

## THE PHENOMENON OF FROZEN FOOD STORE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY AND PURCHASE EXPERIENCE

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### Abstract

*This study aims to uncover the factors that affect customer satisfaction at the Sahl Mart Purwokerto Frozen Food Store, with a focus on service quality and purchase experience. The background of this research is based on the increasing competition in the frozen food business in Purwokerto which requires business actors to pay attention to service aspects and customer purchase experience as key factors in building customer loyalty. The approach used is a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, which aims to understand the meaning and subjective perception of customers towards the service and purchase experience. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observation of loyal customers of Sahl Mart Purwokerto, as well as direct observation at the research site. The analysis was carried out using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The results of the study show that the friendliness, responsiveness of the staff, speed of service, comfort and cleanliness of the store environment have a significant influence on customer satisfaction. An efficient and enjoyable buying experience also strengthens customer loyalty in the buying experience. Strategically, these findings recommend regular training for staff to improve interpersonal skills, response speed and service ethics. In addition, the store's neat, clean, and logically structured interior design also creates a positive shopping atmosphere. This research enriches the literature with a phenomenological approach in the context of frozen food stores and makes practical contributions in store management to maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty in a sustainable manner.*

*Keywords: customer satisfaction, service quality, purchase experience, phenomenology, frozen food.*

### Introduction

In the era of globalization and increasingly rapid digitalization, people's consumption patterns have undergone significant shifts. Consumers no longer only consider price as a factor in determining where to shop, but also pay attention to aspects of convenience, ease of access, product variety, and quality of service. This phenomenon is increasingly seen in the retail trade sector, both on a large scale such as supermarkets or micro and small businesses such as grocery stores and frozen food stores.

Customer satisfaction is a key factor in maintaining business sustainability. According to Kotler & Keller, 2016 Customer satisfaction is defined as the level of a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment that arise after comparing the perception of a product's performance or results with his or her expectations. In the context of retail commerce, customer satisfaction can be a key benchmark in evaluating the effectiveness of marketing as well as operational strategies. A high level of customer satisfaction is usually directly proportional to loyalty, where customers will not only return to make a purchase, but will also become brand ambassadors promoting the store through word of mouth or personal recommendations.

This condition also applies to developing cities such as Purwokerto, as one of the centers of economic growth in Central Java which leads to an increase in the dynamics of public consumption. Frozen food stores are one of the sectors that are experiencing growth because they are considered practical and in accordance with modern lifestyles. One of the well-known stores is Sahl Mart Purwokerto, which provides a variety of frozen food products, household necessities such as sauces, soy sauce, mayonnaise, and other processed products. Despite being known for its competitive prices, friendly service, and complete products, the main challenge remains how the store maintains the quality of service and creates a pleasant shopping experience for customers.

To strengthen this phenomenon, a report from IMARC Group (2024) states that the frozen food market value in Indonesia has reached USD 3.4 billion and is expected to grow to USD 5.9 billion by 2033, with a

compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.31% during the period 2025–2033. This growth is driven by urbanization, rising middle-class incomes, and advances in cold supply chain infrastructure. In addition, *the Statista* report (2023) also shows that as many as 70% of Indonesian consumers now prioritize service quality as the main determinant in choosing a place to shop, outperforming the price aspect which only reaches 58%. These findings confirm that service quality has a significant influence on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the retail sector.

However, there has not been much research that has in-depth explored customer perceptions and experiences of services in frozen food stores, especially with a phenomenological approach. Studies that focus on the subjective dimension of customers become essential to provide a thorough understanding of the factors that shape customer satisfaction and loyalty.

## Methods

According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research methods are research methods used to research on the condition of natural objects, where the researcher is as a key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out in a triangulation (combined) manner, data analysis is inductive or qualitative, and research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

This study employs a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods, aiming to gain a deep understanding of how customers experience and interpret their interactions and shopping experiences at the Sahl Mart Purwokerto Frozen Food Store. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to explore the perceptions, impressions, and meanings inherent in customer experience, especially related to aspects of service quality, comfort, and purchasing experience that are felt directly at Sahl Mart Purwokerto. In accordance with the opinion of Sugiyono (2017), the phenomenological method allows the researcher to capture the subjective reality of the customer in natural conditions, where the researcher acts as the main instrument in the data collection process, which is carried out through in-depth interviews, and observations. This research was carried out at the Sahl Mart Purwokerto Frozen Food Store, which is located on Jalan Jl. Pd Kencana, Karang Pucung, South Purwokerto District, Banyumas Regency, Central Java Province. The research implementation time is from Monday, May 5 to May 20, 2025, including the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results. The selection of this location was carried out purposively (deliberately) with the consideration that Sahl Mart Purwokerto is one of the well-known frozen food stores in the area, has a very diverse number of customers, and offers a variety of frozen food products and other household needs.

