

# CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION AND QUALITY OF SERVICE IN IMPROVING LOYALTY VISITORS IN TOURISM PARK

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**Abstract:** Agrotourism is one of the government's commitment to further improve the quality of tourism in the region and the agrotourism customers play an important role in the agrotourism destination, in this case, is Mekarsari Fruit Garden in improving loyalty. The purpose of this research is to know the role of customer participation and the quality of service in improving loyalty at Fruit Park Mekarsari, West Java. Respondents from this study were visitors who took part in the Mekarsari Garden Tour Package. Questionnaires were given directly after the respondents participated in following the green land package. The number of samples in this study was 144 respondents. Model and Data Analysis Technique for this research used PLS (Partial Least Square). The results of this study indicate that there is no direct correlation between motivation and loyalty, but there is a significant relationship between motivation and loyalty if we consider Service Quality to improve customer loyalty. This indicates that customer motivation will play an important role in improving customer loyalty if customers also feel the quality of service well.

**Keywords:** Agrotourism, Customer Participation, Service Quality, loyalty



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Economic conditions and increasingly complex global competition will require the creativity of business development more competitive in accordance with the advantages they have (Cook and Chaddad, 2000). Agrotourism is one form of agribusiness that has developed a suitable role in the national economic development and in the face of global competition (Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2005). However, the challenges faced in developing agro-tourism in the future are enormous, especially with regard to

human resource readiness, promotion, development of supporting infrastructure, investor attention, and regulators as the basis for the confidence of the community are the things that remain the question for the most community. Therefore, market efficiency must be reformed in order to improve the agro-tourism industry (Kuo and Chiu, 2006; Yang, et al., 2010).

Mekarsari is one of the biodiversity conservation centers in the form of tropical fruits in the world, especially the kind of superior fruits collected from all regions in Indonesia as well as a place of research culture (agronomy), breeding, and breeding of quality seeds that are also distributed to farmers and communities general. Mekarsari has an area of 264 hectares and has a collection of over 100,000 plants consisting of 78 families, 362 species, 1,463 varieties, and 37,000 trees. This place is also equipped with the means to travel and foreign tour-

ists. The fruit garden is also supported by various rides so visitors can get closer to nature. The rides are tourist channels, valley rides, melon rides, deer conservations, water rides, outbound, and more (Mekarsari, 2015).

According to Tew and Barbieri (2011) and Brandt and Haugen (2011) stated that agro-tourism customers should gain knowledge about agriculture and improved quality of life that represent both economic and non-economic benefits. Agrotourism should also pay attention to the importance of the market and the importance of marketing tools. Tew and Barbieri (2011) also stated that there is a link between promotion and policy considerations to develop tourism in agrotourism. The presence of customer participation will increase awareness of customer behavior, so that will increase customer attention. Previous empirical evidence on the relationship between the role of customer participation and service is low (Shelton, 2012; Mustak, et al., 2013; Dong, et al., 2015; Chen, et al., 2015; Chang and Taylor, 2016; Solem, 2016). The results of Dong's research, et al. (2015) shows that when customer participation is high, then services that include customer satisfaction will also be high. Lim (2006) states that service quality, customer satisfaction, loyalty, attitudes, and behavior in the future will contribute professionally. Nasers (2009) states that marketing word of mouth is the most effective way of marketing for advertising activities in agrotourism. Consumer motivation in participating in agritourism activities is influenced by opportunities to buy fresh products and can support local farmers. So that development and economy in agriculture will increase with good. Agrotourism organizations can be used to develop and manage marketing activities and increase resources, thereby increasing visitor loyalty. Lim (2006) states that the Service Quality measurement model should be done as a whole to the customer. Loyalty in the future has a relationship and must be considered, so it can be known how much customer participation (Osman, 2013, Osman and Sentosa, 2013; Ivanauskiene and Volungenaite, 2014; Nejad, et al., 2014; Lee and Kao, 2015; Kline, et al., 2016).

A case study conducted by Kidston (2002), has been found how agrotourism can work in agriculture in the perspective of agriculture and organic farmers. Visitors have supporting roles and opinions about agrotourism and organic farming. Observations have been made Brandt and Haugen (2011), found that the interests and behavior of local visitors are very supportive for success and sustainability agrotourism. From the research Bumbalova (2010) states that changes in the dynamics of the economy in the countryside explore the role of agrotourism that can reduce some negative economic impacts in many rural locations. Paul and Araujo (2015) conducted a survey by providing an assessment of visitors to see the satisfaction of visitors in every involvement in tourism activities based on vegetables. The survey was conducted at a place of tourism that always improve the quality of service, so that customer loyalty can be realized. Similarly, Yulianto, et al. (2016) states that the importance of visitor satisfaction to increase visitor loyalty. From the description above, the purpose of this study is to measure and identify the indirect influence of Customer Participation on loyalty and service quality.

