ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF BRAND EXPERIENCE, APPLICATION EASE OF USE, AND PERCEIVED QUALITY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND ITS IMPACT ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN THE PIJAR SEKOLAH APPLICATION
(A CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS, VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS, AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN WEST BANDUNG REGENCY)

ANALISIS PENGARUH *BRAND EXPERIENCE*, *THE EASE OF USE OF THE APPLICATION*, DAN *PERCEIVED QUALITY* TERHADAP *CUSTOMER SATISFACTION* SERTA DAMPAK PADA *CUSTOMER LOYALTY* APLIKASI PIJAR SEKOLAH
(STUDI KASUS SMP NEGERI, SMK NEGERI DAN SMA NEGERI KABUPATEN BANDUNG BARAT)

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Abstract
This study analyzes the influence of brand experience, application ease of use, and perceived quality on customer satisfaction and its impact on customer loyalty in the PIJAR Sekolah application. The research focuses on users from public junior high schools, vocational high schools, and senior high schools in West Bandung Regency. A quantitative method was employed using a survey distributed to students and educators. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Results show that brand experience, ease of use, and perceived quality significantly influence customer satisfaction. Furthermore, customer satisfaction plays a critical role in driving customer

loyalty. The study emphasizes the importance of enhancing user interaction, simplifying application navigation, and ensuring content quality to boost satisfaction and long-term usage. These findings offer insights for educational technology developers to improve digital learning platforms and foster user loyalty through an optimized experience.

Keywords: Brand Experience, Ease of Use, Perceived Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Educational Technology, PIJAR Sekolah.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis pengaruh pengalaman merek, kemudahan penggunaan aplikasi, dan persepsi kualitas terhadap kepuasan pelanggan serta dampaknya terhadap loyalitas pelanggan pada aplikasi PIJAR Sekolah. Fokus penelitian ditujukan kepada pengguna dari jenjang Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP), Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK), dan Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) negeri di Kabupaten Bandung Barat. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode kuantitatif dengan pendekatan survei yang disebarkan kepada peserta didik dan tenaga pendidik. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengalaman merek, kemudahan penggunaan, dan persepsi kualitas berpengaruh signifikan terhadap kepuasan pelanggan. Selanjutnya, kepuasan pelanggan memiliki peran penting dalam mendorong loyalitas pelanggan. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya peningkatan interaksi pengguna, penyederhanaan navigasi aplikasi, serta jaminan kualitas konten untuk meningkatkan kepuasan dan penggunaan jangka panjang. Temuan ini memberikan wawasan bagi pengembang teknologi pendidikan dalam mengoptimalkan platform pembelajaran digital dan membangun loyalitas pengguna melalui pengalaman yang unggul.

Kata Kunci: Brand Experience, Ease of Use, Perceived Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Educational Technology, PIJAR Sekolah.

1. INTRODUCTION

We are now living in the digital era a period marked by a massive technological shift from mechanical and analog systems to digital technologies, a transformation that began as early as the 1980s. In this new landscape, businesses are racing to create innovative products that support digital transformation. One such enterprise leading this initiative in Indonesia is PT Telkom Indonesia. To stay competitive, companies must not only develop digital products but also identify, explore, and even create niche markets to distribute these solutions effectively. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 further accelerated the need for digital solutions, especially in the education sector. With face-to-face learning abruptly replaced by remote, online, or asynchronous learning, educational institutions were forced to rely on digital platforms. This shift was part of the Indonesian government's strategy to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Though the sudden transition to online learning brought numerous challenges, it also highlighted the importance of adopting and managing digital learning wisely to ensure educational goals remained achievable.

The advancement of digital technology has brought about intense competition in various business sectors, making branding a vital tool for survival. Numerous companies have

failed due to poor marketing and branding strategies. As one of Indonesia's largest and most prominent state-owned enterprises (SOEs), PT Telkom Indonesia Tbk. recognized this digital opportunity and responded by investing in telecommunications, information, media, and edutainment—collectively known as the TIME industry. To play a significant role in Indonesia's educational development, PT Telkom Indonesia committed to contributing through technological solutions that enhance school management systems. Their broader mission is to uplift the quality of education and thereby improve human resources across the nation. On a global scale, Indonesia also faces the challenge of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations. One critical goal is SDG 4, which calls for inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all, along with lifelong learning opportunities. To meet this goal, technology must be accessible to all segments of the population, regardless of geography or socio-economic status. PT Telkom Indonesia also partners with local governments, schools, and technology providers to ensure the successful implementation of Pijar Sekolah. The platform is overseen by the Business Service Division, which markets PT Telkom's products to specific customer segments such as schools, small to mid-sized businesses, hospitals, factories, and hotels—accounts managed by dedicated Business Account Managers.