In addition, Sahl Mart Purwokerto was chosen as the location of the study because this store faces the phenomenon of fierce competition with similar stores in Purwokerto, so it is important to explore in depth how customers interpret the shopping experience and the quality of services provided. The location of this research is also considered representative to reveal the phenomenon of customer satisfaction in a rapidly growing urban environment such as Purwokerto.

Kotler & Keller (2016): In marketing research, customers, consumers, or service users are the main research subjects, because they feel firsthand the quality of products and services.

The subject of the study is a customer who has made transactions more than five times in one month at the Sahl Mart Purwokerto Frozen Food Store. This aims to obtain more data as well as more accurate data from customers who have enough experience with Purchasing Service and store atmosphere.

The criteria for selecting subjects are carried out purposively, which is based on certain considerations that are relevant to the purpose of the research. In this context, informants are selected with the following criteria:

1. Active customers who have made purchases at the Frozen Food Sahl Mart Purwokerto Store at least 5 times in the past month, to ensure that they have a very sufficient experience in interacting with the store's Services.
2. Customers who are willing and able to express their experience directly and in-depth, both related to the quality of the services provided and the overall purchase experience.
3. Customers who have diverse backgrounds, both in terms of age, gender, and employment status, to get a wider variety of perspectives on the customer satisfaction experience at Sahl Mart stores.

The number of informants interviewed in this study was five people, who were selected until the data reached saturation or saturation, which is a condition in which additional interviews no longer provide significant new information. The selection of this number is in accordance with a phenomenological approach that emphasizes more on the depth and richness of data, rather than on the quantity of informants.

The diversity of informant characteristics is expected to provide a more holistic picture of how the purchase experience and service quality affect customer satisfaction levels. The information obtained from the informants became the basis for phenomenological analysis to understand the meaning of the experiences they experienced in the purchase and service process at the Sahl Mart Purwokerto Frozen Food Shop.

According to Sugiyono (2017), the object of research is everything that is the point of attention of the researcher to be studied and conclusions drawn. In qualitative research, as expressed by Moleong (2017), the object of research is a phenomenon that is understood from the perspective of the participant, with the aim of exploring meaning, experience, and perception in depth.

## Results and Discussions

### Results

Sahl Mart Purwokerto Shop is a store engaged in the sale of Frozen Food products. This store was established in 2019 and is located in Purwokerto, Central Java. The Sahl Mart Purwokerto store Frozen food products such as sausages, nuggets, processed meats, soy sauce, sauces and mayonnaise. In marketing its products, Toko sahl mart Purwokerto utilizes digital marketing to reach a wider range of consumers.

This research was conducted with a phenomenological method that aims to explore in depth the subjective experience of customers in interacting and transacting at the Sahl Mart Purwokerto Frozen Food Store. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with five informants who had met the criteria, namely active customers who had shopped at least five times in one month at Sahl Mart Purwokerto. In addition, the researcher also conducts direct observation of the store situation and the interaction between employees and customers.

The results of interviews and observations show that each informant has a unique experience, but there is a common thread related to service aspects, store atmosphere, ease of purchase process, and overall impression felt when transacting at the store.

**Table 2.**

Customer Name	Gender	Age	Work	Shopping Frequency at Sahl Mart Purwokerto	Information
Mr. Nino	Male Male	43	Entrepreneurial	3-4 times per month	Active Customers
Mother Teresa	Woman	40	Teacher	5-7 times per month	Reseller Customers
Mr. Cahyo	Male Male	51	Merchant	4-5 times per month	Regular Customers
Mr. Edi	Male Male	34	Student	8-9 times per month	Regular Customers
Mr. Supri	Male Male	57	Merchant	8-9 times per month	Regular Customers

### 1. Customer Experience

The purchase experience that customers feel is also a factor that strengthens their satisfaction. Some of the things revealed by the informant are:

- Fast and efficient transaction process.
- Complete and varied product availability.
- Ease of getting the products you need without having to travel for a long time.
- Adequate and safe parking areas are available.

Mrs. Naning, who is a reseller customer, stated that the ease of getting stock of goods quickly and completely is an added value that makes her comfortable to continue shopping at Sahl Mart:

"I don't have to wait long if I look for something. Usually there is immediately, and the staff is also quick to help. It keeps me coming back." (Mrs. Naning)

Meanwhile, Mr. Cahyo, who is a Permanent Customer, stated that: It's not complicated, enter the store, know where the goods are, the cashier is also fast. For me who likes to be in a hurry, this is very helpful. (Mr. Cahyo).

