

The Influence of Customer Experience, Brand Awareness and Atmosphere Cafes on Gen Z Consumer Loyalty in Cafes in Kediri City

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ABSTRACT

Generation Z consumer loyalty is an important concern for café business actors because this demographic group is increasingly playing a role in shaping market trends and purchasing patterns. This study aims to analyze the influence of customer experience, brand awareness, and café atmosphere on the loyalty of Generation Z consumers in Kediri City. A quantitative approach was used with a purposive sampling technique on 100 respondents who had visited and made purchases at local cafes. Data collection was carried out through a Likert scale questionnaire, then analyzed using multiple linear regression. The results showed that customer experience and brand awareness had a positive and significant effect on loyalty, while the café atmosphere had no significant influence. Customer experience is the most dominant factor in influencing loyalty. These findings indicate that improving customer experience and strengthening brand awareness need to be strategic priorities for café businesses in building Generation Z consumer loyalty. Further research can expand the context of the region or age group to improve generalization.

Keywords: Cafe atmosphere; Brand awareness; Customer experience; Generation Z; Kediri City; Consumer loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the growth of the café sector in Kediri City has experienced a significant increase which is marked by the emergence of various new cafes with diverse concepts, ranging from modern design to contemporary themes. This phenomenon is inseparable from changes in people's lifestyles, especially generation Z who see cafes not only as a place to buy food and drinks, but also as a space to socialize, work, learn, and express themselves through digital activities. As a group that is active on social media, Generation Z makes a visit to a café part of their visual identity. However, the increasing number of cafes also tightens business competition so that business actors are required to retain customers amid many alternatives. Customer loyalty is an important factor because it is not only reflected in repeat visits, but also emotional attachment and a tendency to give positive recommendations.

Generation Z loyalty is an increasingly complex phenomenon because this group is easily influenced by digital trends, is more critical in choosing, and has rapidly changing preferences. Customer experience is an important factor in creating emotional bonds, where positive interactions, quality service, and a comfortable atmosphere can increase their loyalty (Fitriyasari et al., 2024). Loyal customers generally have strong emotional commitments, are difficult to influence competitors, and are willing to pay more for a trusted brand (Rubio & Yague, 2019). However, Generation Z loyalty is not easy to form, so it requires a deep understanding of what factors influence their decision to remain loyal (Riyanti, 2022). When Gen Z has a positive experience while at a café from service interactions, a comfortable atmosphere, to an emotional impression it can strengthen loyalty and increase the likelihood of repeat visits (Surya et al., 2025).

Previous research has shown that *customer experience* is one of the important antecedents of loyalty, as the customer's perception of the overall interaction while in the café can shape an emotional experience that has an effect on the intention to return (SCHMITT, 2021). Other factors that are no less important are *brand awareness*, which is the ability of consumers to recognize, remember, and differentiate a brand when making purchasing decisions (Jovanna & Hakimah, 2022). Strong brand awareness increases consumer trust, preference, and inclination to choose a café over competitors. Moreover *atmosphere café* It is also an important element that includes interior design, lighting, cleanliness, comfort, as well as other sensory elements that affect the emotional atmosphere of visitors. However, in the context of Generation Z who prioritize personal experience and brand image, the physical atmosphere is not always the main differentiator as many cafes have similar concepts (Kotler et al., 2022). Nonetheless, theme selection and space design remain an important part of creating an engaging experience for consumers (Setyani et al., 2021).

Previous research findings show mixed results regarding the influence *customer experience*, *brand awareness* and *atmosphere café* to customer loyalty. Research (Tanudjaja & Sugiyanto, 2023) shows that *customer experience* has no significant effect on loyalty without the mediation of satisfaction, whereas *brand awareness* exert a strong influence. Research (Syafiudin et al., 2024) found that *customer experience* and taste have a significant effect on loyalty, while *atmosphere* and location has no effect even though all three simultaneously contribute to loyalty. Findings in the beauty services sector also show that *customer experience* and *brand awareness* affects loyalty when mediated by satisfaction (Susilawati et al., 2025). Research (Intan et al., 2024) found that the quality of service, product quality, and *atmosphere café* Positively affect satisfaction and increase loyalty through positive experiences and word-of-mouth recommendations. These differences in findings show that the influence of these three variables depends on the industry context, location, and consumer characteristics.

