

THE INFLUENCE OF INVOLVEMENT AND COMMITMENT ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY WITH THE MEDIATION OF EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT ON HAIDILAO HOTPOT PTC SURABAYA

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Abstract. This study aims to examine the effect of engagement and commitment on customer loyalty, with emotional engagement as a mediating variable among Haidilao Hotpot PTC Surabaya customers. The study used a quantitative approach with a survey method by distributing questionnaires to 209 respondents who had visited and made purchases at Haidilao Hotpot PTC Surabaya. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique with the criteria of customers who had consumption experience at the restaurant. The research instrument was constructed using a five-point Likert scale to measure the variables of engagement, commitment, emotional engagement, and customer loyalty. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through the SmartPLS application. The results showed that commitment had a positive and significant effect on emotional engagement and customer loyalty. Emotional engagement was also shown to significantly increase customer loyalty. Conversely, engagement showed a significant negative effect on customer loyalty and had no significant effect on emotional engagement. In addition, emotional engagement successfully mediated the relationship between commitment and customer loyalty, but was unable to mediate the relationship between engagement and customer loyalty. These findings emphasize the importance of relational and emotional aspects in building customer loyalty in the restaurant industry.

Keywords: Customer Loyalty, Commitment, Involvement, Emotional Engagement, Restaurant

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh keterlibatan dan komitmen terhadap loyalitas pelanggan, dengan keterlibatan emosional sebagai variabel mediasi pada pelanggan Haidilao Hotpot PTC Surabaya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode survei melalui penyebaran kuesioner kepada 209 responden yang pernah mengunjungi dan melakukan pembelian di Haidilao Hotpot PTC Surabaya. Responden dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling dengan kriteria pelanggan yang memiliki pengalaman konsumsi di restoran tersebut. Instrumen penelitian disusun menggunakan skala Likert lima poin untuk mengukur variabel keterlibatan, komitmen, keterlibatan emosional, dan loyalitas pelanggan. Data dianalisis menggunakan *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) melalui aplikasi SmartPLS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komitmen berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap keterlibatan emosional dan loyalitas pelanggan. Keterlibatan emosional juga terbukti meningkatkan loyalitas pelanggan secara signifikan. Sebaliknya, keterlibatan menunjukkan pengaruh negatif signifikan terhadap loyalitas pelanggan dan tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap keterlibatan emosional. Selain itu, keterlibatan emosional berhasil memediasi hubungan antara komitmen dan loyalitas pelanggan, tetapi tidak mampu memediasi hubungan antara keterlibatan dan loyalitas pelanggan. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya aspek relasional dan emosional dalam membangun loyalitas pelanggan pada industri restoran.

Kata Kunci: Loyalitas Pelanggan, Komitmen, Keterlibatan, Keterlibatan Emosional, Restoran

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary lifestyle changes have led to significant shifts in consumer behavior, where individuals increasingly prefer to socialize with friends or gather with family in dining establishments (Widiyanti & Harti, 2021). This trend has intensified competition within the restaurant industry, requiring businesses to continuously innovate to attract and retain customers (Kim et al., 2021). As food consumption is a fundamental human need, the restaurant industry continues to experience substantial growth annually (Widiyanti & Harti, 2021).

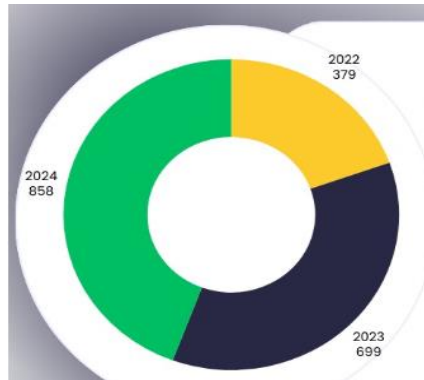


Figure 1. Number of restaurants in Surabaya

According to data released by Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in 2022, there were 11,223 culinary businesses across Indonesia, consisting of 8,042 restaurants, 2,912 cafés and similar establishments, and 269 catering businesses. This rapid expansion highlights the increasingly competitive nature of the food and beverage (F&B) industry.

