [Kushenda and Hariasi \(2024\)](#) demonstrated that experiential marketing, along with product and service quality, significantly contributes to customer loyalty in coffee shops in Pandaan, Indonesia. [Sari and Arini \(2021\)](#) showed that in Robusta coffee customers, product quality, service quality, and price all have a significant direct effect on customer loyalty. Research from [Ge et al. \(2021\)](#) examined Starbucks Reserve customers in Shanghai and found that perceived service quality significantly influences perceived value, which in turn affects customers' behavioral intentions and loyalty, highlighting the crucial role of perceived value as a mediator between service quality and loyalty in the coffee retail context. [Erdiansyah and Imaningsih \(2021\)](#) examined food-delivery customers using GrabFood and found that perceived value has a significant positive effect on customer loyalty, while product quality and promotion influenced loyalty indirectly through satisfaction. As a result, customer loyalty is widely regarded as a multidimensional construct that reflects customers' holistic evaluation of their in-store experience, making it a key performance outcome for coffee retailers like Starbucks.

Hypotheses Development

Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

[Chi and Phan \(2025\)](#) discovered that customer loyalty is strongly influenced by the quality of service delivered, a superior service quality standard, and bolsters satisfaction level, ultimately securing customer loyalty. [Arli et al. \(2024\)](#) findings indicated that while the responsiveness had no impact on loyalty, other elements like tangibles, reliability, assurance, and empathy boosted consumer loyalty. According to [Bitros et al. \(2024\)](#) finding, service quality exerts a significant and positive effect on customer loyalty. If the service quality has a high value, then consumer loyalty will also be positive. [Kotler and Keller \(2016\)](#) emphasize that consistent service quality enhances customer trust and satisfaction, ultimately leading to higher loyalty levels. For example, well-trained baristas who provide personalized and attentive service can strengthen emotional connections between customers and the brand. Furthermore, [Ladhari \(2009\)](#) found that perceived service quality significantly influences customers' intention to revisit and recommend a brand. Similarly, [Han and Ryu \(2009\)](#) demonstrated that superior service quality increases customers perceived value and long-term loyalty. Therefore, maintaining high service quality standards allows Starbucks to foster impactful service interactions that drive both long-term customer retention and enthusiastic interpersonal endorsements. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Service quality positively affects customer loyalty.

Perceived Value and Customer Loyalty

Research consistently found that the value a customer perceives has a significant impact on their satisfaction and likelihood of returning for future purchases (Cronin et al., 2000; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Research by Janati and Kusmayadi (2024) showed that customer loyalty affects by perceived value. If the customer felt the value is good, they will invite others to use the product. According to Dhaigude et al. (2023) finding, perceived value is confirmed has a positive and significant influence on increasing customer loyalty. Specifically, in the context of the coffee retail industry, Han and Ryu (2009) found that the perceived value serves as a crucial link between service and product quality and customer loyalty. In essence, the value a customer feels they are getting from their coffee experience serves as a critical determinant in the consumer's decision to remain a long-term commercial relationship with the establishment. At Starbucks, perceived value encompasses both intangible elements, such as the store environment, personalized services, and the overall brand experience, in addition to more tangible aspects like coffee quality and costs. Consumers are increasingly inclined to promote the brand and return if they perceive that these combined benefits provide superior value to them. Hence, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

H2: Perceived value positively affects customer loyalty.

Product Quality and Customer Loyalty

According to research by Sambung and Kusdiantoro (2023), product quality was found to have direct and significant influence on customer loyalty. This outcome validates the assumption that high product quality produces high customer loyalty but low product quality is always associated with low customer loyalty. Research by Lone and Bhat (2023) determined that product quality act as a pivotal determinant of customer loyalty. Research by Rahmadi et al. (2023) proved that the excellence of the product served as a decisive factor in driving customer loyalty. A superior experience can encourage the formation of lasting loyalty and customers will share good products evaluations to others. Tirtayasa (2022) also emphasized that the relationship between product quality and customer loyalty is characterized by a significant positive correlation. Similarly, Taufik et al. (2022) reported that in a coffee-shop context, product quality directly influences customer loyalty, underscoring the importance of maintaining consistent product standards to retain loyal customers. Therefore, maintaining superior product standards is vital for coffee brands want to retain loyal customers in increasingly competitive markets.