As of 2024, there are 240 schools actively using Pijar Sekolah in various districts across West Java, including 20 schools in West Bandung Regency. According to internal data from PT Telkom and Pijar Sekolah (2024), the platform has facilitated easier access to digital education. However, the platform has experienced notably low sales in West Bandung compared to other districts, such as Sumedang. Despite being fully developed and meeting the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) standard, the product has not gained sufficient traction in West Bandung. MVP refers to a version of a product with just enough features to attract early adopters and validate a product idea early in the development cycle. Customer feedback suggests that price may be a significant barrier for potential users, even after product socialization efforts by Business Account Managers.

Another challenge lies in competition with other education technology platforms, requiring PT Telkom to enhance its service quality to remain relevant and build customer loyalty. Testimonials from the App Store indicate a mix of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the Pijar Sekolah experience. To understand and address these concerns, this research aims to examine how brand experience, ease of use, and perceived quality influence customer satisfaction and ultimately impact customer loyalty. Previous studies, such as those by Puspasari et al. (2022) and Massora & Widyanti (2021), highlight a direct link between service quality, corporate image, and customer satisfaction in fostering customer loyalty. According to Purnama & Hidayah (2019), service quality is essentially the customer's evaluation of the service received compared to their expectations. Good quality service fosters strong relationships between customers and companies. This principle is highly applicable to education, where quality digital services can improve user experience, enhance learning environments, and boost student motivation. Customer satisfaction with Pijar Sekolah is strongly tied to its service quality and overall value. Delivering optimal service not only enhances the company's image but also plays a critical role in determining customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a quantitative research design, which focuses on collecting and analyzing numerical data to explain specific phenomena. According to Hardani et al. (2020), quantitative research is a method that emphasizes objectivity, systematic measurement, and the use of statistical techniques to test predetermined hypotheses, assess variables, and explore the relationships between them. The approach aligns with positivist philosophy, as further emphasized by Sugiyono (2024:15), who states that quantitative research is grounded in positivism and is employed to investigate particular populations and samples using research instruments and statistical data analysis. In this study, the quantitative approach was operationalized through a survey method, utilizing questionnaires as the main data collection tool.

Respondents were asked to answer a series of structured questions, and the responses were analyzed quantitatively to draw meaningful conclusions about the variables under investigation. Operational variables are constructs that can be measured or observed directly through a set of defined indicators. These variables guide the development of instruments used to collect data in alignment with the research objectives. The independent variables in this study include: brand experience (X1), ease of use of the application (X2), and perceived quality (X3). these variables are presumed to influence the dependent variable. The dependent variable is Customer Loyalty (Y), which is affected by changes in the independent variables. Additionally, an intervening variable is included to explain the mechanism by which the independent variables influence the dependent variable. The mediating variable in this study is Customer Satisfaction (Z1).

To gather data, this study employed a structured questionnaire, which served as the primary research instrument. Johnson et al. (2020) define questionnaires as tools for collecting data from respondents through a series of written questions designed for specific research purposes. Lee and Kim (2021) argue that questionnaires can capture both qualitative and quantitative data through systematically arranged closed- and open-ended questions. This research used the Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions. Sugiyono (2024:152) explains that the Likert scale is widely utilized in surveys to quantify attitudes, opinions, and perceptions toward specific phenomena. The scale facilitates the translation of complex constructs into measurable indicators and helps in constructing survey items. The research process follows a systematic series of stages aligned with the principles of quantitative inquiry. At the core of the investigation lies a well-defined research question that explores the impact of service quality and corporate image on customer satisfaction and how these influence customer loyalty toward the Pijar Sekolah application.

