

AZERBAYCAN PAZARINDA MÜŞTERİ SADAKATİNİN BELİRLEYİCİLERİ



CUSTOMER LOYALTY DETERMINANTS IN AZERBAIJAN MARKET

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Öz

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, müşteri sadakatinin belirleyicileri olarak algılanan (duygusal ve ilişkisel) değer, alternatifin çekiciliği, hizmet kalitesi, marka güvenilirliği ve müşteri memnuniyeti değişkenlerinin etkisini inceleniyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, müşteri memnuniyetinin diğer araştırma değişkenleri ile müşteri sadakati arasındaki ilişkideki aracılık rolünün açığa çıkarılması hedeflenmektedir. Araştırma hipotezlerini test etmek amacıyla, tam yapılandırılmış bir form ile yüzyüze anket yöntemi kullanılarak toplandı. Araştırma, Azerbaycan'da cep telefonu kullanıcılarına uygulandı. Kolayda örneklem yöntemiyle 450 cep telefonu kullanıcılarından veriler elde edildi. Araştırma modelini ve hipotezlerini test etmek ve doğrulamak için yol analizi yöntemi kullanıldı. Çalışmada, öncelikle ölçme modelinin test etmek amacıyla doğrulayıcı faktör analizi yapılmıştır. Sonrasında, yapısal araştırma modelini değerlendirmek ve araştırma hipotezlerini test etmek için korelasyon ve yol analizine başvurulmuştur. Sonuçlar, duygusal değer, marka güvenilirliğinin, hizmet kalitesinin ve müşteri memnuniyetinin pozitif etkiye sahip olduğunu, alternatif çekiciliğinin ise sadakat üzerinde negatif etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Bulgular aynı zamanda memnuniyetin aracılık etkisini de ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, firmalar için sadece fonksiyonel fayda değil, aynı zamanda müşteri sadakatini etkileyen ilişkisel boyutları da dikkate almanın önemine vurgu yapmaktadır. Araştırma bulguları, bu değişkenlerin müşteri sadakatinin temel öncülleri olduğunu göstermektedir. Çalışma, müşteri tarafından algılanan değer, tek maddelik bir ölçek veya tek boyutlu bir değer yapısı olarak değil, çok boyutlu bir yapı (duygusal ve ilişkisel) olarak anlaşılmasına katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelime: Sadakat, Memnuniyet, Algılanan Değer, Alternatifin Çekiciliği, Hizmet Kalitesi.

JEL Kodu: M31, M10.

Abstract

The current study examines the perceived (emotional and relational) value, the attractiveness of alternatively, service quality, brand reliability, and customer satisfaction variables as the determinants of customer loyalty. This study also finds how customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between other research variables and customer loyalty. A sample of 450 mobile phone users in Azerbaijan was collected using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed as path modeling to test and validate the study's

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research model and hypotheses. The study conducted empirical research. Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted in order to test our measurement model. Correlation and path analysis was performed to evaluate the structure model and to test research hypotheses. The results suggest that emotional value, brand reliability, service quality, and customer satisfaction have a positive influence, and that the attractiveness of alternatively has a negative effect on loyalty. The findings also reveal a mediating effect of satisfaction. This study puts emphasis on the importance of considering the attributes that not only functional utility, but also relational dimensions that influence customer loyalty for firms. Our findings showed that these variables are the key antecedents of customer loyalty. This study contributes to our understanding of customer-perceived value not as a single - item scale or a unidimensional construct of value but as a multidimensional construct (emotional and relational).

Keywords: Loyalty, Satisfaction, Perceived Value, Attractiveness of Alternatively, Service Quality.

JEL Codes: M31, M10.

1. INTRODUCTION

Developments in information and communication technology (ICT) and more competitive market conditions have contributed significantly to balancing the asymmetric information between the buyer and the seller. This situation also created changes in the concept of marketing. Today's marketing approach requires companies to establish a mutual and long-term relationship with their customers. Because of these long-term, trust-based, and empathetic relationships, businesses will be able to support the improvement of loyalty toward their brands. One of the deadliest mistakes in marketing is to focus solely on acquiring new customers. Acquiring new customers is more difficult and costly than retaining existing customers (Lin & Wang, 2006, p. 272). Loyal customers are a serious source of a competitive advantage for a company. Therefore, research on identifying and explaining the determinants of customer loyalty has been at the center of the marketing academic literature. It is also critical for practitioners in many sectors. Islam et al. (2021) emphasized that some facets of loyalty in the telecom industry were still unexplored; therefore, so some more in-depth understanding was required to examine customer loyalty as a construct. Moreover, it is an important field of study for many sectors or markets. The first examples of customer loyalty studies appear in developed country markets and Anglo-Saxon cultures, later in developing and eastern culture societies, but there are very few studies on Caucasian countries in the literature.