H3: Product quality positively affects customer loyalty.

Price and Customer Loyalty

Kuek et al. (2024) found that Starbucks customers in Malaysia, India, and Indonesia evaluate prices based on whether they reflect the product's value. The same study also suggests that consistently offering diverse, high-quality beverages at perceived prices perceived as fair and valuable for sustaining customer loyalty. Hariharan and Ruban (2025) demonstrated that transparent and fair pricing practices enhance consumer trust, improve perceived value, reduce negative reactions to price adjustments, and strengthen customer loyalty. Moreover, Lee et al. (2022) showed that price fairness is a vital component in determining the strength of a customer's loyalty toward Starbucks. In addition, Pinaraswati et al. (2024) reported that price fairness and service convenience contribute to sustained customer loyalty in Asian markets, mediated by customer satisfaction. Subying and Yoopetch (2025) also emphasized that customer satisfaction and loyalty are driven by multiple dimensions of price fairness, such as procedural and informational fairness. Therefore, price is hypothesized to plays as a substantial determinant in affecting customer loyalty.

H4: Price positively affects customer loyalty.

Conceptual Framework

The study framework model is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Framework

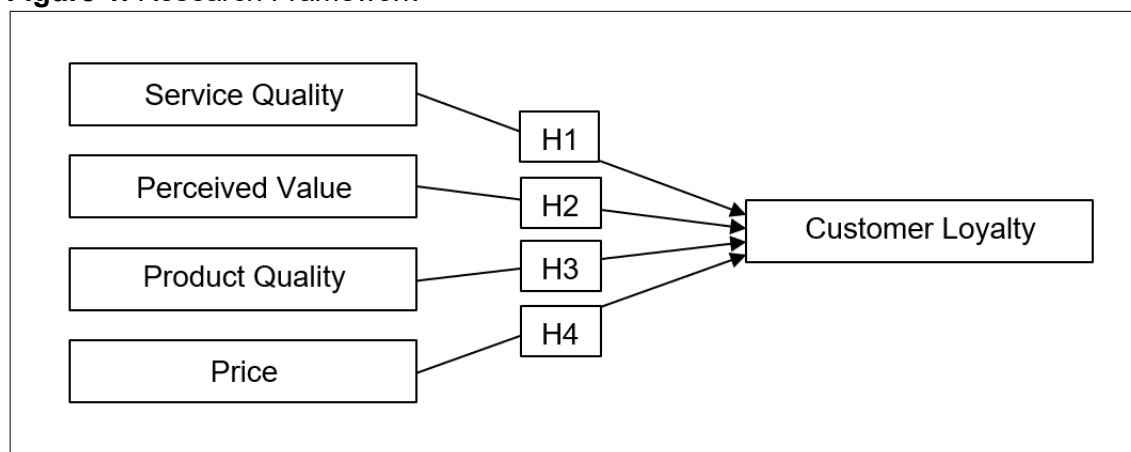


Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study. Service quality, perceived value, product quality, and price are positioned as antecedents of customer loyalty. Based on the preceding theoretical discussion, the model proposes that each variable may directly influence customers' loyalty intentions in the coffee retail context.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design using a structured questionnaire to examine the factors influencing customer loyalty in the coffee retail industry.

Sample and Procedures

The research used a structured questionnaire to assess the main factors affecting consumer loyalty toward Starbucks. Data were collected through Google Forms from 150 respondents using a convenience sampling approach. SPSS software was utilized to analyze the data.

Measures

A five-point Likert scale was used to assess all items, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The items were adapted from established measures utilized in previous research by Mary & Nuangjamnong (2022) and Zena & Hadisumarto (2013). This quantitative measure enabled respondents to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement, thereby facilitating the assessment of their attitudes and perceptions. The items were slightly refined to fit the coffee retail context and were pre-evaluated to ensure clarity and relevance.

Service Quality

Items evaluating customers' perceptions of Starbucks' service delivery, specifically tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy were used to gauge service quality. These criteria assessed how well Starbucks service meets customer expectations and how customers perceive that experience. These included: "Starbucks is clean and cozy.", "Starbucks employees are already trained."

