

WHEN TASTE IS NOT ENOUGH: DETERMINANTS OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN GEROBAKMIE, A LOCAL CULINARY BUSINESS IN JAMBI CITY

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of location, service quality, and product quality on customer loyalty at Gerobakmie, a local culinary business in Jambi City. Customer loyalty is a critical issue for local food businesses because intense competition requires firms to retain customers through more than product taste alone. A quantitative survey approach was employed, involving 240 Gerobakmie customers selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using an online questionnaire and analyzed through validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression. The findings show that location, service quality, and product quality have positive and significant effects on customer loyalty, both partially and simultaneously. Service quality has the strongest influence, followed by product quality and location. The model explains 63.6% of the variation in customer loyalty, indicating that these three variables are important determinants of repeat purchase, customer recommendation, and emotional attachment. The results suggest that customer loyalty in local culinary businesses is shaped not only by taste, but also by accessibility, responsive service, and consistent product quality. Practically, Gerobakmie should improve service reliability, maintain taste consistency, strengthen product standardization, and enhance location-related convenience such as visibility and parking access. This study contributes to marketing management literature by providing empirical evidence on customer loyalty formation in a local culinary business context.

Keywords: Customer loyalty, Location, Service Quality, Product Quality, Culinary Business

Introduction

The culinary industry in Indonesia has become increasingly competitive along with digitalization, changing consumer preferences, and the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises offering more diverse food concepts. Digital transformation has encouraged culinary entrepreneurs to innovate products, expand market reach, and adapt their business strategies to a more dynamic market environment (Mulyono & Rolando, 2024). Nevertheless, MSMEs still face various challenges, including limited access to financing, technological gaps, and increasing market competition, which may affect their growth and sustainability (Aniar et al., 2023). In Jambi City, the opportunity for culinary businesses is supported by population growth, as the number of residents increased from 627.8 thousand in 2023 to 642.3 thousand in 2025 (BPS Jambi, 2025). This demographic condition creates a wider market for food and beverage businesses, including local noodle-based culinary ventures. The growing public interest in bakmie is also reflected in Google Trends data, which shows an increasing search trend for bakmie in Indonesia since March 2023 (Google Trends, 2025).

The increasing popularity of bakmie is reflected in the emergence of several bakmie businesses in Jambi City, one of which is Gerobakmie. Gerobakmie initially operated as a street-cart-based culinary business in 2023 and later developed into a more modern dining place as customer visits increased. The business had several outlets, including Sipin, Thehok, and Telanaipura. However, in October 2025, Gerobakmie closed its Sipin outlet and limited dine-in services to the Telanaipura outlet, while the Thehok outlet focused more on take-away services. This operational change indicates a managerial challenge in maintaining customer visits and loyalty. Consumer reviews on Google Review and TikTok Gerobakmie Jambi City also showed complaints related to location accessibility, slow or less responsive service, limited facilities, and inconsistent taste. These issues are important because customer loyalty in culinary businesses is not only shaped by initial product attraction but also by repeated customer experiences involving accessibility, service quality, comfort, and product consistency.

Customer loyalty is a crucial element for maintaining business sustainability, particularly in a highly competitive culinary market. Loyal customers do not only repeat purchases but also contribute to positive word of mouth and long-term business stability (Ronasih & Widhiastuti, 2021). In the context of local culinary businesses, loyalty is formed through the integration of functional and experiential factors. Location plays an important role because accessibility, visibility, and convenience influence customers' willingness to visit and repurchase (Puspitaningrum & Damanuri, 2022). Service quality is also essential because responsive, reliable, and customer-oriented service strengthens customer satisfaction and long-term relationships (Rahayu & Syafe'i, 2022). Product quality remains a central factor in encouraging repeat purchases because consumers tend to return when the product's taste, appearance, portion, and overall quality meet their expectations (Bali, 2023).