Surabaya, as a metropolitan city in East Java, demonstrates significant potential in restaurant business development. Data from DPM-PTSP Surabaya show that the number of restaurants increased sharply from 379 units in 2022 to 858 units in 2024. This growth reflects favorable business conditions driven by simplified licensing processes and the availability of strategic locations (Nasution et al., 2024). Furthermore, the presence of supporting infrastructure such as shopping centers and commercial complexes strengthens investment attractiveness in this sector (Prayitno, 2023). Consequently, the continuous rise in the number of restaurants reflects a growing culinary business landscape aligned with urban consumption trends (Nasution et al., 2024).

The intensifying competition compels restaurant businesses to innovate in order to enhance customer loyalty (Kim et al., 2021). Delivering superior service and addressing customer needs are essential strategies to encourage repeat visits. In this context, customer involvement plays a crucial role. Involvement refers to the extent to which customers actively pay attention to, are interested in, and feel connected to a product or service (Rachmanu et al., 2024). Highly

involved customers tend to exhibit greater attention to product attributes, perceived benefits, and overall value, thereby fostering loyalty (Lim & Rasul, 2022).

Another important factor influencing customer loyalty is commitment. Commitment reflects customers' psychological and emotional attachment to a brand or service provider, encouraging them to maintain long-term relationships despite the availability of alternative choices (Sihombing, 2022). This attachment develops through satisfaction, trust, consistent service quality, and positive emotional interactions with the restaurant (Utami & Padmantyo, 2024). Customers who feel emotionally connected to a restaurant are more likely to revisit, recommend the brand to others, and resist competitors' offers (Mukuan et al., 2023). Therefore, strengthening customer commitment becomes essential for sustaining loyalty in the highly competitive restaurant industry.

In addition, emotional engagement has recently become an important issue in consumer behavior studies. Emotional engagement refers to a deep emotional bond characterized by feelings of pride, affection, and personal attachment toward a brand or service (Martina & Masnita, 2024). Unlike cognitive evaluation, emotional engagement creates a more personal relationship between customers and restaurants, which may strengthen long-term loyalty. However, previous studies generally examined involvement, commitment, and loyalty separately, while limited research has simultaneously analyzed emotional engagement as a mediating variable within the restaurant industry, particularly in the context of premium hotpot restaurants in Indonesia. Most earlier studies also focused on general service industries rather than experiential dining businesses that rely heavily on emotional interaction and customer experience.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of customer involvement, customer commitment, and emotional engagement into a single structural model to explain customer loyalty in the restaurant sector. This study specifically positions emotional engagement as a mediating mechanism that explains how involvement and commitment influence loyalty among Haidilao Hotpot customers in Surabaya. In addition, this research provides a contextual contribution by examining customer loyalty in the premium hotpot restaurant segment, which is characterized by interactive dining experiences and strong customer-service interaction, aspects that have received limited attention in previous studies.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the influence of customer involvement and customer commitment on customer loyalty, as well as to examine the mediating role of emotional engagement in the relationship between involvement, commitment, and customer loyalty among Haidilao Hotpot PTC Surabaya customers. The

findings are expected to contribute theoretically to consumer behavior and relationship marketing studies, while also providing practical insights for restaurant managers in developing strategies to strengthen emotional relationships and long-term customer loyalty in the increasingly competitive F&B industry.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach aimed at analyzing the influence of involvement, commitment, and emotional engagement on customer loyalty in the restaurant context. The population of this study consists of customers of Haidilao Hotpot PTC Surabaya. Haidilao is a globally recognized hotpot restaurant chain originating from China, known for its exceptional service quality and interactive dining experience. In Indonesia, one of its outlets is located at Pakuwon Trade Center (PTC) Surabaya, which has become a popular culinary destination in the city. Haidilao Hotpot PTC Surabaya offers a communal dining concept with a self-service system, friendly customer service, and various additional facilities such as complimentary snacks, a children's play area, and free manicure services, which serve as unique attractions for customers (BRCC Indonesia, 2024). Given this reputation, the restaurant provides a relevant context for examining customer involvement, commitment, and loyalty within a modern service environment.