Inconsistencies in previous research results open new research gaps to retest the influence *customer experience*, *brand awareness* and *atmosphere café*. This research has a novelty value because it focuses on the context of the café industry in Kediri City which is developing as a culinary center, and places Generation Z as the main group that has unique consumption characteristics and is strongly influenced by digital trends. In addition, this study integrates all three main variables in one analytical model to understand customer loyalty more comprehensively in a local context that has not been widely studied. Based on this background, the purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of *customer experience*, *brand awareness* and *atmosphere café* to the loyalty of generation Z customers in Kediri City, both partially and simultaneously. Theoretically, this research contributes to strengthening the literature related to Generation Z consumer behavior and the antecedents of loyalty in the café industry. Practically, this research is expected to provide insight for business actors in designing marketing strategies, improving customer experience, strengthening brand identity, and creating a relevant café atmosphere for Generation Z to build long-term loyalty in the midst of increasingly competitive industry competition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer experience is a comprehensive perception formed from customer interaction with the company, starting from before, during, to after the consumption process (SCHMITT, 2021). In the context of the café, this experience includes aspects of service, comfort of space, ease of interaction, and emotional impressions felt during visits. Previous research has shown that customer experiences can form emotional attachment and have the potential to increase loyalty, as satisfied customers are more likely to come back and make positive recommendations. Customer experience indicators include satisfaction, emotional engagement, service quality, consistency of service, perception of value, and sensory experience that has an impact on repeat visit intentions. However, research from (Tanudjaja & Sugiyanto, 2023) and (Susilawati et al., 2025) It found that customer experience does not always have a significant effect on loyalty without a mediator such as customer satisfaction, so the role of customer experience in building loyalty still shows mixed results.

Brand awareness is the level of consumer's ability to recognize and remember a brand when considering purchasing options (Kotler et al., 2022). In a highly competitive café industry, brand awareness is one of the important factors that can differentiate one café from another. Consumers who have a high level of awareness of a brand will find it easier to include the brand in the list of considerations, either through recognition, spontaneous recall, or top of mind position. Previous research from (Tanudjaja & Sugiyanto, 2023) and (Susilawati et al., 2025) It shows that brand awareness has a significant influence on customer loyalty because a strong brand can create a sense of trust, familiarity, and confidence for consumers to make a repeat purchase. However, this level of influence can differ depending on the business context and the characteristics of its consumers.

The atmosphere of a café is an element of the physical and emotional environment that is deliberately designed to create a pleasant experience for customers, including layout, lighting, aroma, music, cleanliness, and comfort (Kotler et al., 2022). A cozy atmosphere can increase the customer's perception of the overall quality of the café and influence the decision to spend longer. Nevertheless, research (Syafiudin et al., 2024) found that café atmosphere is not always a major factor in forming loyalty, especially for Generation Z consumers who are more focused on service experience and brand image than just the physical atmosphere. Another study states that atmosphere has an influence on satisfaction and loyalty when it is able to support an overall positive experience (Intan et

al., 2024). Thus, the role of café atmosphere also shows inconsistent results in previous studies.

Customer loyalty refers to a customer's commitment to consistently repurchase despite other alternatives in the market (Rubio & Yague, 2019). Loyalty is not just a repeat visit, but it includes emotional attachment, a tendency to make recommendations, resistance to competitors' offers, and a willingness to pay more for trusted brands. Loyalty indicators include repeat purchases, positive attitudes towards brands, emotional commitment, advocacy, and tolerance for crises and innovation. For cafes, Generation Z customer loyalty is a challenging aspect because their behavior is dynamic, easily influenced by trends, and tends to be exploratory. Therefore, an understanding of the factors that affect loyalty is necessary to create a more effective marketing strategy.