## **THEORITICAL REVIEW**

Agrowisata is one of the potentials in the development of tourism industry worldwide. Agro tourism can be interpreted as a form of tourism activity that utilizes agribusiness as a tourism object that has a purpose to expand knowledge, experience, recreation, and business relationship in agriculture (Phillip, et al., 2010). This can be interpreted that agrotourism is an activity in the development of tourism industry based on natural wealth that has the potential to develop well. In the development of the tourism industry, there are three main components that play a role in its effort to improve the agro-tourism activities, the first is something that can be seen by tourists, for example, the educational tourism activities or the festivals and exhibitions related to agritourism activities. Second is the existence of something to do in the form of activities undertaken by tourists, including workshops such as fruit picking, fruit plant-

ing, fertilizer techniques, cultivation activities, and other natural activities. The third is the existence of something to sell, including the sale of souvenirs or souvenirs, food, and beverages made from fruits and various agricultural products in the agrotourism area. The success of tourism activities requires the support of the community both the farmers and industry players who visit, so that with the support of various parties, then there can be a meeting between supply and demand. This is because in the agro tourism occurs direct marketing of products produced. Therefore, farmers and industrial actors can sell directly to visitors. In Agro-tourism activities, the participation of visitors can be used as an indicator of satisfaction obtained by visitors to the Agro tourism (Fahmi et al 2013). With the satisfaction of the greater the loyalty of visitors. One concept that can be developed in agro-tourism is by placing consumers as the main actors in agro-tourism by participating in every attraction or activity (Paul and Araujo, 2015; Yulianto, et al., 2016). So that the learning process, vacation, and experience that customers get during participating can be enjoyed by customers well. So it needs an integrated and coordinated system of activities for tourism development as well as agriculture in accordance with the wishes of customers.

To increase the loyalty of visitors to the agrotourism, then there must be an increase in service quality. Quality of service is an effort to meet the needs, consumer desires, and accuracy of delivery to balance consumer expectations. In other words, the main factor affecting service quality is the service expected by the customer or the visitor and the public perception of the service. So the expectation is the quality of service can provide a boost to customers or visitors to forge a strong relationship with the service provider or service provider. So to meet the quality of service is required dimensions of service consisting of physical evidence (Tangibles), reliability (reliability), Responsiveness (responsiveness), Assurance (assurance) and empathy (empathy). So Hypothesis of this research is as follows.

H1: Customer participation affects Service Quality

H2: Customer participation affects loyalty

H3: Service Quality affects loyalty

## RESEARCH METHODS

The data used in this study are primary and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained directly by way of observation, interviews, filling out questionnaires, and expert opinion. Secondary data is obtained from the literature, the internet, journals, and other supporting documents. Data Analysis Technique used is PLS (Partial Least Square). Research respondents were visitors who followed the Green Land Mekarsari package. Questionnaires are given directly to the visitors after they follow the Green Land package. The number of questionnaires that can be collected is 144 respondents.

### Operational Definition of Research Variables

The following describes the operational definitions of each variable to be analyzed in this study, namely:

#### Customer participation

Customer participation is how much goals and motivation customers want to reach when they come to Mekarsari Park in the process of learning, recreation, and experience. Customer participation variables refer to Tew and Barbieri (2011); Shelton (2012); Mustak, et al. (2013); Dong, et al. (2015); Chen, at al. (2015); Chang and Taylor (2016); Solem (2016). To measure customer participation, the dimensions represented by the elements of Learning, Recreation, and Experience are used.

Learning is how much customers do the learning process. To measure learning used indicator developed from research. There are 3 Indicators used in this research, namely: Gardening System, Agricultural System, and Knowledge of fruit collection.

Recreation is how much the customer wants in enjoying the atmosphere of recreation in Taman Wisata. To measure recreation used indicators developed from research. There are 3 indicators used in this research, namely: Recreation with family, Recreation with friends, and Tour around the garden.

Experience is how much experience customers want to get during their stay in Mekarsari Tourist Park. To measure the experience used indica-

tors developed from the research. There are 4 indicators used in this research: Buying products, Picking your own fruit, Supporting workers, and Enjoying the rural atmosphere.

### **Service Quality**

Service Quality is how much visitor perception of Service Quality service provided by company, service quality in this research is service quality from Mekarsari Tourist Park. Variable Service Quality refers to Nasers research (2009); Nejad, et al. (2014); Lee and Kao (2015); Lim (2016) To measure Service Quality used 5 dimensions represented by elements of tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy.