While ICT penetrates all the activities of daily living, it has become one of the main factors that directly affect the development of society. ICT forms the backbone of the activity of state bodies, socio-economic, science, and education, culture, etc. fields. Besides its presence everywhere, ICT has enormous economic significance worldwide. Today, the economy of Azerbaijan is almost 70% of the total economy of the country, situated in the South Caucasus; in addition, the economy of Azerbaijan is the only economy in the Caucasus where ICT is the second most significant industry (Guseynov, Abdullaev, Mehdiyev, & Edelkina, 2021). Azerbaijan Country Commercial Guide, chapter of Azerbaijan – ICT, has been stated that ICT is also one of the four target sectors for economic diversification and the second-largest target for foreign investment after the oil and gas industry, in Azerbaijan (<https://www.privacyshield.gov/article?id=Azerbaijan-Information-and-Communications-Technology>). Therefore, the report was said that the Azerbaijani government seeks to develop the country's IT market, having launched education and e-government programs. It is extremely important to examine the loyalty dynamics of consumers in Azerbaijan, due to its potential to attract foreign investors on one hand, and its growing ICT market on the other. Examining customer loyalty determinants in the Azerbaijan mobile technology market has higher potential for practitioners and academics compared to markets that are in the maturity stage of their life cycle and have approached the market size margins.

The concept of perceived value has been addressed as a strategic concept in the marketing literature since the 1990s (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). A strong and unique customer value is one of the main factors of continuous improvement in the products and services of companies, distinctiveness in competition, and a long-term profitable relationship between customers and firm. Perceived consumer value is considered multidimensional, such as price, functional, emotional, and social value (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001); emotional, utilitarian, and economic value (Li, Laroche, Richard, & Cui, 2022); and personal, social, functional, and economic value (Loureiro, Jiménez-Barreto, & Romero, 2020) in the marketing literature. The effect of perceived value on loyalty for the mobile sector and different cultures must be well-examined in different contexts. The dynamics that create the perception of value mostly start before purchasing (Hsiao, 2021), and may include different dimensions for any culture.

Organizations working in a highly competitive market and presenting differential services must position their products, services and brands to be more attractive to target customers than that of competitors. Ping (1993) defined alternative attractiveness as a customer's estimate of the satisfaction likely to be available in an alternative relationship. Consumers almost always are exposed to strong competitive pressures from alternative brands (Sánchez & Curras-Perez, 2019). According to Lee and Kim (2022), when customers recognize alternative attractiveness, they enhance negative attitudes toward current brands and tend to change their psychological and practical relationships. Although many studies in the marketing literature point to a strong direct relationship between loyalty and alternative attractiveness, there are inconclusive findings on indirect relationships (Chuah, Marimuthu, Kandampully, Bilgihan, 2017). This study fills the gap in the literature by revealing the direct and indirect effects of alternative attractiveness on the satisfaction-loyalty model.

Brand reliability has a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers, and brand communication efforts such as advertisements and sales information (Chung, Lee, & Kim, 2022). Additionally, reliability has a strong positive effect on both additional and behavioral loyalty (Ong, Md. Salleh, & Zien Yusoff, 2016). An important feature of brand reliability is that if consumers perceive a brand or service as reliability, they will prefer to transfer that brand's future any attitudes and activities (Hess, Story, , & Danes, 2011). Brand reliability should be examined from studies focusing on satisfaction-loyalty relations.

(Service) Quality is one of the main determinants of value, and value is an important variable that affects both satisfaction and loyalty. (Lee, 2022). Su et al. (2022) emphasized that service quality has been widely studied in the marketing and management literature because the higher the level of service quality an organization delivers, the greater the competitive advantage it can gain (Ladhari, 2008). Additionally, service quality is an important area that can be differentiated in the same way today as it was yesterday.

Customer satisfaction is a key concept in modern marketing. Today, it still focuses on the question of whether customer satisfaction or low price plays a more important role in building consumer loyalty in many markets. Customers' satisfaction with products and services and the roles of determinants in satisfaction-loyalty relations may differ according to country cultures (Wangwacharakul, Medina, & Poksinska, 2021).

The first aim of this study is to examine the perceived (emotional and relational) value, attractiveness of alternatively, service quality, brand reliability, and customer satisfaction variables as the determinants of customer loyalty. The second objective of this study was to identify the relative effects of the research variables on customer loyalty. It also finds how customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between other research variables and customer loyalty. It is thought that the results of the research will not only make an academic contribution to the literature, but also create important implications for managers. In the study conducted in the Azerbaijan mobile operator sector, it is

thought that it will provide an opinion to the relevant departments and managers on what they should give importance to in creating customer loyalty. We address questions mentioned below in this study:

- What are the determinants of loyalty in the mobile operator market in Azerbaijan?
- Does satisfaction mediate the relationships between the perceived (emotional and relational) value, alternatively, service quality, brand reliability, and customer loyalty?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Customer Loyalty

Dick and Basu (1994, p. 99), defined loyalty as the relationship between the positive attitude of customers toward service or product and repeat purchase. Similarly, Gremler and Brown (1996, p. 173) characterized customer loyalty as behavior that the customer's repeat purchase frequency, a positive attitude toward the company, product or brand, and their preference. Kumar and Shah (2004, p. 319) emphasized the four commonly believed benefits of customer loyalty by Reichheld (1996) suggested:

- The costs of serving loyal customers are less;
- Loyal customers are less price sensitive;
- Loyal customers spend more time with the company;
- Loyal customers pass on positive recommendations about their favorite brands or suppliers

As marketing literature noted, customer loyalty can be considered in two dimensions such as behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. Behavioral loyalty includes repeat purchase actions, while attitudinal loyalty includes favorable actions such as giving advice, brand advocacy, and positive word of mouth. Marketing researchers prefer to use attitudinal loyalty in their loyalty studies because behavioral loyalty cannot clearly distinguish between forged and genuine loyalty (Tajeddini et al., 2022). Due to the GSM sector, having less switching cost and high customer churn, customer loyalty is a foremost component.