Based on the defined population, this study involves 209 samples obtained from respondents who met the research criteria. This sample size satisfies the commonly accepted requirements for scientific research. According to Hair et al. (2021), the minimum sample size in SEM research ranges from 5 to 10 observations per indicator. Since this study employs 18 indicators, the minimum required sample ranges from 90 to 180 respondents, indicating that the sample size used is adequate. Respondents were selected using a non-probability sampling technique with purposive sampling, based on the following criteria: (1) at least 17 years old, (2) having visited Haidilao PTC Surabaya at least twice within the last six months, and (3) willingness to voluntarily participate in the survey.

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to customers of Haidilao PTC Surabaya using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was shared via Google Forms to respondents who had visited the restaurant at least once. The study measured four main variables, namely involvement, commitment, emotional engagement, and customer loyalty. Involvement was measured through customer participation and interaction in service activities. Commitment reflected customers' emotional and relational attachment to the restaurant. Emotional engagement was measured through affection, passion, and connection toward the

brand, while customer loyalty was reflected in repurchase intention, word-of-mouth promotion, and resistance to switching to competitors. All indicators were adapted from previous relevant studies to ensure measurement validity and reliability.

The data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS software. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a multivariate statistical technique used to analyze complex relationships among latent variables, both direct and indirect, within a single model simultaneously (Setiabudhi et al., 2025). SEM enables researchers to test theoretical models involving multiple constructs while accounting for causal relationships among variables. PLS-SEM, as a variance-based SEM approach, is particularly suitable for exploratory research, studies with relatively small sample sizes, and models aimed at maximizing the explained variance of dependent variables (Sihombing, 2022). This method does not require strict normality assumptions and is capable of handling complex models. In this study, PLS-SEM is used to examine the effects of involvement and commitment on customer loyalty, as well as to evaluate the validity and reliability of the constructs through outer model and inner model analyses.

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 209 respondents who met the predefined criteria as customers of Haidilao Hotpot PTC Surabaya. The demographic profile indicates that the majority of respondents are female (62.7%), while male respondents account for 37.3%.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n = 209)

Characteristic	Category	Number of People	Percentage
Gender	Male	78	37,3%
	Female	131	62,7%
Age	17-22	152	72,7%
	23-30	38	18,2%
	31-40	10	4,8%
	41-50	6	2,9%
	>50	3	1,4%
Number of visits	2	86	41,1%
	>2	123	58,9%

In terms of age distribution, most respondents fall within the 17–22 age group (72.7%), followed by 23–30 years (18.2%), with smaller proportions in older age categories. This suggests that the customer base is predominantly composed of younger consumers, particularly those belonging to Generation Z. Regarding visit frequency, 58.9% of respondents have visited

the restaurant more than twice, while 41.1% have visited twice. This indicates that the majority of respondents possess sufficient experience with the service, thereby enhancing the reliability of their evaluations.

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed by examining the outer loading values of each indicator. According to established criteria, an indicator is considered valid if its outer loading exceeds the threshold of 0.70.

Table 2. Indicator Outer Loading

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading
Involvement	A1	0.756
	A2	0.708
	A3	0.791
	A4	0.700
	A5	0.736
	A6	0.789
Commitment	B1	0.718
	B2	0.776
	B3	0.781
	B4	0.779
	B5	0.728
Emotional Engagement	C1	0.808
	C2	0.874
	C3	0.748
Loyalty	D1	0.881
	D2	0.848
	D3	0.713

The results indicate that all indicators across the four constructs exhibit outer loading values ranging from 0.700 to 0.881. These values meet the recommended threshold, confirming that each indicator adequately represents its respective latent construct.

Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 3. Cronbach Alpha, Composite Reliability, dan Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Involvement	0.853	0.883	0.559
Commitment	0.814	0.870	0.573
Emotional Engagement	0.741	0.852	0.659
Loyalty	0.748	0.857	0.668

The results show that all constructs have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. Additionally, all AVE values are above 0.50, suggesting that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators.

