

The Effect of Brand Credibility and Conflict Handling on Customer Satisfaction in Forming Customer Loyalty of Cellular Operator Companies in Indonesia

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Abstract

The telecommunications industry has a strategic role in increasing the economic growth, creating jobs and improving the community welfare. The telecommunications industry could increase the economic growth by providing the infrastructure needed for business activities and marketing. The rapid development of technology, the wide reach of internet services, and the increasingly cheap prices of gadgets for access to cyberspace have made internet users grow quite rapidly. The internet is like the center of attention for Indonesian people, so having an internet connection is a basic thing to have. This can cause cellular operator companies to compete with each other, so that customers continue to use the products offered by these companies. Therefore, this research aims to identify and analyze the factors that influence the customer loyalty of cellular operator companies in Indonesia. This research variables include exogenous variables consisting of brand credibility and conflict handling with customer satisfaction as the intermediary variable and customer loyalty as the dependant variable. This research used 200 respondent who were cellular operator users in the Jakarta, Bekasi and Depok area. The selection of respondents used a non-probability sampling approach with the accidental sampling method. Data processing techniques use PLS software version 3.0. The results of this research show that brand credibility and conflict handling directly influence customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on the customer loyalty of cellular operator companies in Indonesia.

Keywords: Brand Credibility, Conflict Handling, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty.

1. Introduction

The telecommunication industry is seen as the foundation of economic growth and plays an important role in a country's economy and forms a social prosperity index (Ruhle Brusic, Kittl, dan Ehrle, 2011; Agyapong, 2011). This telecommunication industry enables information exchange, improves the relationship between individuals and businesses and helps in the decision-making process (Ishaq, 2011). This can cause all mobile operator

companies to compete with each other, so that customers continue to use the products offered by those companies. This company engaged in the internet service business is required to provide high customer satisfaction by providing reliable and superior services to customers. Mobile operator companies are trying to keep their customers from switching to other operators in various ways. These companies always try to get a deep understanding of customer value for businesses over a long period of time which is commonly called customer loyalty.

Customer loyalty refers to customer behavior to make continuous purchases of selected company goods or services. Customer loyalty has an important role in a company, maintaining them means improving financial performance and company survival performance. This is the main reason for companies to attract and retain them (Nasher, 2019).

Customer loyalty is very important for business because it can help in planning a long-term marketing strategy, and increase business profitability. By understanding customer loyalty, businesses can allocate their resources more effectively and gain long-term benefits from good relationships with customers. Customer loyalty has an important role in a company, retaining customers means improving financial performance and company survival performance. One of the ways to increase loyalty is by providing customer satisfaction for the services provided by the company (Iddrisu, Nooni, Fianko, dan Mensah, 2015). Efforts to satisfy customer needs carried out by each company can be carried out with various strategies, with the hope that customers will not switch to other similar products or services of other companies.

Customer satisfaction is one of the determining factors of a company's success. If the performance of the product/service is below expectations, customers will not be satisfied. If the product/service performance meets expectations, then the customer will be satisfied. If the product/service performance exceeds expectations, the customer is very satisfied or happy (Pratama, 2017). Many companies focus on high satisfaction because customers who only feel satisfied are easy to change their minds if they get a better offer. All companies focus on customer satisfaction, because satisfied customers are not easy to switch to competing

products. Satisfaction is the extent to which performance meets customer expectations. The relationship will continue as long as the service provider meets customer expectations (Negi & Ketema, 2013).

One of the strategies that companies can do to increase customer satisfaction is to increase brand credibility. Every company has a product with its own advantages and disadvantages depending on the brand and price. Customers think that famous brands in the market are safer compared to less popular brands, because popular brands in the market provide more complete information. Brand credibility refers to the level of trust and confidence of customers towards a brand. This includes aspects such as the reliability of the brand in fulfilling its promises, honesty in conveying information, and their ability to fulfill the promises made about the product or service offered. Brand credibility reflects the extent to which customers believe in the brand and feel confident in the quality and value offered by the brand (Othman, Kamarohim dan Nizam, 2017).

Trust in the brand plays an important role in creating customer satisfaction. Brand credibility creates a risk-free approach for customers because they believe in brand details and have confidence related to the value of products and services. Therefore, brand credibility plays a key role in influencing customer satisfaction (Othman et al., 2017).