2.2. Perceived (Emotional and Relational) Value

The relationship between a customer's perception of value and both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty has long been studied in different sectors (El-Adly, 2019). Zeithaml (1988, p. 14), explained the perceived value as "the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given". Perceived value can be defined as the ratio of benefits to costs (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2018, p. 103). In fact, this is a cognitive activity. Consumers can cognitively integrate the benefit of a good or service with the sacrifices or toils they have endured to obtain that benefit. As a result, they arrive at the concept we call value. If the customer thinks that the perceived benefits are greater than the perceived costs, its perceived value will also be high (Choi et al., 2004, pp. 915-917). According to Sweeney and Soutar (2001, p 208), perceived value has four sub-dimensions: emotional value, social value, quality value, and finally price value. Chuah et al. (2017, p. 126) argued that the value perceived by customers has five components: performance/quality value, price/value for money, emotional value, relational value, and personalization value. We only used two of these components.

Perceived Emotional Value (PEV): Emotional value is the utility derived from affective states or feelings that a product or service generates (Jiang and Kim, 2015). Emotional value could also be defined as the feelings customers experience from the perceived utility of products (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). Emotional value is an individual perception of the value of purchasing any product and service (Seegebarth et al., 2016; de Morais Watanabe et al., 2020). Emotional value is an

important determinant of the purchasing decision and considers the benefit obtained from the emotional and emotional states provided by a product or service (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). The favorable emotional state of the customer toward any brand affects the purchasing tendency positively. (Fazal-e-Hasan, 2018, p. 103). Therefore, if the business, product, store, salesperson, brand, or advertisement create positive emotions, customers will develop positive attitudes and have behavioral tendencies. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) found that emotional value is the strongest predictor of consumers' intention to purchase from a particular store.

Perceived Relational Value (PRV): Relational value includes the benefits and rewards customers receive from their long-term relationships. (Chuah vd., 2017, p. 126). Relational value relates to the value derived from the emotional, social, or relational bonds between partners (Chen, & Wang, 2016). The relational value includes not only tangible benefits but also long-term intangible benefits.

Türkmendağ and Hassan (2018) emphasized that emotional value as a sub-dimension of perceived value positively affects customer loyalty in the restaurant industry in Erzurum. Onaran et al. (2013) found that emotional value affects customer loyalty in thermal hotel customers. They also showed that satisfaction plays a mediating role in this relationship.

Chuah et al. (2017) argued that perceived emotional and relational value affects customer loyalty indirectly through customer satisfaction. Chen and Hu (2010) found that relational benefits have positive effects on customer loyalty in their research on the coffee market in Australia.

H1: Perceived emotional value positively impact customer satisfaction.

H2: Perceived relational value positively impact customer satisfaction.

Hmed-a: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived emotional value and customer loyalty.

Hmed-b: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived relational value and customer loyalty.

2.3. Attractiveness of Alternatives (ALT)

The attractiveness of alternatives was defined to customer perceptions regarding the extent to which viable competing alternatives are available in the marketplace (Jones, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2000: p. 262). As Anderson and Narus (1984) stated that alternative attractiveness was composed of four dimensions (Wu, 2011):

- The number of available alternatives;
- the degree of differences among them;
- the degree of difficulty in understanding them, and
- the degree of difficulty in comparing them

Wu (2011), researched the role of attractiveness of alternatives in the relationship between satisfaction and customer loyalty. They found that as the alternative attractiveness increases, the negative moderating effect of the zone of tolerance (a range of expectations regarding service performance) on the relationship between satisfaction and customer loyalty weakens (Wu, 2011). Lee, Ahn, & Kim (2008) argued the moderating role of the attractiveness of alternatives in the service industry field. They found that an alternative attractiveness acts as a moderator in the relationship between confidence, social benefits, and customer loyalty. Ghazali et al. (2016) investigated the negative effect of the attractiveness of alternatives in online pure-play retailers. Their findings showed that alternative attractiveness plays a greater role as a driver of customer loyalty. This implies that as

lower the perception of good alternatives available in the market, the more loyal customers will be. Similarly, Lee, Ou, & Choi, (2021), Picón, Castro & Roldán, (2014), Ha & Park, (2013), and Kim et al. (2016) studied that the attractiveness of alternatives had negative effects on customer loyalty or moderating/mediating effects on the relationships between customer loyalty and other research variables such as relationship benefits and satisfaction etc.

H3: The attractiveness of alternatives positively impacts customer satisfaction.

Hmed-c: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between the attractiveness of alternatives and customer loyalty.

2.4. Brand Reliability (BR)

Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman, (1993) conceptualized trust as “existing when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity”. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001, p. 82) define brand trust as “the consumer's willingness to trust the brand's ability to perform its stated function”. In the case of uncertainty, consumers need more information about the product or service before making a purchase decision, and brand trust is one of the important factors that reduce this information (Baek & King, 2012, p. 262). Trust is a variable that reduces the customer's perceived risks and concerns about whether the product will be satisfactory or the product will produce the promised benefits.