Tangibles are how much experience customers want to get during their stay in Mekarsari Tourist Park. To measure tangibles used indicator developed from the research. There are 4 indicators used in this research, namely: buy the product, picking the fruit yourself, support the workers, enjoy the rural atmosphere.

Reliability is how much Mekarsari Park ability to provide services in accordance with the promised, reliable, accurate and consistent. To measure the reliability used indicator developed from the research. There are 3 indicators used in this research, namely: Quick service, Attention seriously, Easy to find.

Responsiveness is how much the willingness of all employees Mekarsari Park to help customers and provide services quickly and hear and address complaints from customers. To measure responsiveness used indicators developed from the study. There are 3 indicators used in this research, namely: Clear information, Helping difficulties, Responding to requests quickly.

Assurance is how much an employee's ability to fulfill the beliefs and beliefs of promises made to customers. To measure assurance used indicators developed from the research. There are 3 indicators used in this research, namely: competence, employees friendly, have knowledge.

Empathy is how much attitude, response and action employees Mekarsari tourist park can feel what is being perceived by the customer. To mea-

sure empathy used indicator developed from the research. There are 3 Indicators used in this research, namely: serve customer needs, understand customer needs.

### **Loyalty**

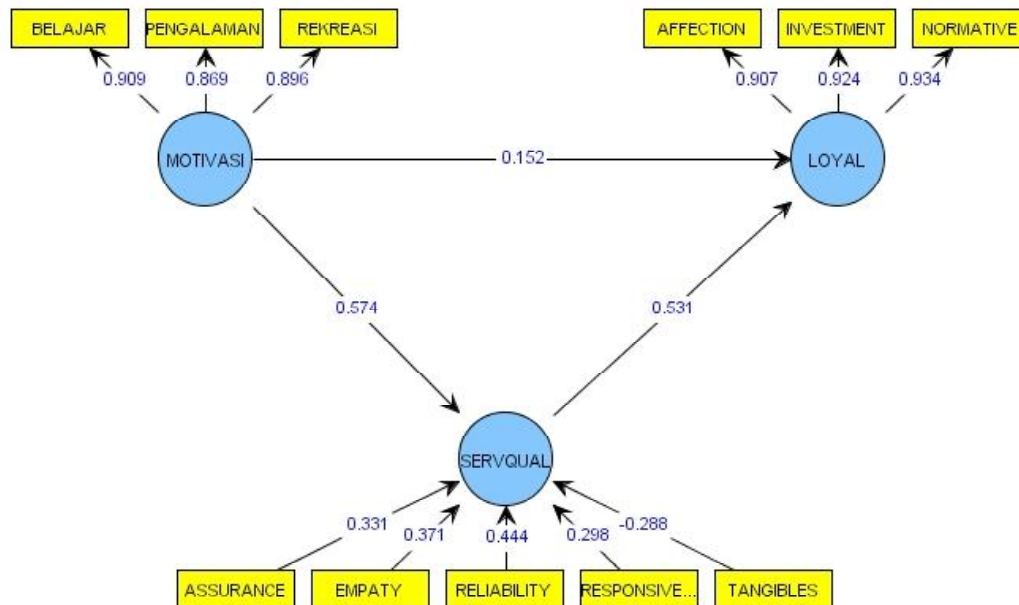
Affective loyalty is how much visitor loyalty to always be part of Mekarsari Park Emotionally. To measure affective loyalty is used indicator developed from research Osman and Sentosa (2013); Ivanauskiene and Volungenaite (2014); Nejad, et al. (2014); Lee and Kao (2015); Kline, et al. (2016). There are 3 Indicators used in this research, which is spent Vacation time, come at the time of offer of a new program, problem together.

Normative loyalty is how many visitors loyalty to be part of Mekarsari Tourist Park is based on social expectations. To measure normative loyalty used indicators developed from the research. There are 3 indicators used in this research, namely: family atmosphere, respect for visitors respect for visitors, personal proximity.

Investment loyalty is how much the visitor's devotion to being part of Mekarsari Tourist Park is based on the collected investment. To measure investment loyalty used indicators developed from research. There are 3 Indicators used in this research, namely: return visit, come if there is a new program, favorite place.