Perceived Value

Items capturing consumers' assessments of the value and advantages of Starbucks' products and services in relation to the cost were used to measure perceived value. This includes opinions about pricing fairness, value for money, and overall satisfaction with the transaction. An example item is: *"Drinking Starbucks products makes me feel energy and fresh."*

Product Quality

Indicators evaluating the freshness, flavor, consistency, and presentation of Starbucks' food and beverages items were used to measure product quality. These items reflected customers' perceptions of Starbucks' overall product excellence. For instance: *"I am satisfied with the overall quality of Starbucks products."*

Price

Items assessing consumers' perceptions of Starbucks' pricing fairness, affordability, and price-quality balance compared to other coffee retailers were used to measure price perception. For example: *"Starbucks products are available at reasonable prices."*

Customers Loyalty

Items reflecting customers' intentions to have repeat purchases, promote Starbucks to others, and sustain long-term patronage were used to measure customer loyalty. Both behavioral and attitudinal loyalty were demonstrated by these items. An example item is: *"I intend to say positive things about Starbucks."*

RESULTS

Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table 1. Summary of Respondent's Demography (N=150)

Item	Classification	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 20	18	12
	20-29	89	59.3
	30-39	29	19.3
	40-49	10	6.7
	50 and above	4	2.7
Gender	Male	70	46.7
	Female	80	53.3
Race	Malay	41	27.3
	Chinese	72	48
	India	33	22
	Others	4	2.7
Frequency of buying Starbucks	Daily	6	4
	Once a week	36	24
	Once a month	53	35.3
	Rarely	55	36.7
Highest Education Level	Primary School	3	2
	Secondary School	16	10.7
	Diploma	16	10.7
	Bachelor's Degree	102	68
	Master's Degree	10	6.7
	Ph.D. Degree	3	2
Occupation	Student	95	63.3
	Government Sector	7	4.7
	Private Sector	29	19.3

	Self-employed	16	10.7
	Unemployed	3	2

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 150 respondents reveals that the majority were young adults, with 59.3% aged between 20 and 29, followed by 19.3% in the 30-39 age group. There are a slight female majority (53.3%), while male make up a smaller proportion (46.7%). The largest racial group was Chinese (48.0%), followed by Malay (27.3%) and Indian (22.0%). In terms of Starbucks purchasing frequency, most respondents reported buying Starbucks rarely (36.7%) or once a month (35.3%), while only a small group of respondents consumed it daily (4.0%). The participants were highly educated, with 68.0% holding a bachelor's degree and small percentages having primary school or Ph.D. degree (2.0% each). Students made up the majority of the respondents (63.3%), with others working mainly in private sector (19.3%) or self-employed (10.7%).

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlation Analysis

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, and Zero-order Correlations for All Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Service Quality	0.864				
Perceived Value	0.496**	0.880			
Product Quality	0.546**	0.591**	0.882		
Price	0.390**	0.606**	0.540**	0.879	
Customer Loyalty	0.368**	0.630**	0.562**	0.689**	0.898
Number of items	5	4	3	4	5
Mean	4.164	3.982	4.116	3.583	3.768
Standard Deviation	0.627	0.760	0.744	0.912	0.740

Note: N = 150; *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. The diagonal entries represent Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, and zero-order correlations for all study variables. All constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.864 to 0.898, indicating high reliability. The zero-order correlations indicate that all variables are positively and significantly related at the 0.01 level. Service quality shows moderate correlations with perceived value ($r = 0.496$), product quality ($r = 0.546$), price ($r = 0.390$), and customer loyalty ($r = 0.368$). Perceived value demonstrates strong relationships with product quality ($r = 0.591$), price ($r = 0.606$), and especially customer loyalty ($r = 0.630$). Product quality is also significantly correlated with price ($r = 0.540$) and customer loyalty ($r = 0.562$). Price has the strongest association with customer loyalty ($r = 0.689$), suggesting that pricing may be a key determinant of loyalty among respondents.