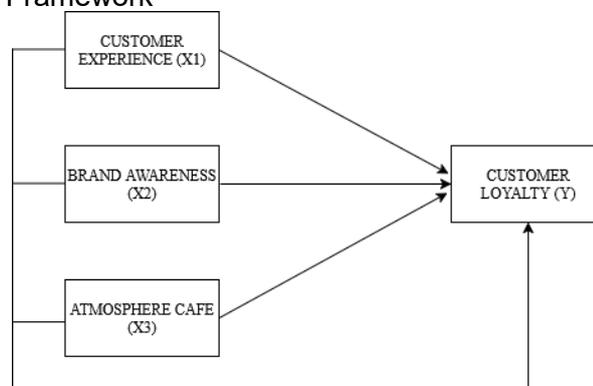
Previous research from (Tanudjaja & Sugiyanto, 2023) and (Susilawati et al., 2025) suggests that customer experience has the potential to shape customer loyalty through enjoyable interactions and positive emotional experiences, although some findings state that such an influence becomes significant only when mediated by customer satisfaction. Instead, research (Syafiudin et al., 2024) shows that customer experience has a direct effect on loyalty without a mediator. Brand awareness was also found to have a strong influence on loyalty, because familiar and memorable brands create trust and increase the likelihood of repeat purchases (Tanudjaja & Sugiyanto, 2023) and (Susilawati et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the café atmosphere shows mixed research results; Some studies state that the atmosphere has a positive effect on satisfaction and loyalty (Intan et al., 2024) But other studies have concluded that the atmosphere does not have a significant impact on customer loyalty (Syafiudin et al., 2024). This inconsistency of findings opens a research gap to re-examine the relationship between the three variables in the context of generation Z in Kediri City.

- H1: Customer experience has a significant effect on customer loyalty.**
- H2: Brand awareness has a significant effect on customer loyalty.**
- H3: Atmosphere café has a significant effect on customer loyalty.**

Conceptual Framework

The framework of this study describes the relationship between the variables tested, namely the influence of customer experience, brand awareness, and café atmosphere on Generation Z customer loyalty.

Figure 1. Research Framework



RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this quantitative research is to investigate how factors such as café ambiance, brand recognition, and customer service affect the loyalty of Kediri City's Generation Z customers. Because it could utilize numerical data collected from

standardized research equipment to objectively examine the connection between variables, the quantitative method was selected.

People in Kediri City who are part of Generation Z and have shopped at cafes make up the study population. Given the lack of information on the population size, a sample of 100 respondents was created using the Cochran formula with a 10% margin of error. The following criteria were used in the sample process: (1) customers from Generation Z; (2) residents or active participants in Kediri City; and (3) minimum of two café visits in the last six months. The sampling was carried out using purposive sampling approaches. Information was gathered by sending out surveys to those who were eligible. The survey was designed using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates a strong disagreement and 5 indicates a strong agreement. Generation Z's café consumption was the focus of a number of items modified from earlier studies that made up the study instrument.

The independent variable consists of customer experience (X1), brand awareness (X2), and atmosphere café (X3), while the dependent variable is consumer loyalty (Y). Each variable is measured using several statements that reflect its theoretical concept. All instruments are tested for validity and reliability to ensure their feasibility as a research measuring tool.

The data was analyzed using SPSS and multiple linear regression. Classical assumption tests, such as those for normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, were run on the model prior to regression analysis. A t-test for partial effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable, an F-test for simultaneous influence, and a determination coefficient (R^2) test for the overall influence of independent variables are all part of regression testing

RESULTS

The SPSS software was used to conduct the study, which included various linear regression approaches. The research was laid out in three primary tables: one for the determination coefficient test (R Square), one for the simultaneous test (F-test), and one for the partial tests (T-test).

In order to make sure the regression model is suitable for multiple linear regression analysis, it is necessary to do a classical assumption test (Best Linear Unbiased Estimator). Tests for heteroscedasticity, multicollinearity, and normalcy are all part of the classical assumption battery.

The purpose of the normalcy test is to determine whether the residual data follows a normal distribution. According to the Normal P-P Plot test findings, the data points are distributed along the diagonal and in the same general direction as the line. The residual data distribution is therefore quite close to normal, as this shows. It follows that the normalcy assumption is satisfied by the regression model.

The purpose of doing the multicollinearity test was to identify highly correlated independent variables. Tolerance values for Customer Experience (0.269), Brand Awareness (0.365), and Atmosphere (0.310) are all higher than the threshold of 0.10, according to the computed data. Also, the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values of 3.722, 2.737, and 3.227 remain below the 10 limit, respectively. These findings rule out the possibility of multicollinearity in the current regression model.

In order to determine whether the residual variance was unequal across observations, the heteroscedasticity test was used. Findings from the experiment Without any

discernible pattern, the scatterplot shows that the residual dots are distributed randomly above and below the zero axis. The absence of heteroscedasticity symptoms in the regression model is shown by this.

Based on the results of the normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, it can be concluded that the regression model in this study has fulfilled all classical assumptions. Thus, the model is feasible to use for multiple linear regression analysis at a later stage.