In the use of mobile operators, internet disruptions will definitely occur in all companies, so customer satisfaction is also affected by the number of disruptions that occur and conflict handling carried out by the mobile operator company. Along with the disruption of mobile operators, mobile operators need to handle conflicts so that customer satisfaction is maintained. Conflict handling refers to the process or strategy used to manage or resolve conflicts between the parties involved. This involves identifying, understanding, and resolving conflicts in a way that minimizes the negative impact and promotes a satisfactory resolution for all parties involved. Effective conflict handling can affect customer satisfaction through various mechanisms, including problem solving, increased trust, effective communication, and reduced dissatisfaction (Mahmoud et al., 2018).

Conflict handling in this study includes aspects such as responding to customer complaints, problem solving, effective communication, and efforts to prevent larger conflicts. The handling of this conflict can be improved through employee training to improve skills in resolving their internet conflicts. The next way is to develop an internal mechanism for employee training in communication skills regarding conflict resolution with customers (Negi & Ketema, 2013).

2. Theoretical Framework

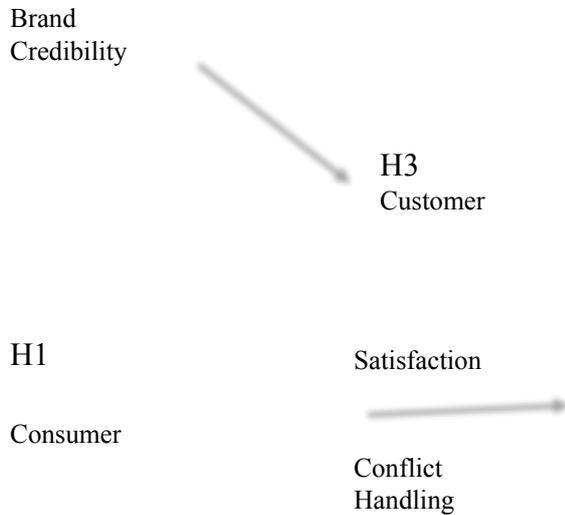


Figure 1: Research Model
H2
Loyalty

Customer Relationship Management Theory

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a strategic approach to manage relationships with customers with the aim of building long-term relationships that are profitable for companies and customers. CRM involves the use of technology, processes, strategies, and philosophies to understand and meet customer needs, increase customer satisfaction, and strengthen long-term relationships between companies and customers (Zablah, Bellenger dan Johnston, 2004). CRM also involves customer knowledge management, which emphasizes the importance of understanding and using knowledge about customers to improve company performance and customer satisfaction (Margianti, Refianti, Mutiara dan Nuzulina 2016)

Companies use CRM tools for various reasons such as stimulating revenue and customer growth or increasing customer loyalty and acquisition (Dallapozza, Goetz dan Sahut, 2018). Li, Huang dan Song (2019) show that CRM has significant operational benefits that can increase customer satisfaction and result in higher profitability.

Customer relationship management refers to a series of relational practices adopted by companies to attract, maintain, and improve customer relationships. For most companies in various sectors, CRM has developed as a potential framework to achieve long-term

competitive advantage (Soltani dan Navimipour, 2016; Reicher dan Szeghegyi, 2015; Lipia inen, 2015). The competition is getting tougher these days, creating a positive customer relationship is not only a must, but also a key to differentiation.

Consumer Behavior Theory

Schiffman & Kanuk (2000) define consumer behavior as the behavior shown by consumers in searching, buying, using, evaluating, and spending products and services with the hope of satisfying their needs. Consumer behavior involves certain decisions, activities, ideas, or experiences that satisfy the needs and desires of consumers. Mowen dan Minor (2022) give a different definition by explaining consumer behavior as the study of purchasing units and exchange processes in acquiring, consuming and spending goods, services, experiences, and ideas. This definition focuses on purchasing units not only individuals but also groups or organizations that buy products or services.

Consumer behavior theory in the needs choice model claims that consumers collect and analyze information from various alternatives gradually and finally choose the best option. Consumer behavior theory can support the relationship between customer innovation and customer satisfaction. Innovative individuals are always looking for change, excitement and new experiences, which lead them to continue exploring new products/services (Quoquab et al., 2018). Customer satisfaction is traditionally considered as a fundamental determinant of long

term consumer behavior (Velnampy dan Sivesan, 2012). Building and maintaining good relationships with consumers is the key to the company's success (Sangadji & Sofia, 2013).