## **RESEARCH RESULT**

In this study consider the model of second order confirmatory factor analysis. so that in the PLS approach is used by using repeated indicators approach From the results of the PLS program output, validity and reliability test has met the requirements that have been determined. There are many methods that can be used to test the validity, in this study, used discriminant validity test and convergence validity. Discriminant validity is seen from cross loading. The correlation value of the indicator variable must be greater than the correlation value between the indicator and the other variables. Another method of assessing discriminant validity is to look at Average Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable must have a value greater than 0.5. So the



Source: PLS Data processed, 2016

**Figure 1** Output of PLS Program

value of AVE meets the criteria for further analysis. While the value of square root of AVE must be greater than the correlation value between variables, so that variable can be analyzed further. The next step after the validity test is reliability testing. Reliability test used in this research is Composite Reliability method. The acceptable value limits with composite reliability value are 0.7 and in this study, the value has been met. The above structural model is evaluated by using R-square dependent latent variable with the same interpretation with the regression that is by using Q-square predictive relevance for the constructed model which measures how well the observation value generated by the model and also the parameter estimation. The Q-square value greater than zero indicates the model

has predictive relevance, otherwise if the Q-square value less than zero indicates the model lacks predictive relevance.

From Table 1 for the PLS output, it is seen that R-square has a value greater than zero. As for the goodness of fit model obtained from the calculation as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 Q\text{-Square} &= 1 - (1 - R_1^2) (1 - R_2^2) \dots (1 - R_p^2) \\
 &= 1 - (1 - (0.398^2) (1 - (0.329^2) \\
 &= 1 - (0.842 \times 0.892) \\
 &= 1 - 0.751 \\
 &= 0.249
 \end{aligned}$$

This shows that the model has predictive relevance because it yields calculation Q-Square = 0,249. The next step is to know the significance of the relationship between variables. The level of significance is obtained by comparing the t-test with the t-table value. If the value of t-test is greater than t-table, then there is a significant relationship between variables.

**Table 1** R-square

|                 | R-square |
|-----------------|----------|
| Motivation      |          |
| Loyalty         | 0.398    |
| Service Quality | 0.329    |

Source: Data processed, 2016

Table 2 Relationship between Variables

| No. | Exogenous variables        | Endogenous variables | path coefficient | t-statistics | Information     |
|-----|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1   | The Customer Participation | Service Quality      | 0.574            | 4.789        | significant     |
| 2   | The Customer Participation | Loyalty              | 0.152            | 1.078        | not significant |
| 3   | Service Quality            | Loyalty              | 0.531            | 5.492        | significant     |

Table 2 shows that customer participation has a significant relationship to Service Quality and loyalty variables. However, there is no significant relationship between customer participation and loyalty.

## DISCUSSION

From Table 2, the value of loading factors is greater than 0.5 ( $0.574 > 0.5$ ), the relationship between Customer participation variable and Service Quality is considered significant. So that the participation or motivation of visitors affects Service Quality. This can be interpreted that the motivation of visitors can move management in improving Service Quality. This shows the Mekarsari about the importance of visitor motivation coming to Mekarsari based on the wishes, requests, or encouragement of the community especially the visitors. Mekarsari develops all aspects ranging from facilities that are more adequate, comfortable, fun, better service, faster, and responsive that is fast and precise information service. Mekarsari also optimizes aspects of hospitality and the development of insight of employees or field officers. Besides empathic attitudes such as patient complaints, understanding needs, understanding desire, and trying to give the best without being asked will be the next step Mekarsari continues to do. This is done as Mekarsari's appreciation of "customer oriented" to the desire and motivation of visitors who come to Mekarsari. This study supports Norby and Retallick (2012) research, Paul and Araujo (2015), and Yulianto, et al., (2016). The concept of agritourism should place visitors as the main actors in the agro business. Visitors who always participate in any existing activities then agro-tourism will still control the quality of the agro business. Customer satisfaction becomes the goal of increasing consumer loyalty. This is due to the in-

volvement of consumers in every activity or attraction that exists. Brown and Hershey (2012), Maneenet, et al. (2014), and Leffew (2014) stated that the business owners of agritourism will be very helpful in knowing the magnitude of motivation and consumer participation, improving marketing, increasing promotion, building networks, predicting potential customers, and knowing how the economic impacts of the agrotourism industry are. Customer participation is very important in seeing how good the quality of agro-tourism, customer participation in this research relates to the learning process, recreation, and experience during the tour in Mekarsari. The learning process related to customer participation is an indicator of knowledge, the indicator has contributed the most so that with the knowledge information provided can increase customer participation.