According to the research conducted by Yang and Liu (2018) on mobile phone users in Taiwan, brand trust affects behavioral loyalty positively and significantly. Mohammad (2012, pp. 111-126), in his research on female shampoo users in Jordan, found that the trust factor had the most effect on customers' brand loyalty. Ball et al. (2003) reported that there is a positive relationship between brand trust and customer loyalty. Lau and Lee (1999), Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Şahin et al. (2010), Harris and Goode (2004), and Gürbüz and Doğan (2013) etc. demonstrated in many studies.

H4: Brand reliability positively impacts customer satisfaction.

Hmed-d: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand reliability and customer loyalty.

2.5. Service Quality (SQ)

Uzir et al. (2021), argued that service quality was a vital factor in customer satisfaction (Kim, 2021), especially customer -centered firms. Karafakioğlu (1998) explained the concept of service as an intangible activity or benefit offered by a person or business to another person or business. Berry (1981) defined perceived service quality as the customer's judgment about a firm's overall excellence or superiority. Grönroos (1984) defined that service quality was classified as functional and technical service quality. Quality perceptions on all dimensions of service are likely to be positively associated with customers' attitudes toward the organization and their likelihood of remaining a customer (Bell, Auh, & Smalley, 2005).

Bilgin and Kethüda (2017, p. 160) found that all four dimensions of service quality had a statistically significant effect on customer loyalty in their study on restaurant businesses. There are many academic studies on the relationship between perceived service quality and loyalty (Zeithaml, 1988; Bloemer, 1998; Vigripat & Chan, 2007; De Ruyter et al., 1998; Bell et al., 2005; Wang, 2010).

H5: Service quality positively impacts customer satisfaction.

Hmed-e: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty.

2.6. Customer Satisfaction (CSAT)

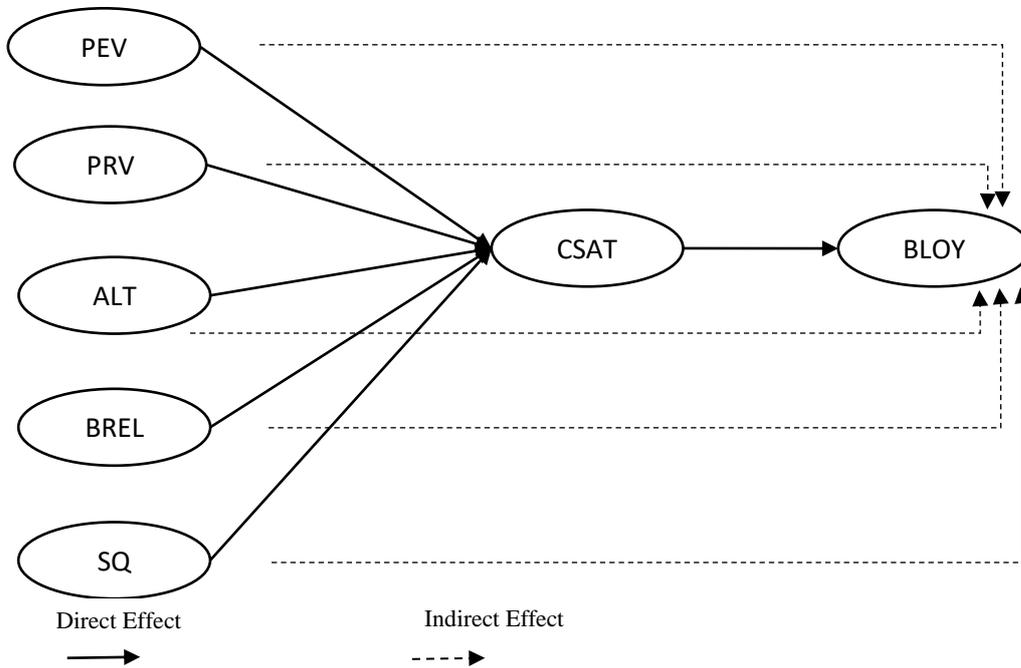
Rust and Zahorik (1993) emphasized that “the value of customer satisfaction rests on its relationship to choose and market share”. Additionally, there is a strong and positive link between customer satisfaction and firm profitability (Helgesen, 2006). As a natural consequence of these relationships, companies started to place the concept of customer satisfaction at the center of their business strategies, and satisfaction has been the cornerstone of the marketing concept. Customer satisfaction has generally been studied as a unidimensional construct.

Barutçu (2008) attempted to identify the antecedents of e-loyalty in the e-retail sector. Because of this research, it has been determined that e-satisfaction affects e-store loyalty the most. In a similar study, it was determined that satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on loyalty (Arasıl et al., 2004, p. 57). Many studies have showed that there is a strong correlation between satisfaction and loyalty in the literature (Deng et al., 2010; Ball et al., 2003; Caruana, 2002; Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Şahin et al., 2011). Zang et al. (2023) also stated that the strong link had been extensively elaborated and verified by numerous research such as Chuah et al., 2017; Prentice et al., 2020; Quy Nguyen-Phuoc et al., 2021; Raza et al., 2020. Marketing literature has many findings that customer satisfaction leads to a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. Therefore, we postulate

H6: Customer satisfaction positively impacts customer loyalty.