3. Research Method

Sampling and data collection

The population of this study is all people who use Telkomsel, Halo, Simpati, by.U, Indosat, Three, XL and Axis mobile operators in the Jakarta, Bekasi and Depok regions. The number of populations in this study is not known for sure, in other words individuals do not get the same possibility to be taken as a sample. To determine the number of samples that will be used in the research, the Roscoe theory is used. According to Roscoe (Sugiyono, 2017), a viable sample size in research is 30 to 500. Based on this concept, this research will use 200 respondents.

The sampling technique used in this study uses the non-probability sampling method with the accidental sampling sample technique which is a sampling technique based on chance, namely anyone who happens to meet the researcher can be used as a sample, if it is seen that the

person who happens to meet matches the criteria that have been determined by the researcher (Sugiyono, 2017). The respondents in this study are people who use mobile operators in the Jabodetabek area.

The distribution of questionnaires in this study was carried out offline and online. As for the offline distribution of the questionnaire, it is by directly meeting with the mobile operator user community domiciled in the Jabodetabek area as many as 40 respondents and asking for their willingness to be able to fill out this research questionnaire. Meanwhile, the distribution of the questionnaire online was carried out using google form, by sending a google form link <https://bit.ly/KuesionerMy> dissertation through social media such as whatsapp, instagram, facebook and other social media, to mobile operator users domiciled in the Jabodetabek area as many as 160 respondents.

Closed questionnaires are used to test customer loyalty models. Questionnaires with closed questions were developed by adopting previous similar research questionnaires. The brand credibility measurement scale was based on the research of Sweeney dan Swait (2008). The measurement scale for conflict handling is based on the research of Negi & Ketema (2013).

The measurement scale of commitment and customer satisfaction is based on the research of Dagger & O'Brien (2010), Dandis et al (2022). The customer loyalty measurement scale is based on the research of Dandis et al (2022).

4. Results and Discussion

The distribution of the location of residence or domicile of the respondents in this study, the majority of respondents are domiciled in the Jakarta area as much as 100 people or 50%, domiciled in the Bekasi area as many as 60 people or 30%, and the rest domiciled in the Depok area as much as 50 people or 20%.

The characteristics of the next respondents based on the mobile operator used showed that the respondents in this study were not significantly different from the results of the 2023 APJII survey. The majority of respondents use Telkomsel/Simpati/Halo/by.U operator as many as 120 people or 60%, use Indosat/Three operator as many as 50 people or 25%, and at least use XL/Axis operator as many as 30 people or 15%.

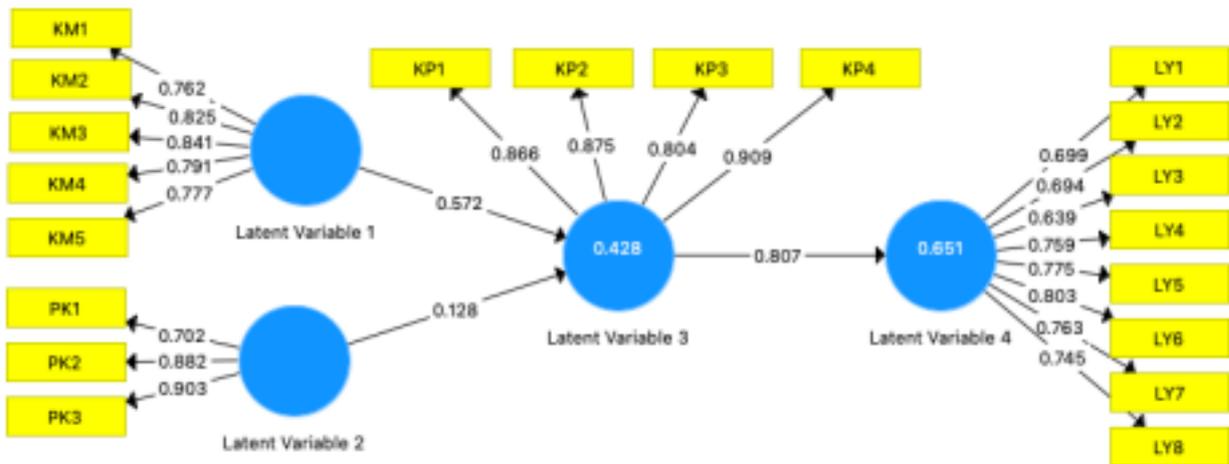


Figure 2: Research Model Results 10

4.1 Path Coefficient

In the results of the line coefficient test for all mobile operators, based on figure 2, Brand credibility has an effect on customer satisfaction of 0.572. Conflict handling has an impact on customer satisfaction of 0.128. Furthermore, the customer satisfaction variable has an effect on the customer loyalty variable of 0.807.