Previous studies have shown that location, service quality, and product quality are related to customer loyalty, although the findings are not always consistent across contexts. Soliha et al. (2021) found that location has a positive effect on customer loyalty, while Monica and Ramadhan (2024) also confirmed the role of location in strengthening consumer loyalty. Regarding service quality, Soerjanto et al. (2024) emphasized that service quality contributes to customer loyalty through better service experiences, while Marwanah and Shihab (2022) highlighted the role of electronic service quality and satisfaction in building customer trust and loyalty. In terms of product quality, Woen and Santoso (2021) found that product quality affects customer satisfaction and loyalty, and Sugiharti and Cahyani (2025) showed that product quality plays an important role in customer loyalty in the food and beverage sector. However, other studies reported different results. Ruslyani (2024) found that location had a positive but insignificant effect on customer loyalty, Syafikah and Asnawi (2024) found that service quality did not always directly determine loyalty, and Suwandi and Balqiah (2023) found that product quality had a positive but insignificant effect on loyalty toward local cosmetic brands. These inconsistent findings indicate that the influence of each variable may differ depending on business characteristics, product type, customer behavior, and market context.

Based on this gap, this study focuses on customer loyalty in Gerobakmie, a local culinary business in Jambi City. Unlike previous studies that examined cafés, fast-food restaurants, financial services, retail services, or cosmetic brands, this study examines a local bakmie business that is facing branch closure, dine-in service limitations, and consumer complaints related to access, service, and taste consistency. Therefore, this study offers a more specific contribution to marketing management literature by explaining how location, service quality, and product quality jointly shape customer loyalty in a local culinary business operating in an increasingly competitive urban market. This study aims to examine and analyze the effect of location, service quality, and product quality on customer loyalty at Gerobakmie in Jambi City.

Literature Review

Location

Location is a strategic element in business because it determines how easily customers can access products and services. A proper business location supports operational efficiency, customer accessibility, and long-term growth opportunities (Sari, 2021; Yani & Subandrio, 2021). In culinary businesses, location is not only related to physical position, but also to accessibility, visibility, traffic conditions, parking availability, surrounding environment, competition, and government regulation (Puspitaningrum & Damanuri, 2022). This study focuses on three location dimensions that are most relevant to Gerobakmie, namely accessibility, visibility, and parking facilities, as adapted from Chairuman et al. (2023) and Abdillah and Rufial (2022). Empirically, Hidayat (2020), Hariono and Marlina (2021), Yonathan and Janamarta (2023), and Haryanto and Mathori (2025) show that a strategic, accessible, and convenient location can strengthen repeat purchase behavior and customer loyalty. Therefore, location is expected to influence customer loyalty at Gerobakmie in Jambi City.

H1: Location has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at Gerobakmie in Jambi City.

Service Quality

Service quality reflects a company's ability to meet customer needs and expectations through accurate, timely, responsive, and reliable service (Izzuddin & Muhsin, 2020). In the culinary business, customers evaluate not only the food they consume but also the service experience they receive during ordering, dining, and complaint handling. This study uses three dimensions of service quality, namely reliability, responsiveness, and empathy, as adapted from Along (2020) and Juliet (2020). Reliability refers to consistent and accurate service, responsiveness reflects the speed and willingness of employees to assist customers, while empathy represents personal attention to customer needs. Previous studies by Putra et al. (2021), Anggraini and Budiarti (2020), Widianti and Safuan (2025), and Kristanto (2022) confirm that good service quality can increase trust, satisfaction, repeat purchase, and customer recommendations. Thus, service quality is expected to strengthen customer loyalty at Gerobakmie.

H2: Service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at Gerobakmie in Jambi City.

Product Quality

Product quality is a key factor in customer loyalty because customers tend to repurchase when the product meets or exceeds their expectations. Product quality reflects the ability of a product to perform its function consistently, reliably, and in accordance with customer needs (Asti & Ayuningtyas, 2020; Mariansyah & Syarif, 2020). In culinary businesses, product quality is closely related to taste, appearance, portion size, reputation, food safety, and consistency of presentation. This study measures product quality through aesthetics and perceived quality from Kusuma and Utomo (2020), as well as conformity to specifications from Octavia et al. (2023). Prior studies by Prabowo and Mahfudz (2021), Lengkong et al. (2021), Munfaqiroh et al. (2022), and Siantry et al. (2024) indicate that products with consistent quality, attractive appearance, and conformity to customer expectations can create positive experiences and strengthen customer loyalty. Therefore, product quality is expected to affect customer loyalty at Gerobakmie.