The research framework of this study is formulated, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Model



Note(s): PEV; Perceived emotional value; PRV: Perceived relational value; ALT: Attractiveness of alternatives; BREL: Brand reliability; SQ: Service quality; CSAT: Customer satisfaction; BLOY: Customer loyalty

3. METHODOLOGY

The conceptual model of the relationships between the research variables is given in Figure 1. Customer loyalty (BLOY) was examined as a dependent variable. As independent variables, emotional value (PEV), relational value (PRV), attractiveness of alternatives (ALT), customer

satisfaction (CSAT), perceived service quality (SQ), and brand reliability (BREL) were taken into consideration.

Sampling Process: Three mobile operators operate in the Azerbaijan GSM sector. Bakcell is the first mobile operator company established in March 1994 in Azerbaijan. Azercell Telekom Limited is a GSM operator established in Azerbaijan on January 19, 1996. Nar Mobile Limited was established in 2007. Research data were collected by the questionnaire method and a convenience sampling method was used. The research was applied to 450 students studying at 2 different universities in Baku. The survey forms were obtained by face-to-face interview method from graduate and undergraduate students on different days for each faculty for three weeks. Incomplete and incorrect forms were eliminated by examining the collected data. After cleaning the collected survey data, 403 (89.5%) valid survey forms were obtained.

Measuring and Scales: While preparing the questionnaire, a literature review was made, and statements were formed by adapting the scales whose reliability and validity were tested before. While creating the questionnaire, attention was paid to keep the questions short and understandable, and the scales were grouped appropriately so that respondents could easily notice the difference. Since the statements about the scales were adapted from foreign articles, the items were translated into Azerbaijani and Russian. The questionnaire consists of the following parts: (1) emotional and relational values are based on the PEV and PRV scale developed by Chuah et al. (2017); it includes 9 items; (2) attractiveness of alternatives, for which 3 items reflecting the degree of customers' perceptions of obtaining a more satisfactory service from an alternative provider in the marketplace are designed based on by Wu (2011) to measure ALT; (3) brand reliability, service quality and customer satisfaction are measured respectively, using 5, 4 and 4 items based on the BR, SQ, and CSAT scale proposed by Alan and Arshad (2012); and (4) customer loyalty is measured based on the BLOY scale developed by Giovanis et al. (2015) by retaining 5 items. . Each item was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questions on the final part include demographic and personal information about mobile phone usage (which mobile operator they use, age, sex, average monthly invoice amount (INV), customer contact time (CCT), and operator change frequency (OCF), etc.).

4. RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics: In Table 1, we provide Operator information and usage preferences of respondent details of the sample. The typical customers in our study are from 16 to 44 years of age, commonly with a university degree, who mainly earn 40–1200 AZN monthly.

Table 1. Operator Information and Usage Preferences of Respondents

Operator Frequency		Average invoice amount (INV)	
Azercell	223 (%55,34)	Minimum	1 AZN (0.58\$)
Bakcell	11 (%27,54)	Maximum	150 AZN (88\$)
Nar mobile	69 (%17,12)	Mean	11 AZN (6\$)
Operator change frequency (OCF)		Customer contact time (CCT)	
Never	169	Minimum	1 month
At least 1	122	Maximum	36 month
At least 2	73	Income (INC)	
At least 3	24	Minimum	40 AZN
At least 4	10	Maximum	1200 AZN
At least 5	1	Age	
At least 6	3	Minimum	16
At least 7	1	Maximum	44
Sex			
Male	103		
Female	200		

Testing the measurement model: The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated a good model fit, with χ^2/df 641.70/374=1.716 comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.947, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) =0.958, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.056, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.042. All factor loadings were beyond 0.50, indicating that all indicators exhibited unique variance more than common variance. All these results were included in Table 2.

Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis, CR, AVE, and Reliability

			λ	CR	AVE	Cronbach α
PEV5	<---	PEV	.833	0.894	0.628	0.832
PEV4	<---	PEV	.812			
PEV3	<---	PEV	.739			
PEV2	<---	PEV	.815			
PEV1	<---	PEV	.762			
PRV4	<---	PRV	.783	0.746	0.431	0.760
PRV3	<---	PRV	.738			
PRV2	<---	PRV	.542			
PRV1	<---	PRV	.523			
ALT3	<---	ALT	.821	0.759	0.518	
ALT2	<---	ALT	.737			
ALT1	<---	ALT	.581			
BR1	<---	BR	.603	0.797	0.441	0.794
BR2	<---	BR	.715			
BR3	<---	BR	.707			
BR4	<---	BR	.691			
BR5	<---	BR	.596			
SQ1	<---	SQ	.782	0.822	0.537	0.801
SQ2	<---	SQ	.791			
SQ3	<---	SQ	.676			
SQ4	<---	SQ	.675			

			λ	CR	AVE	Cronbach α
CSAT4	<---	CSAT	.718	0.722	0.398	0.649
CSAT3	<---	CSAT	.524			
CSAT2	<---	CSAT	.575			
CSAT1	<---	CSAT	.688			
BLOY1	<---	BLOY	.636	0.831	0.499	0.828
BLOY2	<---	BLOY	.655			
BLOY3	<---	BLOY	.808			
BLOY4	<---	BLOY	.769			
BLOY5	<---	BLOY	.646			

Note(s): *p < 0.05; λ : standardized factor loading; CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted; SD: standard deviation; NA: not applicable

Correlation Analyses: Based on the correlation table, it can be concluded that BLOY and CSAT (.504); PEV (.283); ALT (-.224); SQ (-.669); BR (.649); OCF (-.121) have significant relationships. CSAT and PEV (.253); PRV (.206); ALT (-.198); SQ (-.539); BR (.402); OCF (-.138) show significant relationships. The result of the correlation analysis are shown in Table 3.