The results of the research in Table 2 also shows the value of loading factors of customer motivation variables with loyalty has a value of 0.152 This shows the relationship between two variables that are not significant because the value is below 0.5. This study does not support the results of research from Hall and Skaarup (1992), Liu, et al. (2014), Yulianto, et al. (2016), Hounnoklang, (2016), and Zeppel, H (2016). This shows that between the motivation of visitors with the level of loyalty directly there is no significant relationship. Motivation or desire of visitors include the desire to learn, visitors want to know, and improve the insight farming, farming, and gardening. Visitors who come with the motivation will really want information from the guide on the way and also from the gardener. The next motivation is the desire for recreation. The spacious garden area, greenery, and comfortable conditions make visitors come to meet the need for recreation. Fatigue, rou-

tine, and affordable locations from the city of Jakarta and outside Jakarta make Mekarsari an option to visit. Tourism objects that provide inner satisfaction or recreation coupled with learning aspects for themselves and families become an attractive choice for visitors. But this does not mean making visitors loyal to Mekarsari. It can be analyzed from internal and external factors Mekarsari, internal factors in this research is the improvement of service, these factors can not provide certainty of visitor loyalty. External aspects such as traffic, attractions elsewhere, global economic conditions, and other factors that can be analyzed can further affect the level of loyalty to Mekarsari tourist attraction.

From Table 2 we get the value of loading factors ( $0.531 > 0.5$ ), the relationship between Service Quality variables and customer loyalty is significant. This can be seen in Table 2, which shows the value of 0.531. Service Quality owned by Mekarsari Park encourages visitor loyalty. This is indicated by the value of loyalty indicator greater than 0.70. This study supports Tseng's research, et al. (2008), Donnelly (2009), Chatzigeorgiou, et al. (2009), Osman and Sentosa (2013), Osman (2013), Al-Ababneh (2013), Ismail et al. (2016), and Kline et al. (2016). Service Quality becomes very important and becomes the main thing to keep visitors coming back. Excellent service and consumer-oriented can produce satisfaction that keeps visitors coming back. This result is in contrast to the aspect of motivation that has been done by Mekarsari. Although the aspect of visitor motivation needs to be considered but does not guarantee visitor loyalty. Good service and satisfying for visitors will make visitors become loyal. A good Quality Service is a thorough Quality Service that relates to visitors. Fulfillment of the more varied facilities, attractive design, more accessible location, faster service, reliable, easier for visitors, clear information, responsiveness to complaints and requests, always ready to overcome the difficulties of visitors related to services, employee skills in this case is the insight and communicative attitude of the employee to the visitors, hospitality and empathy to the needs of visitors, and patiently respond to complaints and problems of visitors is the overall form of Service Quality associated with

visitor loyalty. So from the results of this study shows that for customer participation in improving customer loyalty must consider the quality of service factor. Quality of service is a very important role in improving loyalty. From the results of the respondents showed that the quality of service from Taman Muaharsari was perceived by respondents well. The service given by the workers is perceived by the respondent is very good, quickly responsive and has excellent competence, so the respondent is very empathy towards the seriousness of the workers in serving the existing visitors in Mekarsari. Therefore customer loyalty is high. This is because visitors now feel part of the garden tour Mekarsari fruit. One of the factors is because Mekarsari is able to create an atmosphere of kinship. So the respondents make the Mekarsari a favorite place and will certainly take the time to return to visit.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

Customer Participation directly affects Service Quality. This shows that Customer Participation plays an important role in improving Service Quality. Customer Participation has no direct effect on customer loyalty. This shows that Customer Participation does not contribute directly to loyalty. Quality of service affects loyalty. This shows that Service Quality plays an important role in increasing visitor loyalty. Customer Participation indirectly affects the loyalty of visitors through the quality of service. This shows that customer motivation will play an important role in improving customer loyalty.

### Recommendation

Mekarsari's attitude is pro-market or customer-oriented, the overall business process leads to one thing that is the expectation of the visitor. The hope of visitors is that they can always participate so it will be motivated to come to Mekarsari. Mekarsari should also know the strengths of each visitor and the policies associated with improving Service Quality. Future research needs to explore more about studies that measure aspects of motivation for rec-

reation, learning, and new experiences. Of course, the policy will be more focused on the most powerful motivation and most desired by visitors. Further analysis of what should be other factors influencing loyalty improvement is needed for further research.

There is a relationship between the quality of service to visitor loyalty. Quality is a keyword that must be understood based on the results of this study. Visitors are very concerned and want good quality and service and this will guarantee them to stay loyal to visit Mekarsari. The development of Service Quality covering all aspects will increase the number of loyal visitors to Mekarsari, various forms of loyalty ranging from the number of regular visits, the amount of spending, the number of people Mekarsari wants, and so on.

This study demonstrates the process of a circle that begins with the motivation of the visitor or the wishes of the visitor that Mekarsari is trying to fulfill and the visitor's motivation as a controller in improving the service to the visitor; further improvement of the service will increase visitor loyalty to Mekarsari.

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