H3: Product quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at Gerobakmie in Jambi City.

Customer Loyalty and the Integration of Location, Service Quality, and Product Quality

Customer loyalty refers to customers' willingness to repurchase, recommend a business to others, and maintain emotional attachment to a particular brand or company. Loyalty is formed when customers feel satisfied with the product and service they receive, which then encourages repeat purchases and stronger preference over competitors (Damanik et al., 2024; Jannah & Hayuningtias, 2024). In this study, customer loyalty is measured through repeat purchase and referrals from Teguh and Oentara (2022), as well as affective loyalty from Saputra and Wala (2024). These dimensions are relevant because customer loyalty in local culinary businesses is reflected not only in repeated transactions but also in positive recommendations and emotional comfort toward the business.

Previous studies show that location, service quality, and product quality are important factors in shaping customer behavior, although many studies in the culinary sector still focus more on satisfaction or purchase decisions rather than loyalty. Fantika et al. (2023) explain that location, service quality, and product quality jointly shape customer value and business experience, while Sunita et al. (2023) emphasize that excellent service, high product quality, and strategic location are important for maintaining long-term customer relationships. However, Ariyanti et al. (2022) found that location does not always significantly affect loyalty when service quality and product quality become stronger determinants. These mixed findings indicate the need to examine the simultaneous effect of location, service quality, and product quality on customer loyalty in the context of Gerobakmie as a local culinary business in Jambi City.

H4: Location, service quality, and product quality simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty at Gerobakmie in Jambi City.

Methods

This study used a quantitative survey design to examine the effects of location, service quality, and product quality on customer loyalty at Gerobakmie in Jambi City. The population consisted of Gerobakmie customers whose total number was unknown; therefore, purposive sampling was applied with three criteria: respondents had to be domiciled in Jambi City, had purchased Gerobakmie at least twice, and were willing to participate in the study. A total of 240 respondents was determined based on the ten-times rule proposed by Hair et al. (2021). Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms and QR codes, supported by structured interviews and non-participant observation to better understand the business and customer context.

The questionnaire measured four variables: location, service quality, product quality, and customer loyalty, using a five-point Likert scale. Location was measured through accessibility, visibility, and parking facilities; service quality through reliability, responsiveness, and empathy; product quality through aesthetics, perceived quality, and conformity to specifications; and customer loyalty through repeat purchase, referrals, and affective loyalty. The data were analyzed using validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression. The t-test was used to examine partial effects, the F-test to examine simultaneous effects, and the coefficient of determination to assess the explanatory power of the model.

Results and Discussion

Gerobakmie is a local bakmie business in Jambi City that initially operated with a street-cart concept before developing into a more modern dining place. In its development, Gerobakmie opened several outlets, including Tugu Juang, Thehok, and Telanaipura. However, due to increasing competition and operational adjustments, Gerobakmie later concentrated its dine-in and take-away services at the Telanaipura outlet. This business condition makes Gerobakmie a relevant case for examining how location, service quality, and product quality shape customer loyalty in a local culinary business. This study involved 240 Gerobakmie customers in Jambi City. Most respondents were young consumers aged 16–25 years, while the main source of information about Gerobakmie came from friends, indicating that word-of-mouth communication remains an important channel in introducing the business to customers.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Percentage
Age	16–25 years	63%
	26–34 years	33%
	35–50 years	3%
	>50 years	1%
Source of information	Friends	44%
	Relatives	30%
	Social media	25%
	Siblings/family	1%
	Direct information	1%
Purchase frequency	2–3 times	39%
	4–6 times	35%
	>6 times	26%
Domicile	Kota Baru	18%

Jambi Selatan	16%
Danau Sipin	15%
Telanaipura	14%
Jelutung	14%
Alam Barajo	10%
Paal Merah	6%
Jambi Timur	4%
Pasar Jambi	3%