As defined by Sugiyono (2024:130), a population refers to the entire set of objects or individuals possessing certain characteristics relevant to a research study. The population of this research includes teachers and students from public junior high schools (SMP), senior vocational schools (SMK), and senior high schools (SMA) in West Bandung Regency who actively use the Pijar Sekolah application. The total number of users is 13,868. According to Sugiyono (2024:131), a sample is a subset of the population that retains the essential characteristics of the entire group. The sampling technique used in this study is probability sampling, which ensures that each individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected. Based on this calculation, a sample of 389 respondents was

obtained. These respondents were proportionally drawn from the broader population of Pijar Sekolah users in SMP, SMK, and SMA institutions within West Bandung Regency. The sample is expected to adequately represent the characteristics of the total population and enable accurate generalization of the study's findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Respondent Characteristics

This section describes the demographic and usage characteristics of the respondents who participated in this research. The variables examined include gender, age, status, and frequency of using the Pijar Sekolah platform. The purpose of this demographic overview is to provide context for understanding the perspectives and behaviors of the respondents in relation to the use of the educational platform.

3.2 Respondent Characteristics by Gender

Based on the data presented in Table 4.1, the majority of respondents are female. Out of 389 total participants, 237 respondents (60.9%) are women, while 152 respondents (39.1%) are men. This suggests that female users are more engaged or more willing to participate in the research related to Pijar Sekolah. The gender distribution may also reflect broader educational trends in digital platform usage, where female users are often more proactive in utilizing online learning tools, especially within the context of school-based applications.

3.3 Respondent Characteristics by Age

Table 4.2 illustrates that the largest proportion of respondents falls within the age group of 12 to 25 years. This group accounts for 223 individuals or 57.3% of the total sample. Following that, the 26 to 39 age group makes up 147 respondents (37.8%), while the 40 to 53 age group includes only 19 respondents (4.9%). There are no respondents above the age of 53. These findings indicate that Pijar Sekolah is predominantly used by younger individuals, particularly those in their teenage to young adult years, which aligns with the typical age range of students and early-career educators in the education system.

3.4 Respondent Characteristics by Status

Regarding the occupational or role-based status of the respondents, Table 4.3 shows that the majority are students. Specifically, 177 out of 389 respondents (45.5%) are students, 140 (36.0%) are teachers, and the remaining 72 respondents (18.5%) are categorized as non-teachers. This data reflects that Pijar Sekolah primarily serves its intended user base of students, with a significant portion of educators also actively involved. The presence of non-teaching participants might include administrative staff, parents, or educational stakeholders who are also exploring or engaging with the platform.

3.5 Respondent Characteristics by Frequency of Pijar Sekolah Usage

The usage intensity of the Pijar Sekolah application is presented in Table 4.4. The data reveals that the majority of respondents, 224 individuals (57.6%), access the platform between one to five times per week. Meanwhile, 145 respondents (37.3%) use it between five to ten times per week, and only a small portion, 20 respondents (5.1%), report using the application more than ten times a week. These findings suggest that while the platform is being used consistently, the majority of users still engage with it at a relatively moderate frequency. This could imply limited assignments requiring the platform or perhaps a preference for offline activities or alternative digital tools among some users.

The respondent profile shows a user base predominantly composed of young, female students who interact with Pijar Sekolah on a limited but regular basis. Understanding these characteristics helps contextualize further analysis regarding user satisfaction, usability, and the overall effectiveness of the Pijar Sekolah platform in enhancing educational experiences in West Bandung Regency.