The mean scores ranged from 3.583 to 4.164, indicating generally positive perceptions across all study variables. The standard deviations fell between 0.627 and 0.912, suggesting a moderate level of variability in responses, with the greatest variation observed for price and the least for service quality. Overall, the correlations highlight meaningful and significant connections between all constructs, supporting their relevance in understanding customer loyalty.

Multiple Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Table 3. Regression Analysis

Variables	Customer Loyalty
Service Quality	-0.041
Perceived Value	0.275***
Product Quality	0.186*

Price	0.437***
R Square	0.564
F Change	46.854
Durbin-Watson	1.859

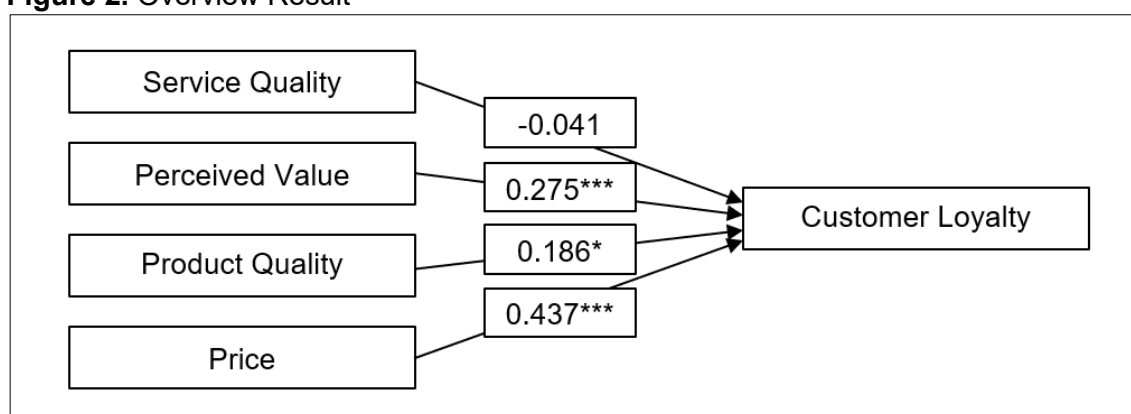
Note: N=150; *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Standardized coefficients (Beta) are reported.

Table 3 presents the regression analysis examining the hypothesized relationships between service quality, perceived value, product quality, price, and customer loyalty. With an R² value of 0.564, the model clarifies 56.4% of the variance in customer loyalty, indicating a strong overall explanatory power.

Among the key drivers, price ($\beta = 0.437, p < 0.001$) emerges as the strongest and most significant determinant of customer loyalty, suggesting that customers are highly sensitive to pricing in their loyalty decisions, providing support for H4. Regarding perceived value, H2 predicted that customer loyalty would be positively affected. The result shows that perceived value also shows a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.275, p < 0.001$), indicating that when customers feel they receive good value, their loyalty increases. Therefore, H2 is supported. H3 product quality was hypothesized to positively affect customer loyalty. The findings demonstrate that product quality contributes positively as well ($\beta = 0.186, p < 0.05$), highlighting its role in fostering loyalty. Accordingly, H3 is supported. In contrast, service quality shows a negative but non-significant relationship with customer loyalty ($\beta = -0.041$), suggesting that in this context, service quality may not strongly influence loyalty when considered alongside the other variables. Thus, H1, which proposed that service quality positively affects customer loyalty, is not supported.

The model is statistically significant as the F-change value is 46.854, and the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.859 provides evidence that the assumption of non-autocorrelation has been satisfied. Overall, the findings highlight price, perceived value, and product quality as key drivers of customer loyalty, while service quality does not have a direct significant effect in this study. The overview of the hypothesized model is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Overview Result



Note: Standardized coefficients are reported.

DISCUSSION

This study explored how service quality, perceived value, product quality, and price influence customer loyalty toward a premium coffee retail context. The results indicate that price, perceived value, and product quality have significant, positive impacts on customer loyalty, whereas service quality does not have a significant direct effect when

all variables are considered simultaneously. These findings align with recent shifts observed in the service and retail sectors, where consumers increasingly emphasize value, fairness, and product performance over interpersonal elements.

Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

Service quality showed a negative and non-significant effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = -0.041$, $p > 0.05$); therefore, H1 was not supported. In many traditional service models, service quality has been viewed as a central driver of customer loyalty, but its influence can be context-dependent. In standardized environments like global café chains, customers often expect a consistent baseline of service, making service quality more of a hygiene factor than a primary differentiator. Customers focus more on speed, convenience, and accuracy, while trade-offs between quality, value, and price become more salient when basic expectations are met. This helps explain why, in this study, service quality did not significantly predict loyalty when perceived value, product quality, and price were included in the model.

Supporting this view, recent empirical research highlights the mixed nature of the service quality and loyalty link depending on context and competitive environment. Research from [Yum and Yoo \(2023\)](#) emphasized that service quality enhances loyalty primarily through customer satisfaction rather than as a standalone driver. Similarly, [Putri and Kristiningsih \(2024\)](#) observed that service quality and perceived value significantly influence trust and satisfaction, but their positive impact on loyalty is limited, with these mediators playing a stronger role in driving loyalty outcomes. These findings align with the current study's outcome that service quality, while conceptually relevant, does not directly drive loyalty in a model that includes stronger predictors like perceived value and price.

Overall, in highly standardized, brand-centric contexts like premium cafés, service quality functions mainly to prevent dissatisfaction but is not sufficient on its own to drive loyalty, whereas perceived value, product quality, and price play a stronger role in driving loyalty. This underscores the need for loyalty models in contemporary service environments to adopt a multidimensional perspective, recognizing both direct and indirect pathways through which service quality affects customer behavior.

Perceived Value and Customer Loyalty

Perceived value had a significant positive effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.275$, $p < 0.001$); therefore, H2 was supported. In premium service industries, such as specialty coffee retail, perceived value has increasingly become a key determinant of customer loyalty. Perceived value encompasses not only the price paid but also product quality, sensory experience, environment, brand's reputation, convenience, and emotional engagement with the brand. Customers are more willing to pay high prices and remain loyal when they believe that the benefits, practical, experiential, or symbolic, are worth more than the expenses.

Shifts in perceived value often reflect broader economic pressures, particularly in periods of rising living costs. Younger consumers, who tend to be more price-conscious in the context of rising living costs, increasingly demand higher value for the money they spend. This change makes perceived value even more important as a multidimensional concept that includes pricing fairness, product quality, and the quality of the experience. Also, studies demonstrate that perceived worth can make up for problems in other areas. [Gunawan et al. \(2024\)](#) show that perceived value can compensate for imperfections in other areas; customers may overlook minor service issues if they still perceive high overall value.

For example, if customers think that the product, atmosphere, or convenience still offer good overall value, they may be willing to overlook little problems with the quality of service. This compensatory function elucidates the robust and constant correlation between perceived value and customer loyalty observed in various empirical investigations, and it underscores its significance as a primary predictor in the current findings. In this study, perceived value emerged as a significant predictor of loyalty, confirming its central role compared to other factors. This finding resonates with recent research (Husin et al., 2023) showing that perceived value robustly predicts loyalty and can even mediate or moderate the effect of service quality, product quality, and price on behavioral intentions. According to Chi and Phan (2025), a comprehensive meta-analysis shows that perceived value plays a consistent and important role in customer loyalty across different industries and contexts.

For a brand like Starbucks, perceived value is probably a mix of the consistency of the products, the atmosphere, the brand image, the convenience, and the whole experience. Consumers are more likely to stay loyal when they think they are getting good value for their money. This indicates that contemporary consumers, particularly those patronizing premium cafes, evaluate brands holistically rather than focusing solely on individual product or service dimensions.

Product Quality and Customer Loyalty

Product quality had a significant positive effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.186$, $p < 0.05$); therefore, H3 was supported. In the food and beverage industry, product quality remains a critical driver of customer loyalty. Consistently delivering fresh ingredients, reliable taste and presentation, and high sensory appeal fosters trust and repeat behavior among consumers. For premium coffee brands, product quality is not only a functional attribute but also part of the brand's identity; consistency across outlets reinforces brand trust and strengthens emotional attachment to the brand. When consumers perceive that the product aligns with or surpasses their initial standards, there is a higher probability that they will associate the brand with personal lifestyle and self-expression, which in turn enhances their loyalty.