Source: Primary data, 2026

The descriptive analysis shows that customers generally assessed Gerobakmie positively, although several aspects still require managerial attention. Location obtained a mean score of 3.04 and was categorized as moderate. The strongest indicator was that the outlet was easy to find or access, while the weakest indicator was the perception that the outlet was strategically located. Service quality obtained a mean score of 3.68 and was categorized as good, with employee responsiveness as the strongest indicator, while service consistency received the lowest score. Product quality obtained a mean score of 3.87 and was also categorized as good, mainly because the appearance of the bakmie was considered attractive. However, taste consistency received the lowest assessment, indicating that product standardization remains a critical issue. Customer loyalty obtained a mean score of 3.73 and was categorized as good, especially in terms of repurchase intention, although customer comfort and emotional attachment still need to be strengthened. This descriptive analysis is consistent with Prabowo and Ranidiah (2021), who explain that descriptive analysis is used to describe respondents' perceptions of the research variables.

Table 2. Descriptive Results of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Category	Highest Indicator	Lowest Indicator
Location	3.04	Moderate	Location is easy to find/access	Location is considered strategic
Service quality	3.68	Good	Employees are responsive in helping customers	Service is consistent
Product quality	3.87	Good	Bakmie appearance is attractive	Taste is consistent in every purchase
Customer loyalty	3.73	Good	Intention to repurchase	Feeling suitable and comfortable with Gerobakmie

Source: Primary data, 2026

The instrument test shows that all statement items for location, service quality, product quality, and customer loyalty were valid because their calculated correlation values exceeded the r-table value of 0.127. The reliability test also showed that all variables were reliable, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.824 for location, 0.844 for service quality, 0.853 for product quality, and 0.820 for customer loyalty. These results indicate that the questionnaire items were suitable for measuring the constructs and that respondents' answers were internally consistent.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Test Summary

Variable	Range of r-value	r-table	Validity	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
Location	0.558–0.810	0.127	Valid	0.824	Reliable
Service quality	0.722–0.786	0.127	Valid	0.844	Reliable
Product quality	0.513–0.855	0.127	Valid	0.853	Reliable
Customer loyalty	0.701–0.756	0.127	Valid	0.820	Reliable

Source: Primary data, 2026

Before hypothesis testing, the regression model fulfilled the classical assumption requirements. The normality test indicated that the residuals followed the diagonal line, suggesting a normal distribution. The multicollinearity test showed that location, service quality, and product quality had tolerance values above 0.10 and VIF values below 10, meaning that there was no serious multicollinearity among the independent variables. The heteroscedasticity test showed that residual points were randomly distributed around zero, while the linearity test confirmed that the relationship between each independent variable and customer loyalty was linear. Therefore, the regression model was considered appropriate for testing the proposed hypotheses.

The multiple linear regression results show that location, service quality, and product quality have positive effects on customer loyalty. The regression equation is $Y = 0.680 + 0.164X_1 + 0.559X_2 + 0.232X_3$. Location has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, with a coefficient of 0.164 and a significance value of 0.013. Service quality has the strongest effect, with a coefficient of 0.559 and a significance value of 0.000. Product quality also has a positive and significant effect, with a coefficient of 0.232 and a significance value of 0.001. Simultaneously, the three variables significantly affect customer loyalty, as indicated by the F-value of 137.367 and a significance value of 0.000. The coefficient of

determination is 0.636, indicating that location, service quality, and product quality explain 63.6% of the variation in customer loyalty, while the remaining 36.4% is explained by other factors outside the model.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Variable	Regression Coefficient	Beta	t-value	Sig.	Result
Constant	0.680	—	0.534	0.594	—
Location	0.164	0.132	2.504	0.013	Significant
Service quality	0.559	0.575	11.483	0.000	Significant
Product quality	0.232	0.203	3.400	0.001	Significant

Source: Primary data, 2026

Table 5. Model Fit Summary

Model Measure	Value
R	0.797
R Square	0.636
Adjusted R Square	0.631
F-value	137.367
Sig. F	0.000

Source: Primary data, 2026

The significant effect of location indicates that accessibility, visibility, and supporting facilities such as parking areas contribute to customers' willingness to repurchase and remain loyal to Gerobakmie. This finding is consistent with Fantika et al. (2023), Susianti and Arini (2021), and Masrani and Sampeliling (2024), who found that location has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. However, compared with service quality and product quality, location has the weakest influence in this study. This suggests that although location remains important, especially after outlet closures and dine-in service limitations, customer loyalty at Gerobakmie is more strongly shaped by service experience and product quality.