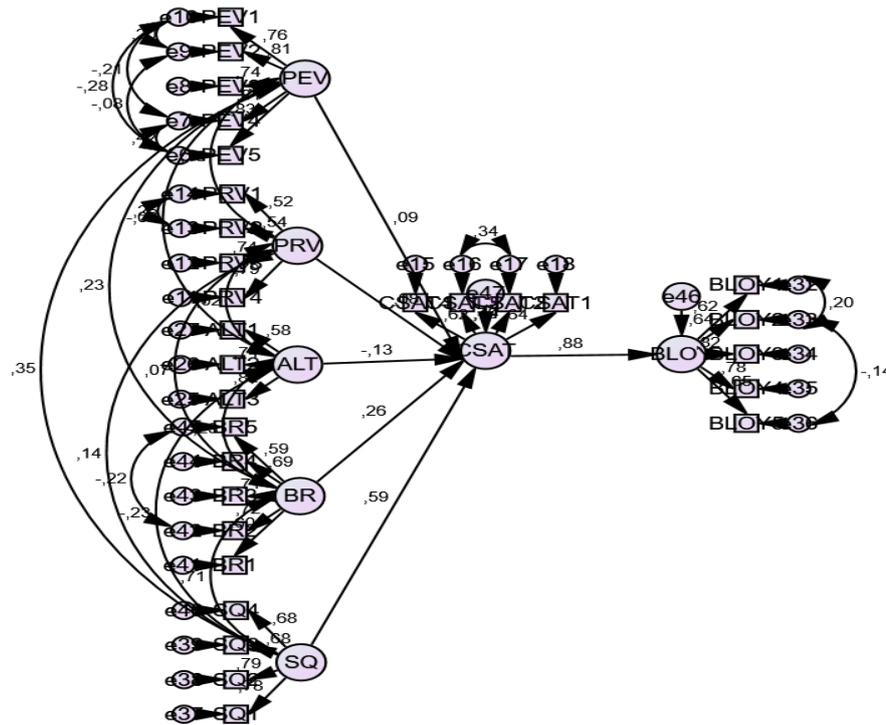
Table 3. Correlation Analysis

	BLOY	CSAT	PEV	PRV	ALT	SQ	BR	CCT	OCF	INC	Age
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	1										
2	.504**	1									
3	.283**	.253**	1								
4	.114*	.206**	.197**	1							
5	-.224**	-.198**	-.020	-.010	1						
6	.669**	.539**	.303**	.155**	-.196**	1					
7	.649**	.402**	.204**	.110*	-.195**	.600**	1				
8	.027	.014	-.028	.020	-.006	.038	.061	1			
9	-.121*	-.138**	-.050	-.015	.038	-.098*	-.063	-.345**	1		
10	-.025	-.039	-.073	-.018	.014	-.070	-.025	.416**	-.051	1	
11	-.079	.007	.025	.035	.022	-.096	-.005	.375**	.054	.476**	1

Note(s): PEV; Perceived emotional value; PRV: Perceived relational value; ALT: Attractiveness of alternatives; BREL: Brand reliability; SQ: Service quality; CSAT: Customer satisfaction; BLOY: Customer loyalty
**: p<0.001; *:p<0.05

Testing the structural model: The analysis of the structural model yielded the following results for the goodness-of-fit indices: χ^2 /df= 706.85/379= 1.86, CFI= 0.935, TLI=0.925, and RMSEA=0.046, indicating a satisfactory model fit. Figures 2 and Table 4 show the hypothesized model and path loadings.

Figure 2: Path Analysis (Direct Effects)



In support of H1, knowledge from, about and for PEV significantly and positively influenced CSAT at the 0.05 probability level ($\beta=0.089$), but PRV has not significant effect on CSAT. Next, ALT negatively affected CSAT ($\beta=-.129$), supporting H3. In support of H4 and H5, BR positively affected CSAT ($\beta=0.260$) and SQ ($\beta=0.594$). Finally, CSAT also positively influenced BLOY ($\beta=0.877$), supporting H6.