Once it was confirmed that the regression model had met all classical assumptions, further analysis was carried out to test the influence *Customer Experience*, *Brand Awareness* and *Atmosphere* against *Consumer Loyalty* through multiple linear regression tests.

To find out how much the ability of independent variables to explain the variation of dependent variables, a determination coefficient test was performed. Test results *R Square* can be seen in [Table 1](#) below.

Table 1. Coefficient Determination Test

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.769a	.592	.579	3,487	1,646

a. Predictors: (Constant), ATMOSPHERE, BRAND AWARENESS, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
 b. Dependent Variable: LOYALTY

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Customer Experience, Brand Awareness, and Café Atmosphere were shown to have a high link with Consumer Loyalty, according to the investigation. The correlation coefficient value (R) was 0.769. With an R-squared value of 0.592, we can see that Customer Experience, Brand Awareness, and Café Atmosphere together account for 59.2% of the variance in Consumer Loyalty change. While other variables, such as product quality, pricing, and advertising, accounted for the remaining 40.8%.

The F test is performed to find out whether the independent variables together have an effect on the dependent variables. The results of the F test can be seen in [Table 2](#) below.

Table 2. Simultaneous Tests

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Itself.
1	Regression	1690,687	3	563,562	46,357	.000b
	Residual	1167,073	96	12,157		
	Total	2857,760	99			

a. Dependent Variable: LOYALTY
 b. Predictors: (Constant), ATMOSPHERE, BRAND AWARENESS, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

The results of the ANOVA test showed that the F value was calculated as 46.357 with a significance value of 0.000. Meanwhile, based on the distribution table F at a significance level of 5% with the degree of free numerator ($df_1 = 3$) and denominator ($df_2 = 96$), the value of the F table was obtained of 2.696.

Because F is calculated ($46,357 > F$ table ($2,696$)) and significance value ($0.000 < 0.05$), it can be concluded that Customer Experience, Brand Awareness, and Atmosphere Café simultaneously have a significant effect on Consumer Loyalty. Thus, the regression model used in this study was declared fit to be used in further analysis.

In order to partly ascertain the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable, the t-test was administered. You can see the t-test results in the table below.

**Table 3. Partial Test (t-Test)
Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Itself.
1 (Constant)	11,909	2,345		5,079	,000
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE	,377	,141	,336	2,666	,009
BRAND AWARENESS	,903	,163	,599	5,551	,000
ATMOSPHERE	-,200	,156	-,150	-1,281	,203

a. Dependent Variable: LOYALTY

Source : Data processed by researchers (2025)

How each partially independent variable affects the dependent variable may be found using the t-test. The following outcomes were derived from the multiple linear regression analysis:

- 1) A t-value of 2.666 and a significance level of 0.009 were found for customer experience. With 96 degrees of freedom, the table's t-value is 1.984 at the 5% significance level (bidirectional test). It may be inferred that Customer Experience significantly impacts Consumer Loyalty positively, since the t-counts (2.666) are more than the t-table (1.984) and the significance value (0.009) is less than 0.05.
- 2) Brand Awareness has a t-value of 5.551 with a significance value of 0.000. Because t counts ($5.551 > t$ table (1.984)) and significance value ($0.000 < 0.05$), it can be concluded that Brand Awareness has a positive and significant effect on Consumer Loyalty.
- 3) Atmosphere Café has a t-value of -1.281 with a significance value of 0.203. Because t counts ($-1.281 < t$ table (1.984)) and significance value ($0.203 > 0.05$), it can be concluded that Atmosphere Café has no significant effect on Consumer Loyalty.

DISCUSSION

This section of the discussion aims to further explain the research findings by linking them to the research objectives, relevant theories, and empirical contributions produced. This study was conducted to analyze the influence of Customer Experience, Brand Awareness, and Atmosphere Café on Consumer Loyalty in Cafes in Kediri City, especially among generation Z. This research is important because the rampant competition in the café industry requires business owners to understand what factors are able to encourage the formation of customer loyalty in a sustainable manner.

Theoretically, this research contributes to strengthening the relationship model between customer experience, brand awareness, and café atmosphere on consumer loyalty. Practically, this research contributes to café business actors as a basis for decision-making marketing strategies and improving service quality. The results of this study provide a deeper understanding of which variables are most effective in building loyalty in Generation Z, who are known to have dynamic consumption behaviors and are strongly influenced by experiences and perceptions of brands.