Figure 1 The results of the PLS Algorithm Measurement Model
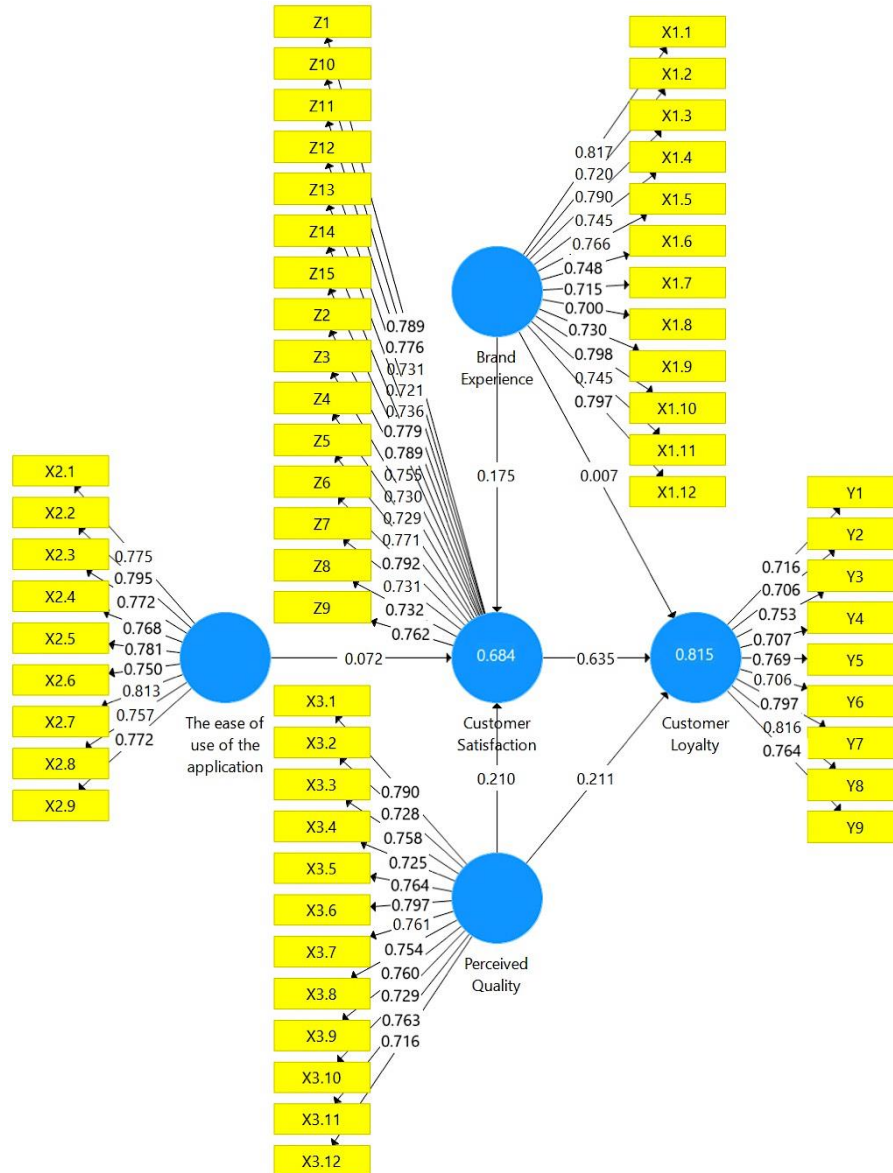
Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is the correlation between the scores of reflective indicators and the scores of their corresponding latent variables. It aims to determine the validity of the relationships between indicators and their constructs. This validity is typically assessed using outer loadings, which are the correlation coefficients between the observed variables (indicators) and the latent constructs they represent. According to Hair et al. (2016), indicators with outer loadings above 0.7 are considered strong. Values between 0.4 and 0.7 may still be retained if the composite reliability increases, while indicators below 0.4 should be eliminated.

The results from the outer loading analysis reveal that all indicators surpass the 0.7 threshold. The construct "Brand Experience" consists of 12 indicators with loadings

ranging from 0.700 to 0.817. The construct "Ease of Use" comprises 9 indicators with values between 0.750 and 0.813. "Perceived Quality" includes 12 indicators with loadings between 0.716 and 0.797. "Customer Loyalty" has 9 indicators ranging from 0.706 to 0.816, and "Customer Satisfaction" is represented by 15 indicators, all above 0.721. These results suggest that each indicator contributes significantly to the respective construct.

Another key indicator of convergent validity is the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). AVE measures the average variance that a latent construct captures from its indicators. A value of 0.5 or higher indicates adequate convergent validity (Ghozali, 2014). In this study, all constructs achieved AVE values above 0.5: Brand Experience (0.569), Ease of Use (0.565), Customer Satisfaction (0.549), Perceived Quality (0.544), and Customer Loyalty (0.504). This confirms the internal consistency and the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs. It is commonly assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Values below 0.85 are considered acceptable, and up to 0.90 may still be tolerable depending on the context (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2017). HTMT values above 0.90 suggest a lack of discriminant validity.

In this study, all HTMT values fall below the threshold of 0.90. The highest HTMT value is between Customer Loyalty and Customer Satisfaction (0.752), followed by Brand Experience and Perceived Quality (0.574). The lowest HTMT value is observed between Ease of Use and Customer Satisfaction (0.189). These findings indicate that each construct in the model is empirically distinct and does not overlap excessively with other constructs.