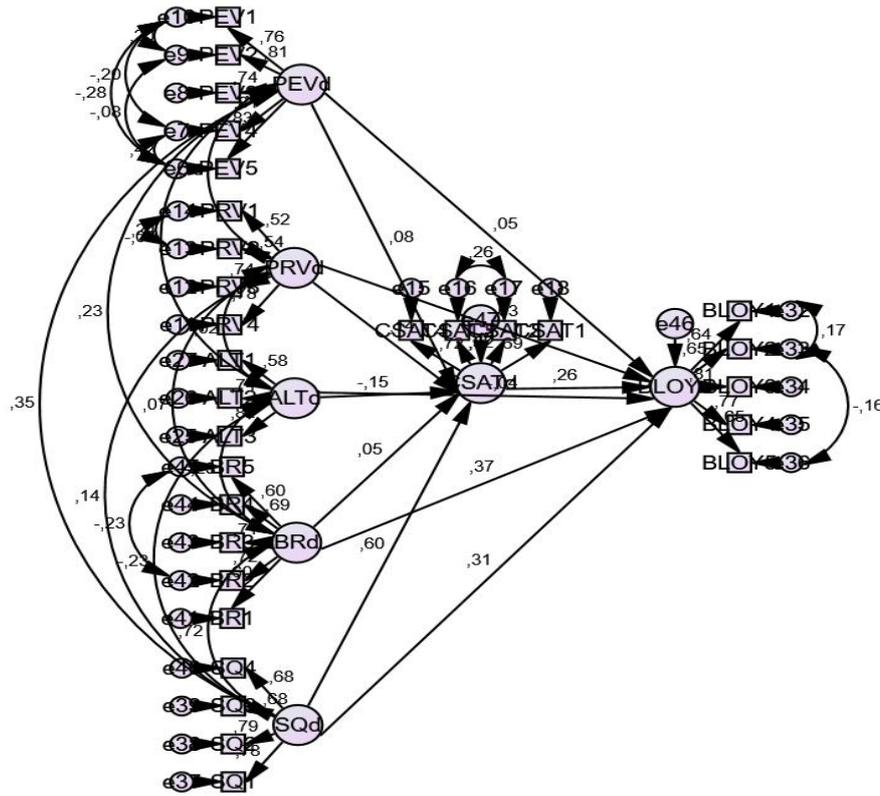
Table 4. The Results of The Structural Model (Direct Effects)

			Standardized Coefficient	S.E.	Sig.		Sig.
CSAT	<---	PEV	0.089	0.026	0.050	H1	Sup.
CSAT	<---	PRV	0.078	0.033	0.082	H2	N.S.
CSAT	<---	ALT	-0.129	0.035	0.005	H3	Sup.
CSAT	<---	BR	0.260	0.084	***	H4	Sup.
CSAT	<---	SQ	0.594	0.068	***	H5	Sup.
BLOY	<---	CSAT	0.877	0.106	***	H6	Sup.

Note(s): Sup.: Supported; N.S. Not Supported; SE:Standard error. **: $p<0.001$; * $p<0.05$

To test the mediating effects of CSAT in our research model we have used, a bootstrapping approach. This approach was performed key rules such as a bias-corrected bootstrap 95% confidence interval (CI) was calculated, based on 5,000 bootstrap samples since this method is considered a reliable procedure to examine the significance of indirect and total effects (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013), dealing with non-normality of the indirect effect (Little, 2013).

Figure 3. Path Analysis (Indirect Effects)



As shown in Table 5 and Figure 3, the indirect effects as BLOY <--- CSAT <--- PEV and BLOY <--- CSAT <---BR did not show a significant effect. The indirect effect from PRV on BLOY through CSAT was significant; Hmed-b was supported (BLOY <--- CSAT <--- PRV). The indirect effect of ALT was found to be -0.035 and significant so Hmed-c (BLOY <--- CSAT <--- ALT) was supported. The bootstrapping results showed that this indirect effect as BLOY <--- CSAT <--- SQ was 0.144 and significant, confirming Hmed-e.

Table 5. The Results of Indirect Effects

				Indirect Coefficient	Boot S.E.	%95 CI (L/U)		Sig.	
BLOY	<---	CSAT	<---	PEV	0.015	0.013	0.000/0.045	Hmed-a	N.S.
BLOY	<---	CSAT	<---	PRV	0.033	0.021	0.008/0.082	Hmed-b	Sup.
BLOY	<---	CSAT	<---	ALT	-0.035	0.023	-0.87/-0.006	Hmed-c	Sup.
BLOY	<---	CSAT	<---	BR	0.016	0.050	-0.052/0.112	Hmed-d	N.S.
BLOY	<---	CSAT	<---	SQ	0.144	0.071	0.054/0.291	Hmed-e	Sup.

Note(s): Sup.: Supported; N.S. Not Supported; SE:Standard error; CI (L/P): confidence interval (Lower/Upper). **: $p < 0.001$; * $p < 0.05$

5. DISCUSSION

Karunaratna and Kumara, (2018) stated that due to the magnitude of its impact on a highly dynamic and competitive business context, loyalty had become as a cornerstone for the sustained growth and profitability of business. The mobile communication sector is extremely dynamic in terms of competition structure, customer dynamism, and speed of technology change. We studied the determinants of customer loyalty in the Azerbaijan GSM sector. Our data were collected from 450 users in this market, where three operators operated. The results of the structural model showed direct and indirect relationships between customer loyalty and its determinants. Based on these findings, theoretical and practical implications can be discussed.