Service quality is the most dominant determinant of customer loyalty. This finding indicates that customers place strong emphasis on reliable service, employee responsiveness, and empathy during the purchasing process. Fast, friendly, and consistent service creates positive experiences that strengthen emotional attachment and encourage repeat purchases. This result is in line with Yuliana and Purnama (2021), Alifah (2025), and Rukayyah et al. (2024), who found that service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. In the context of a culinary business that is closely connected to social media reviews and customer testimonials, service quality becomes particularly important because negative experiences can quickly spread and influence the perceptions of potential customers.

Product quality also has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. This result shows that taste consistency, product appearance, portion suitability, and conformity to customer expectations are important in encouraging customers to continue purchasing from Gerobakmie. This finding supports Ekowati and Riyadi (2021), Vildayanti and Saputra (2025), and Karjuni and Susliawati (2021), who state that good and consistent product quality can encourage repeat purchases and create positive perceived value. However, in this study, product quality has a moderate influence, stronger than location but weaker than service quality. This can be explained by the issue of inconsistent taste reported by customers, which may reduce the strength of product quality in shaping loyalty. Therefore, product standardization is an important managerial concern for Gerobakmie.

Simultaneously, the findings confirm that customer loyalty at Gerobakmie is shaped by the combination of location, service quality, and product quality. This means that loyalty is not formed by a single factor, but by the integration of functional and experiential elements in the customer journey. The result is consistent with Sukanti et al. (2020), Akmal et al. (2023), and Sunita et al. (2023), who found that location, service quality, and product quality jointly influence customer loyalty. Theoretically, this study strengthens marketing management literature by showing that customer loyalty in a local culinary business is shaped not only by taste, but also by accessibility, service experience, and product consistency. Practically, Gerobakmie should prioritize service quality improvement, maintain product consistency through recipe standardization and quality control, and strengthen location accessibility through clearer signage, better parking management, and more effective take-away service arrangements.

Conclusion

This study concludes that location, service quality, and product quality have positive and significant effects on customer loyalty at Gerobakmie in Jambi City, both partially and simultaneously. These findings confirm that customer loyalty in a local culinary business is not determined by product taste alone, but also by location accessibility, service interaction, and product consistency. Among the three determinants, service quality plays the most dominant role, indicating that customers place strong value on responsive, friendly, and reliable service when deciding whether to repurchase and remain loyal to a culinary business.

Theoretically, this study contributes to marketing management literature by strengthening the view that customer loyalty in local culinary businesses is shaped by the integration of functional and experiential

factors. Location provides convenience and access, service quality shapes customer experience during interaction, and product quality becomes the basis for evaluating value and satisfaction. Practically, the findings indicate that local culinary businesses need to manage customer loyalty through an integrated strategy rather than relying solely on product taste or brand popularity.

Gerobakmie is recommended to improve location-related aspects by maintaining accessibility, environmental cleanliness, clear business visibility, and customer convenience around the outlet. In terms of service quality, Gerobakmie should strengthen employee friendliness, service speed, and responsiveness to customer complaints in order to create a more positive purchasing experience. In terms of product quality, the business needs to maintain taste consistency, raw material quality, portion suitability, and product appearance so that the product remains aligned with customer expectations. Regular evaluation of customer satisfaction and loyalty through simple questionnaires or direct feedback is also necessary to identify customer needs and support continuous improvement.

This study is limited to three variables, namely location, service quality, and product quality, and focuses only on Gerobakmie in Jambi City. Future studies are encouraged to include other variables such as price, promotion strategy, customer satisfaction, and brand image to provide a broader understanding of customer loyalty. Future research may also expand the sample size, compare several local culinary businesses, use qualitative or mixed methods, and apply more advanced analytical techniques by including mediating or moderating variables.

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