### 2. Perceived Service Quality

From the results of the interview, all informants agreed that the quality of service at Sahl Mart Purwokerto was the main factor that affected their satisfaction. The informant mentioned several aspects of the service that were considered very influential, namely

□ Employee friendliness: Customers feel warmly welcomed when they come to the store, employees actively offer assistance in finding goods, and provide suggestions for products according to their needs.

- ☐ Responsive: When customers ask about stock or product information, the employee provides quick and precise answers.
- ☐ Store cleanliness and comfort: A clean, tidy, and well-organized store gives a comfortable impression for longer shopping.
- ☐ Disclosure of price information: All products have clear price tags, and employees are always ready to provide discount or promo information.

Almost all customers revealed that the service provided by Sahl Mart employees was considered friendly, polite, and responsive. They feel comfortable because employees are able to provide detailed product information, help find the necessary products, and offer efficient service, even when the store is crowded.

Mr. Edi, who is a Regular Customer, stated that if I shop at Sahl Mart, it is friendly, I wonder if it is also served patiently, so it is comfortable, and I am used to subscriptions.

### 3. Satisfaction and Loyalty

According to the interviews conducted, it is evident that most customers are satisfied with their shopping experience at Sahl Mart. This sense of satisfaction arises from the quality of service, the comfort of the place, and the competitive prices. This satisfaction encourages the emergence of loyalty, as stated by Mr. Edi:

"I have been here several times. If I need frozen food with kebab raw materials, I will go directly to Sahl Mart because I already know the quality."

Loyalty also appears in the form of recommendations to others. Some customers admitted that they had recommended this store to friends or relatives.

### 4. Interpretation of Findings

Based on a phenomenological analysis using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, it can be concluded that the customer experience at Toko Sahl Mart has a positive impact on the quality of service, creating both emotional and functional satisfaction. Interpersonal interactions with store employees play an essential role in creating a pleasant impression and ultimately shaping customer loyalty.

The subjective meaning that emerges from the customer experience shows that satisfaction does not only depend on the product, but is also strongly influenced by social interactions, the physical comfort of the store environment, as well as the ease of the purchase process. Thus, Sahl Mart can maintain and increase customer loyalty through consistency in service quality.

### Discussions

The findings of this study support the theory of customer satisfaction proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016), which states that satisfaction is the result of a customer's evaluation of the purchase experience in relation to their initial expectations. Informants are satisfied that the quality of service and comfort of the store's environment meet and even exceed their expectations.

In addition, this study aligns with the findings of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) regarding SERVQUAL, which emphasizes five dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Respondents highlighted the importance of hospitality, speed of service, and clear product information, reflecting the dimensions of responsiveness and empathy in a tangible manner.

In the context of previous research, a study by Wulandari & Astuti (2020) on customer loyalty in modern retail found that a positive shopping experience strengthens loyalty through the perception of service quality. A similar trend is evident in the results of this study, where a consistent and enjoyable experience encourages customers to continue shopping and recommend the store to others.

Thus, the scientific contribution of this study lies in affirming the importance of the emotional experience dimension in creating customer loyalty, especially in the context of local frozen food retail stores, which have not been studied extensively from a phenomenological perspective.

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of customer satisfaction at the Sahl Mart Purwokerto Frozen Food Store is significantly influenced by the quality of service and the purchase experience customers have. The quality of the services provided, which includes friendliness, responsiveness, politeness, and the ability of employees to provide product information clearly, is an essential aspects that shape positive customer perceptions. Sahl Mart's success in creating a comfortable, clean store environment, and neat product arrangement also contributes greatly to increasing customer comfort and satisfaction when shopping.

In addition, an easy, fast, and supported purchase experience with a variety of payment methods such as QRIS provides convenience and convenience for customers. An efficient transaction process without long queues makes customers feel valued and prioritized. These findings reinforce the theory that customer satisfaction is not only determined by the products offered, but also influenced by the overall service process and the experience that customers receive during interacting with store services.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the synergy between good service quality, a supportive store atmosphere, and a positive shopping experience can create a high level of satisfaction among Sahl Mart Purwokerto customers. This satisfaction will ultimately have a positive impact on customer loyalty, increased purchase frequency, and the spread of positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Based on these conclusions, some suggestions that can be given are as follows:

1. For the Manager of Sahl Mart Purwokerto, it is expected to continue to maintain and improve the quality of service to customers by holding regular training for employees, especially in the aspects of communication and service. It is important to maintain a positive image of the store in the eyes of customers.
2. It is also recommended to consistently maintain the cleanliness and comfort of the store, including paying attention to the arrangement of the product so that it remains neat and easy to reach by customers. A cozy store atmosphere will enhance the positive experience and make customers feel at home shopping.
3. For the next researcher, it is hoped that this research can be developed by involving more informants from various backgrounds, or by using more diverse data triangulation methods, so that the research results become more comprehensive and can be generalized to a wider context

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