Composite Reliability

Composite Reliability (CR) is used to assess the internal consistency of the constructs. A CR value greater than 0.7 indicates good reliability. Cronbach's Alpha is another reliability measure that assumes equal weighting of indicators. Although more conservative, it complements CR in validating measurement consistency (Hair et al., 2017).

The results show that all constructs have CR and Cronbach's Alpha values above the 0.7 threshold. Customer Satisfaction shows the highest reliability (CR = 0.923; α = 0.910), followed by Brand Experience (CR = 0.911; α = 0.894), Ease of Use (CR = 0.885; α = 0.856), Perceived Quality (CR = 0.860; α = 0.833), and Customer Loyalty (CR = 0.855; α = 0.812). These results affirm that all constructs have strong internal consistency and are reliable.n this chapter, the researcher presents the data from the research conducted. The research instruments in this study consisted of pre-test and post-test. Hypothesis testing with SPSS 25 includes mean scores, and significant t-tests. The kind of test was multiple choice and essay. The total number of questions in each test was 15, which consists of 10 multiple choice and 5 essays. For the assessment, each correct answer was awarded one point in multiple choice questions, while the essay test was worth five points. The result of the test can be seen as follows:

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion conducted in this study, several important conclusions were drawn regarding the influence of brand experience, ease of use, and perceived quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty among users of the Pijar Sekolah application. These relationships were found to be both direct and indirect, offering valuable insights into digital consumer behavior, especially within the educational technology context. The research revealed that brand experience exerts a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction, suggesting that users who undergo engaging and memorable experiences with the brand tend to feel more satisfied. Likewise, the ease of use of the application contributes significantly to user satisfaction, highlighting the critical role of an intuitive and user-friendly interface in enhancing digital interactions. In addition, perceived quality encompassing dimensions such as system reliability, performance, and aesthetic appeal also has a strong and positive relationship with satisfaction, confirming that users' perceptions of quality play a pivotal role in shaping their overall experience.

Furthermore, customer satisfaction itself is proven to have a strong and direct influence on customer loyalty, positioning it as a central factor in cultivating long-term user engagement. The findings also indicate that brand experience, ease of use, and perceived quality not only impact satisfaction but also have direct positive effects on user loyalty, thus demonstrating the multifaceted nature of user engagement. Importantly, customer satisfaction serves as a significant mediating variable in the relationships between brand experience, perceived quality, and ease of use with customer loyalty. This mediating role reinforces the importance of focusing on a comprehensive user experience strategy, as satisfaction amplifies the impact of other experiential factors on loyalty.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study proposes several academic recommendations for future research. Given that this study employed a quantitative approach using questionnaires, future researchers are encouraged to adopt qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or participatory observation to gain richer insights into user experiences with digital learning platforms like Pijar Sekolah. Moreover, as the research scope was limited to the education sector, subsequent studies are advised to replicate this model in other industries—such as public services, e-commerce, or digital finance—to examine the consistency of these relationships across different sectors. Another key finding emphasizes the substantial influence of customer satisfaction on loyalty, marked by a path coefficient of 0.635. This result underscores the necessity of maintaining customer satisfaction as a core construct in future consumer behavior models, especially within the digital context. Although ease of use was found to be significant, its impact was relatively lower, prompting future investigations to explore other mediating or moderating variables like perceived usefulness or trust to improve the model's explanatory power.

From a practical perspective, this research offers several strategic insights for the developers and administrators of the Pijar Sekolah application. Given that customer satisfaction has the strongest effect on loyalty, it is imperative for the management team to prioritize user satisfaction by improving service quality, simplifying application features, and enhancing technical support systems. Perceived quality also emerged as a key factor influencing satisfaction and loyalty, indicating that continuous improvements in system

functionality, stability, and interface design are essential. Regular evaluations and updates should be conducted to maintain users' positive perceptions of the application. Although ease of use had a comparatively lower impact, it remains statistically significant. Therefore, developers should focus on designing an interface that is intuitive and accessible to users of various ages and digital literacy levels, and they should provide clear usage guides. Lastly, brand experience plays an essential role both directly and indirectly in influencing loyalty. This calls for a strong and consistent brand strategy, which could include digital campaigns, visually engaging educational branding, and enhancements to the emotional, functional, and symbolic aspects of user interaction with the application. Together, these efforts can help strengthen user loyalty and ensure the long-term success of Pijar Sekolah in the digital education landscape.

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