4.2 Fit Model

Table 1 Fit Model Mobile Operator

Fit Model	Saturated Model
NFI	0,804
SRMR	0,064

Source: Data processed (2024)

To assess the accuracy of a model with PLS can be seen from NFI. An NFI value close to 1 indicates that the tested model has high accuracy or compatibility. NFI values starting from 0 – 1 are derived from the comparison between the hypothesized model and a certain independent model. Based on table 1, it can be seen that the NFI value for testing all mobile operators is at 0.804 which means that it has a model match that can be declared good (Ghozali, 2014).

4.3 Hypothesis Test

A hypothesis that can be accepted or rejected can be done by path coefficient analysis (path

coefficient) which is paying attention to significance values and p-values. The hypothesis testing guidelines used in this study are the t-statistical value > 1.96 and the p-value significance level of 0.05 (5%) To determine the direct variable effect on the structural level can be seen in the f square test with criteria (f square 0.02 low, 0.15 moderate and 0.35 high) (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2 Hypothesis Testing of all Mobile Operator

	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	F Square	Result
Brand Credibility \square Customer Satisfaction	10.137	0.000	0,386	Accepted
Conflict Handling \square Customer Satisfaction	2.031	0.040	0,029	Accepted
Customer Satisfaction \square Customer Loyalty	27.202	0.000	1,869	Accepted

1.6.1.4

4.4 The Effect of Brand Credibility on Customer Satisfaction

The results of hypothesis testing on brand credibility towards customer satisfaction directly have a positive and significant effect, can be seen in table 2 T-statistics value which is $10.137 > 1.96$ with p-value $0.00 < 0.05$. The conclusion obtained is that H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted which means that brand credibility has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.

4.5 The Effect of Conflict Handling on Customer Satisfaction

Testing the hypothesis of handling conflicts on customer satisfaction directly has a positive and significant effect. The result can be seen in Table 2, namely the statistical t-value of $2.031 > 1.96$ with a p-value of $0.04 < 0.05$. The conclusion obtained is that H_0 is rejected and H_2 is accepted. Although there is an influence, the f square value in the conflict handling variable on customer satisfaction is 0.155, this shows that the structural level has a low influence. The need for attention from the company towards conflict handling is very important in influencing customer satisfaction.

4.6 The Effect of Customer Satisfaction on Customer Loyalty

The results of the hypothesis testing in table 2 can be seen at the t-statistical value of $27.202 > 1.96$ with p-value $0.000 < 0.05$. The conclusion obtained is that H_0 is rejected and H_3 is accepted which means that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on

customer loyalty. Customer loyalty will increase if customers feel satisfied with the service received. This is supported by the fact that shows that the majority of respondents answered that they agreed with the satisfaction obtained from the mobile operator company used.

4.7 Discussion

The results of this study are in line with the research (Dandis et al., 2022; Seyed Ghorban & Tahernejad, 2012) which shows that brand credibility has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction of mobile operators. Brand credibility plays an important role in affecting customer satisfaction, in line with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Based on TPB, customer attitude towards satisfaction is influenced by factors such as positive brand credibility. If customers have a positive attitude towards the credibility of their mobile operator brand, this will most likely increase customer satisfaction while using the mobile operator.

Subjective norms in TPB indicate social influence on customer decisions. Strong brand credibility can create positive subjective norms, where friends, family, or customer colleagues provide positive support and recommendations to the mobile operator brand. This can strengthen the customer's intention to continue using the mobile operator and ultimately increase their satisfaction.

Increasing the brand credibility of mobile operator companies is something that is needed to affect customer satisfaction levels. In the competition in today's era, brand credibility is the key that distinguishes between professional and unprofessional companies. Brand credibility reflects the company's reputation customers views, which in turn affects their perception of satisfaction with the products offered

The results of this study are also consistent with previous research which found that conflict handling has a direct effect on customer satisfaction (Negi & Ketema, 2013; Ngah et al., 2023). Although significant, the conflict handling variable towards direct satisfaction at the structural level has a low effect because of the f square value of 0.134. Therefore, it is necessary to improve conflict handling from mobile operators. The increase can be done by mobile operators and directly increase customer satisfaction, there are several steps that can be taken. First of all, it is important to have a conflict reporting system that is efficient and easily accessible to customers. This can include the use of all social media, mobile applications, or customer service numbers that are available 24 hours a day for customers to report problems.