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Table 4. R-Square Value

Endogenous Variable	R-Square	Category
Emotional Engagement	0.480	Moderate
Loyalty	0.631	Moderate

The results show that Emotional Engagement has an R^2 value of 0.480, indicating that 48.0% of its variance is explained by involvement and commitment. Meanwhile, Customer Loyalty has an R^2 value of 0.631, suggesting that 63.1% of its variance is explained by involvement, commitment, and emotional engagement.

Hypothesis Testing (Path Coefficients)

Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping procedures, evaluating path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values.

Table 5. Hypothesis test result (path coefficient)

Hypothesis	Variable Relationship	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
H1	Emotional Engagement → Loyalty	0.444	5.624	0.000	Supported
H2	Involvement → Loyalty	-0.149	2.268	0.023	Supported
H3	Involvement → Emotional Engagement	-0.046	0.570	0.569	Rejected
H5	Commitment → Loyalty	0.506	5.025	0.000	Supported
H6	Commitment → Emotional Engagement	0.722	7.131	0.000	Supported

The results reveal that emotional engagement has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, supporting H1. In addition, involvement has a significant effect on customer loyalty, supporting H2, although the relationship is negative. However, involvement does not significantly affect emotional engagement, leading to the rejection of H3. Furthermore, commitment has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, supporting H5.

Commitment also has a positive and significant effect on emotional engagement, supporting H6.

Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effects)

The mediating role of emotional engagement was examined to assess indirect relationships.

Table 6. Mediation test result (indirect effect)

Hypothesis	Variable Relationship	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
H4	Involvement→Emotional Engagement →Loyalty	-0.020	0.541	0.589	Rejected
H7	Commitment→Emotional Engagement →Loyalty	0.320	3.723	0.000	Supported

The results indicate that emotional engagement does not significantly mediate the relationship between involvement and customer loyalty, leading to the rejection of H4. This finding suggests that customer involvement alone is insufficient to create a strong emotional bond capable of encouraging long-term loyalty. Although customers may actively interact with the restaurant or participate in service-related activities, such involvement does not automatically generate emotional attachment. In the context of the restaurant industry, especially experiential dining, customers may perceive involvement more as a functional interaction rather than a meaningful emotional experience. Consequently, involvement is unable to indirectly strengthen loyalty through emotional engagement.

In contrast, emotional engagement significantly mediates the relationship between commitment and customer loyalty, supporting H7. This result indicates that customers who already possess a strong sense of commitment toward the restaurant are more likely to develop emotional attachment, which subsequently strengthens their loyalty. Emotional engagement becomes an important psychological mechanism that transforms commitment into sustainable loyal behavior, such as repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth. This finding highlights that loyalty in the restaurant industry is not only shaped by transactional experiences, but also by emotional relationships that create feelings of connection, trust, and personal attachment between customers and the brand.

DISCUSSION

The present study offers a refined understanding of customer loyalty formation within experiential dining by disentangling the roles of involvement, commitment, and emotional engagement. The findings reveal that loyalty is primarily driven by affective and relational mechanisms rather than mere participation. Emotional engagement has a strong and significant impact on customer loyalty, highlighting its important role in maintaining long term customer relationships. This result is consistent with contemporary engagement literature, which emphasizes that affective attachment characterized by enthusiasm, passion, and emotional connection drives both behavioral loyalty and advocacy (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Kabadayi et al., 2023). In experiential service environments such as Haidilao, emotional engagement is likely developed through multisensory experiences, personalized interactions, and symbolic value creation, which together enhance customers' psychological connection to the brand.

However, involvement through emotional engagement demonstrates a significant yet negative relationship with customer loyalty, contrary to common expectations. Rather than enhancing loyalty, higher involvement leads customers to adopt a more critical perspective toward service performance. This suggests that involvement in this context is predominantly cognitive, which may not generate favorable emotional outcomes (Lim & Rasul, 2022).

Highly involved customers tend to pay closer attention to service details, resulting in higher expectations and greater sensitivity to minor inconsistencies, such as service delays or quality variations. In experiential service settings, involvement may shift the focus from emotional enjoyment to performance evaluation, thereby reducing emotional connection as a key driver of loyalty (Martina & Masnita, 2024). This finding contrasts with prior studies that report a positive relationship between involvement and loyalty (Rizal & Ismail, 2025; Fahmi et al., 2024), as well as research suggesting that involvement enhances loyalty through customer engagement (Kabadayi et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the study suggests that when involvement is mainly cognitive, it encourages critical evaluation rather than emotional bonding (Goyal & Verma, 2023), which ultimately weakens customer loyalty.