Theoretical and Practical Implications: Kim and Park (2017) researched the effects of economic value, functional value, social value, and emotional value on satisfaction and the mediating effect of satisfaction on the relationship between overall value and loyalty. They found that emotional value was positively related and that positive feelings influenced satisfaction. Additionally, satisfaction had a full mediation effect between value and loyalty. Gounaris, Tzempelikos, and Chatzipanagiotou (2007) include values as multidimensional variables (product value, procedural value, personal value, emotional value and perceived sacrifice) in the research model. They argued that all dimensions were equally important to consisting of perceived value for firms. We found a significant effect of perceived emotional value, but perceived relational value had an insignificant effect on customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction played a mediating role in the relationship perceived relational value and loyalty but not in the relationship between perceived emotional value and loyalty. Our important implications pertain to the mediating effect of satisfaction on the relationship between value and loyalty. Consistently with relationship marketing theory, managers should work on building value to deliver premium loyal customers. It should not be forgotten that value has direct and indirect effects on loyalty. These implications incorporate many alternative strategies for managers. In summary, our results support the idea that users tend to be loyal to those operators where they perceive high value to be available and they are more satisfied in the GSM sector. We recommend managers pay special attention to create and develop the value for the customer when presenting their products and service to increase the level of satisfaction and loyalty.

According to Patterson & Smith (2003), Wang (2009), and Ghazali et al. (2016) identify as an important determinant of loyalty and satisfaction is the attractiveness of alternatives. We found that the attractiveness of alternatives negatively affected both direct and indirect loyalty. Thus, facing the rise in the attractiveness of alternatives, customers will choose to explore the new relationships and their loyalty declines. Dogan and Erdogan (2017) indicated that GSM industry customer satisfaction is quite cost orientation rather than emotional. This is extremely important as a sector where switching costs are low, customer pass-through is easy and market share dynamic.

Giovanis and Athanasopoulou (2017), show that brand satisfaction and brand reliability are the major determinants of brand loyalty for Gen Y-ers. Delgado-Ballester, and Munuera-Alemán (2005) stated that resources such as loyalty and trust are immobile and cannot be purchased or replicated (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) so, firms consider the relationship between reliability and loyalty as a sustainable resource-based competitive advantage. We found that brand reliability directly and indirectly affected loyalty. Giovanis and Athanasopoulou (2018) also revealed that trust affected behavioral intentions through satisfaction.

Our results showed that service quality had a direct effect on satisfaction and an indirect effect on loyalty through satisfaction. These results stand with the latest prior empirical studies' findings (Chayomchai, 2021; Omer et al., 2021; Park & Kim, 2022). Dam and Dam (2021) studied out as service quality was a precursor to customer loyalty.

Karunaratna and Kumara (2018) said that “customer satisfaction is a key element to enhancing customer loyalty”. Loyalty is directly and positively influenced by customer satisfaction. Managers should pay attention to customer satisfaction because of higher satisfaction cause to customer be become more loyal and will be disposed to remain in the long-term in relationships. Higher satisfaction will enhance higher loyalty.

This current research demonstrated the direct and mediating links between emotional value, relational value, attractiveness of alternatives, brand reliability, service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty considering the previous empirical studies. Decision-makers in firms, especially the GSM sector, should focus on strategies that improve the customer’s perception of emotional value, relational value, attractiveness of alternatives, brand reliability, service quality, and satisfaction to increase customer loyalty. The research results showed that service quality was an antecedent of brand image, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

Limitations and Future Research: This study involves some limitations. One limitation of this study comes from the fact that the field research has been conducted on only the Azerbaijan market and focused on the GSM Sector. This may pose constraints on our ability to generalize our findings. The Second limitation posits that the relative importance of each research dimension on loyalty might change over time by taking into consideration customers’ needs change continuously. Future studies can test loyalty (attitudinal and behavioral) as a multidimensional and our conceptual model in other service sectors.

6. CONCLUSION

This research empirically proved that the value, attractiveness of alternatives, brand reliability, service quality, and satisfaction directly and/or indirectly influence customer loyalty in mobile communication. The findings showed that these variables are the key antecedents of customer loyalty. This study contributes to our understanding of customer-perceived value not as a single - item scale or a unidimensional construct of value but as a multidimensional construct (emotional and relational). Therefore, this study will enable GSM managers to realize that they can manage their brand loyalty with both the emotional and relational aspects of value. According to our findings, if relational value and the service quality variable increased, customer loyalty would increase. However, the increase in the attractiveness of alternatives would have a negative effect on customer loyalty.

In conclusion, the findings of this study determined that perceived emotional value, perceived relational value, attractiveness of alternatives, brand reliability, service quality, and customer satisfaction are the determinants that affect customer loyalty in Azerbaijan in the GSM sector, directly or indirectly. Service quality has the strongest effect on loyalty via satisfaction. Additionally, the effects of the attractiveness of alternatives and perceived relational value are remarkable. The attractiveness of competitor's brand or service negatively affects satisfaction and loyalty, while relational value has a positive effect on loyalty. This finding can be the result of sample characteristics. Our sample mostly consists of generation z. The most important question to be answered for this generation is "maintain a long-term relationship with the existing brand or the attractiveness of the competitor's offer?". This study contributes to the customer loyalty research stream by integrating value, service quality, and relationship quality constructs. Additionally, this research provides valuable knowledge and information to mobile service providers to build customer loyalty in Azerbaijan. GSM operators in Azerbaijan must provide customer satisfaction because of its direct link to customer loyalty. This research is a comprehensive study that helps mobile service providers in Azerbaijan understand the factors that drive customer loyalty and satisfaction. Our results can assist GSM operators in identifying gaps and opportunities for improvement in their services, ultimately leading to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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