It is important for mobile operator companies to train their employees in communication and conflict resolution skills. Employees must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to listen with empathy, identify problems appropriately, and offer satisfactory solutions for customers. Routine training and performance evaluation can help ensure that employees are always ready to handle conflicts properly.

Mobile operator companies are expected to have a structured and transparent conflict resolution process. Customers must be given clear information about the steps to be taken to solve their problems and given an estimated time for resolution. This helps reduce confusion and uncertainty for customers, thus increasing their trust and satisfaction with the company.

The use of technology can also help improve conflict handling. For example, companies can implement a customer relationship management system (CRM) that allows to track and monitor every interaction with customers. In this way, the customer support team can have quick access to conversation history and customer information needed to resolve conflicts more efficiently.

Lastly, it is important to have a strong commitment from management and company leaders to improve conflict handling. By prioritizing conflict resolution and emphasizing the importance of customer satisfaction in corporate culture, mobile operator companies can ensure that all necessary steps are taken to improve the overall customer experience (Negi & Ketema, 2013; Ngah et al., 2023).

Customer satisfaction has a significant impact on mobile operator customer loyalty because customer loyalty is a measure of the total value obtained from a customer during his relationship with the company. First of all, customer satisfaction contributes fully directly to customer retention. Satisfied customers tend to keep using services from the same mobile operator for a longer period of time, which means they will generate sustainable revenue for the company over a longer period of time. Satisfied customers tend to have a higher level of loyalty to the brand, which means they will be more likely to use various additional services offered by mobile operators and generate additional revenue for the company.

Customer satisfaction has an impact on the customer's willingness to recommend a brand to others. Satisfied customers tend to be more active in giving positive feedback about mobile operator services to friends, family, or on social media. This can help attract new potential customers which can then increase customer loyalty from mobile operator companies. Satisfied customers will also use mobile operator services more intensively because they feel

comfortable with the brand and have a strong relationship with it. This means they will generate higher income for the company.

The results of this research are consistent with the research of Iddrisu et al (2015) which found that customer satisfaction affects customer loyalty to mobile operator companies in Ghana. The results of the same similar research are the study of Khan et al (2023) which found that customer satisfaction affects the customer loyalty of mobile operator companies in Pakistan.

Customer satisfaction can also affect the level of customer engagement. Satisfied customers tend to be more active in interacting with brands, for example by using new features, participating in loyalty programs, or giving feedback regularly. This can increase the use of services and the added value provided by customers to mobile operators. Lastly, customer satisfaction can also have an impact on the level of customers who switch to competitors.

5. Conclusion

Empirical implications show that the proposed research model in measuring customer satisfaction and its influence on customer loyalty of mobile operator companies in Indonesia is appropriate. The success of this model contributes to a further understanding of customer behavior in the context of telecommunications and can provide valuable insights for research and development in this field. Thus, these empirical results not only have practical implications in company management, but also provide conceptual and theoretical contributions to academic literature on customer behavior in the context of telecommunications.

5.1 Preliminary managerial implications

The managerial implication in this research is that mobile operator companies need to pay attention to the role of conflict handling. There needs to be an improvement in conflict handling from mobile operators. The increase can be done by mobile operators by having a conflict reporting system that is efficient and easily accessible to customers. This can include the use of all social media, cellphone applications, or customer service numbers that are available 24 hours a day for customers to report problems. It is also important for mobile operator companies to train their employees in communication and conflict resolution skills. Employees must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to listen with empathy, identify problems appropriately, and offer satisfactory solutions for customers. Routine training and

performance evaluation can help ensure that employees are always ready to handle conflicts properly. Customer satisfaction, as the main determining factor, requires special attention in company management. High satisfaction contributes directly to customer loyalty for mobile operator companies.

5.2 Limitations and future studies

Based on the findings of this study, it shows that conflict handling variables have the smallest influence on customer satisfaction. The next researcher is advised to enrich the model by including conflict management variables. Customer trust in conflict management information conveyed by the company when there is a problem with its mobile operator can be considered as a critical element in shaping the customer's perception of customer satisfaction at the company. Furthermore, research that includes conflict management variables can focus on how these factors affect customer perceptions of mobile operators. By including these variables, research can further contribute to the understanding of factors involving customer satisfaction with a product/service.

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