The close relationship between perceived value and product quality further underscores its importance. Consumers tend to remain loyal to a brand when they believe that the quality of the product justifies the price they pay, particularly in premium contexts where higher prices are acceptable if quality is assured. A study of coffee shops in Bandung by Sugiharti and Cahyani (2025) indicates that the sensory attributes of the product, which include taste, consistency, and presentation, serve as a substantial driver of customer loyalty. Likewise, product quality was shown to significantly foster stronger loyalty in a café context. Enhancing product quality not only meets customer expectations but also strengthens brand attachment and competitive positioning (Lestari & Sahara, 2025). These findings indicate that sustaining high product quality is essential for customer retention, potentially having a stronger impact on loyalty than service quality alone in competitive coffee markets.

For premium brands like Starbucks, ensuring uniform product quality and stringent quality control across all outlets is vital for maintaining consumer trust and loyalty. Any variation in product quality could weaken customer confidence and loyalty more rapidly than occasional service lapses, highlighting the central role of product consistency in a multidimensional loyalty model.

Price and Customer Loyalty

Price was the strongest predictor of customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.437$, $p < 0.001$); therefore, H4 was supported. In this study, price was identified as the primary driver of customer

loyalty, highlighting shifting market dynamics and evolving consumer preferences. Although Starbucks is positioned as a premium brand, an increasing number of customers, particularly college students and young adults, are highly sensitive to how fair and transparent pricing is relative to the value received. Price is more than a monetary amount; it communicates value perception and fairness, and directly influences behavioral intentions. When customers perceive that they are receiving quality products and experiences at fair prices, their likelihood of remaining loyal increases. Conversely, if prices are perceived as too high relative to benefits, loyalty diminishes even when product and service quality are maintained.

Empirical research supports the central role of price fairness and value perceptions in fostering loyalty. A study in restaurant contexts shows price fairness has a strong positive effect on customer loyalty (D'Souza, 2025). Moreover, Tan et al.'s (2024) research indicates that synergistic effects between price and perceived quality (taste, service, and environment) enhance customers' perceptions of fairness and contribute to favorable behavioral outcomes, suggesting that balanced pricing strategies are critical in competitive markets.

The competitive café market, with numerous specialty and local alternatives, highlights the strategic importance of pricing. Customers compare brands and weigh prices against perceived benefits and convenience, making price a key lever for retaining loyalty, especially when paired with loyalty programs, discounts, and value-oriented promotions. To sustain loyalty in premium contexts, pricing strategies must be aligned with strong perceived value and consistent product quality; when customers perceive prices as fair relative to the quality and experience offered, they are more likely to remain loyal despite competitive alternatives.

Integrated View: Value–Quality–Price over Service

The results indicate that in high-end café environments, consumer loyalty is influenced more by perceived value, product quality, and pricing fairness than by the interpersonal service quality. In standardized global café chains, customers often expect a baseline level of service and instead evaluate brands on consistent product performance, overall value, and perceived fairness of pricing. This shift in consumer expectations suggests that loyalty models, which historically emphasized service quality, are evolving toward value-centered approaches that prioritize pricing, perceived value, and product quality as primary drivers of loyalty.

Theoretical Implications

The strong effect of perceived value and price shows how important value-based loyalty models are becoming. This aligns with meta-analytic evidence by Blut et al. (2024), which shows that perceived value is a strong predictor of customer outcomes across different service contexts, even in premium coffee retail, where service and brand identity are strong.

Simultaneously, the non-significant impact of service quality challenges traditional SERVQUAL assumptions, suggesting that service has evolved into a hygiene factor within standardized, brand-centric contexts. That is, customers may take baseline service quality for granted, and loyalty appears to be driven more by perceived value, price, and product quality. These findings indicate the need to reconsider the role of service quality in loyalty models, potentially as an indirect or moderating factor rather than a primary predictor in highly branded service environments.

Along with these findings, the strong effect of product quality reinforces well-established insights in hospitality and food service research, where attributes such as taste,

freshness, and consistency often have a greater influence on repeat purchase behavior than service factors. This shows that loyalty models in the food and beverage industry should prioritize product quality as a central driver of customer loyalty, instead of treating it as a secondary element.