Furthermore, involvement does not significantly influence emotional engagement, indicating that participation alone is insufficient to foster affective bonds. This result challenges the commonly assumed linear relationship between participation and engagement, suggesting instead that emotional engagement is contingent upon the quality of experiential and affective stimuli rather than the mere presence of interaction. Prior studies have similarly emphasized

that emotional engagement is primarily driven by affective experiences rather than cognitive activity alone (Lourdes & Ferdinand, 2024).

Conversely, commitment is identified as a key driver of both emotional engagement and customer loyalty. This finding underscores the importance of relational continuity, trust, and perceived value in fostering long-term customer relationships. In line with the Commitment-Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), commitment functions as a foundational element that strengthens both emotional attachment and behavioral loyalty. Customers who perceive a meaningful and enduring relationship with the brand are more likely to internalize the brand experience, thereby enhancing both engagement and loyalty. The mediation analysis further highlights the pivotal role of emotional engagement. While emotional engagement does not mediate the relationship between involvement and loyalty, it significantly mediates the effect of commitment on loyalty. This indicates that emotional engagement serves as a critical mechanism through which relational commitment is translated into sustained loyalty behaviors. In other words, commitment alone is insufficient unless it is accompanied by emotional resonance.

Collectively, these findings suggest a fundamental distinction between cognitive participation and emotional bonding. While involvement may influence customer behavior at a functional level, it is emotional engagement reinforced by commitment that ultimately determines the strength and sustainability of customer loyalty in experiential service contexts. This study contributes to the advancement of consumer behavior and relationship marketing literature, particularly in the context of experiential services. The findings reinforce the relevance of Emotional Bonding Theory by demonstrating that emotional engagement serves as a key mechanism in the formation of customer loyalty. This supports the view that affective attachment plays a more critical role than cognitive evaluation in shaping long-term customer relationships.

Furthermore, this study extends the Commitment-Trust Theory by highlighting the dual role of commitment as both a direct determinant of loyalty and an antecedent of emotional engagement. This integration provides a more comprehensive understanding of how relational and emotional processes interact in influencing customer behavior. At the same time, the results challenge the conventional assumption that involvement inherently leads to positive outcomes. The insignificant effect of involvement on emotional engagement and its negative relationship with loyalty suggest that involvement should be conceptualized more carefully, particularly in experiential service contexts where emotional value is dominant.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that restaurant businesses should prioritize emotional and relational strategies to enhance customer loyalty. Developing emotional engagement should become a central focus. Restaurants can achieve this by creating immersive and memorable experiences through personalized service, interactive dining elements, and emotionally meaningful interactions that resonate with customers. Strengthening customer commitment is equally important. Businesses are encouraged to implement strategies that build trust and long-term relationships, such as maintaining service consistency, offering loyalty programs, and delivering personalized communication. Although customer involvement remains relevant, it should be carefully managed. Excessive involvement may lead to increased cognitive evaluation rather than emotional attachment. Therefore, involvement strategies should be designed to enhance enjoyment and emotional value rather than increasing customer effort.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that customer loyalty in the experiential dining industry is primarily influenced by commitment and emotional engagement. Commitment significantly strengthens both emotional engagement and customer loyalty, indicating that customers with strong psychological attachment are more likely to maintain long-term relationships with the restaurant. Emotional engagement also plays an important role in increasing loyalty by creating meaningful emotional connections between customers and the brand. In contrast, involvement demonstrates a significant but negative effect on loyalty and does not significantly influence emotional engagement, suggesting that customer participation alone is insufficient to build emotional attachment in experiential service settings. Furthermore, emotional engagement successfully mediates the relationship between commitment and loyalty but fails to mediate the relationship between involvement and loyalty. These findings highlight the importance of affective and relational factors in developing sustainable customer loyalty within the restaurant industry.

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