The research found that consumer loyalty is positively and significantly impacted by customer experience. Customers are more likely to stay loyal to a café if they have a positive experience there, as shown by the t-value of 2.666 and significant level of 0.009 (< 0.05). According to studies (Syafiudin et al., 2024), these results corroborate the idea that a customer's emotional, sensory, cognitive, and behavioral components all contribute to their overall experience and, in turn, their likelihood to form a lasting bond with a brand. Customers are more likely to return to a café if they have positive experiences there in terms of service, the convenience of making purchases, the comfort of their seats, and the reliability of the food and drink. The key reason for choosing a meeting place for Generation Z is an enjoyable and distinctive experience. Therefore, it is not unexpected that cafes in Kediri City have seen a large increase in customer loyalty due to Customer Experience.

The Brand Awareness variable was also proven to have a positive and significant effect on Consumer Loyalty, with a t-value of 5.551 and a significance of 0.000 (< 0.05). These findings show that the higher the level of consumer awareness of a café brand, the more likely they are to remain loyal and make repeat purchases. These results support the research (Susilawati et al., 2025) which states that brand awareness is the initial stage of loyalty formation because consumers tend to choose brands that are already known and trusted. In the digital era, cafés that actively build brand image through social media, visual design, and service consistency will be easier to remember. Generation Z is very concerned about the relevance, popularity, and aesthetics of brands, so cafes with high brand awareness find it easier to retain customers even though the competition is getting tougher. These findings confirm that Brand Awareness is the dominant factor in building Consumer Loyalty in the Gen Z segment.

In contrast to the previous two variables, Atmosphere Café had no significant effect on Consumer Loyalty, with a t-value of -1.281 and a significance of 0.203 (> 0.05). These findings show that the café atmosphere is no longer a strong differentiating factor for consumers in Kediri City. The majority of cafes now have interior designs that are comfortable, aesthetic, and relevant to the preferences of young people, so that the atmosphere is not the main consideration in forming loyalty. Gen Z consumers prioritize personalized experiences, such as interactions with staff and quality of service, as well as brand awareness that provides trust and engagement. Gen Z loyalty is also dynamic; They love to try new things and switch places when there are promotions or other more

interesting experiences. Therefore, although the atmosphere favors comfort, these variables are not strong enough to drive long-term loyalty.

The findings of this study have important managerial implications for café owners in Kediri City. Improving the quality of customer experience should be a top priority through friendlier service, more efficient ordering processes, and the creation of a more personalized consumption experience. In addition, cafes need to strengthen Brand Awareness through digital branding strategies, visual design consistency, and promotional activities that are relevant to Gen Z. Meanwhile, even though the atmosphere does not have a significant effect on loyalty, café owners still need to maintain the comfort of the space because these factors can influence the decision of the initial visit even though it does not have a strong impact on loyalty.

Like other studies, this study has some limitations. The scope of the study only covers cafes in Kediri City, so generalization of results to other regions needs to be done carefully. This study also uses a quantitative approach with questionnaires, so the depth of understanding of consumer behavior may be limited. In addition, the variables used are limited to Customer Experience, Brand Awareness, and Atmosphere, even though consumer loyalty can be influenced by many other factors such as price, product quality, or promotion.

Based on these limitations, further research can expand the research area to other cities or use mixed methods to gain a deeper understanding. Future research may also include additional variables such as brand image, perceived value, service quality, or consumer psychological factors to look at a more comprehensive model of loyalty. In addition, longitudinal studies can be conducted to find out the changes in Gen Z's loyalty behavior over time.

CONCLUSION

Customer Experience and Brand Awareness were shown to significantly and positively impact consumer loyalty at cafes in Kediri City, according to this research. This indicates that customer loyalty is directly proportional to the quality of the café's service and the extent to which customers are familiar with the brand. However, there was no statistically significant relationship between customer loyalty and the Atmosphere component.

This suggests that, in comparison to prior experience and brand recognition, the café environment is not now the primary element that motivates customers to maintain loyalty. What makes this study unique is that it applies a single research model to the Gen Z consumer environment, integrating the variables of customer experience, brand awareness, and café atmosphere.

This study has limitations in the scope of objects that only focus on cafes in the Kediri City area, so the results cannot be generalized to other regions with different consumer characteristics. Further research can expand the research area, increase the number of samples, and consider other variables such as customer satisfaction or trust to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape consumer loyalty in the café industry.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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