Managerial Implications

The strong effect of price on customer loyalty suggests that premium cafe brands like Starbucks should ensure that pricing aligns with perceived value. Strategies could include transparent pricing, periodic discounts or student promotions from time to time, and clear communication of the quality, ethical sourcing, and brand prestige associated with their products.

Enhancing the overall customer experience can further strengthen perceived value. Elements such as atmosphere, comfort, and convenience features like digital ordering and loyalty programs. At the same time, it's important to keep the quality of the product consistent in terms of freshness, flavor, and reliability. These are all parts of the experience that would contribute to loyalty beyond service interactions. Introducing limited-time offers or product innovations can also maintain customer interest without compromising core quality.

In this context, managerial focus should prioritize pricing, product quality, and value communication, rather than relying solely on service to differentiate the brand. Basic service standards, such as cleanliness, accurate orders, and prompt responses, remain important as hygiene factors.

Finally, targeted marketing methods aimed at price-sensitive segments, such as students and young adults, through promotions, loyalty rewards, and value bundles can retain consumers concerned about costs while preserving the premium brand image.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's results, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding the factors that influence customer loyalty toward Starbucks. The correlation results show that all four independent variables are positively and significantly correlated with customer loyalty. However, the regression results show that only price, perceived value, and product quality are the strongest and most important factors that influence customer loyalty. Service quality does not have a significant direct effect on loyalty in this model when these other factors are considered. Among the predictors, price has the biggest influence, suggesting that when customers feel the price is fair and reasonable, they are more likely to stay loyal. Perceived value also plays a critical role, as customers who believe they receive good value for what they pay demonstrate higher loyalty. Product quality also increases loyalty by reinforcing consistency and satisfaction, while service quality plays a comparatively smaller role relative to the other variables.

These findings offer several practical implications for Starbucks. To strengthen customer loyalty, the company should keep improving product quality and consistency, as these reinforce customers' trust in the brand. Since price has a strong influence, competitive pricing, promotional bundles, or enhanced loyalty programs may help retain customers. Improving perceived value with better customization, high-quality ingredients, or unique offerings also enhances customer loyalty. Even though service quality showed a weaker statistical impact, maintaining friendly and efficient service still matters for sustaining customer satisfaction and overall brand perception.

For future research, several alternative recommendations can be considered. Researchers could explore the impact of seasonal trends, special promotions, or menu innovations on customer loyalty over time. Investigating the effect of competitors' strategies or broader market changes could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of customer behavior. Additionally, exploring cultural factors, personal preferences, and demographic differences may reveal why certain groups display higher loyalty than others.

Overall, this study demonstrates that price, perceived value, and product quality are the most important factors influencing customer loyalty toward Starbucks. Customers respond positively when they perceive fair pricing, good value, and consistent high-quality products. By focusing on these areas, Starbucks can enhance customer satisfaction, encourage long-term loyalty, and strengthen its position in a highly competitive market.

LIMITATION

The first limitation of this study is the use of convenience sampling. In this study, a survey form was distributed online via Google Form, which limited participation to individuals with internet access and a willingness to respond. As a result, the sample may not be entirely representative of the broader Starbucks market landscape, constraining the study's generalizability. Future studies should adopt a broader and more varied sampling strategy, potentially through random or stratified sampling techniques, to enhance representativeness.

This study also relied on self-reported data, in which participants completed the survey independently without guidance. As a result, participants may have provided responses based on personal preference, subjective opinions, or social desirability that do not accurately reflect their actual behavior. This could reduce the accuracy of the measures and reliability of the data regarding service quality, product quality, perceived value, pricing, and customer loyalty. Future research could incorporate complementary methods such as interviews, focus groups, behavioral tracking, or observational methods to obtain more objective and in-depth insights.

Lastly, this study adopted a cross-sectional approach, with data gathered within a specific timeframe. As a result, this approach does not capture changes in participants' preferences, attitudes, or behavior over time. The findings may only reflect customers' perceptions at the moment of data collection. Future research could adopt a longitudinal design or mixed-methods approach to examine the evolution of customer loyalty and better understand how it develops across different periods or market conditions.

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The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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