

MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Interpersonal Communication and Customer Experience on Customer Attitudinal Loyalty: Moderating Role of Switching Costs in B2B Seafood Processing Companies

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of interpersonal communication and customer experience on customer attitudinal loyalty, as well as the moderating role of switching costs in the context of business-to-business seafood processing companies. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 54 customers of a seafood processing company and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling to test the relationships among the research variables. The findings indicate that interpersonal communication has a positive and significant effect on customer attitudinal loyalty ($\beta = 0.240$; $p < 0.05$), while customer experience also has a positive and significant effect on customer attitudinal loyalty ($\beta = 0.657$; $p < 0.01$). In addition, switching costs significantly strengthens the relationship between interpersonal communication and customer attitudinal loyalty ($\beta = 0.315$; $p < 0.05$). However, switching costs do not significantly moderate the relationship between customer experience and customer attitudinal loyalty ($\beta = -0.288$; $p > 0.05$). These findings confirm that interpersonal communication and customer experience are important determinants of customer attitudinal loyalty in B2B relationships, whereas switching costs function as a supporting mechanism that strengthens the influence of interpersonal communication but does not strengthen the influence of customer experience. Therefore, B2B seafood processing companies should prioritize strategies aimed at improving the quality of interpersonal communication and delivering superior customer experiences to establish and sustain long-term customer loyalty.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication, Customer Experiences, Customer Attitudinal Loyalty, Switching Cost, B2B.

JEL Code: M31, L14.

I. Introduction

The food and beverage (F&B) processing industry has experienced rapid growth in recent years. This phenomenon is evidenced by the increasing number of restaurants, cafes, and food service providers, both online and offline. According to a report from Statista, the global culinary industry market is estimated to reach \$3.48 trillion in 2024 and is projected to grow to \$4.03 trillion by 2025, with significant growth in the food and beverage sector (statista.com, 2025). In Indonesia alone, in 2024, the number of companies operating in the



food and beverage (F&B) industry reached a total of 1,284,679 units. Of this number, micro-enterprises dominate with a very significant figure, reaching 1,186,679 businesses. Meanwhile, small enterprises were recorded at 89,415 units, and large and medium enterprises totaled only 8,953. Referring to the Indonesian Standard Industrial Classification (KBLI), this sector contributes 21.04 percent to the total output of the processing industry, or more than one-fifth of the overall contribution (Techinasia.com, 2025).

This phenomenon illustrates that with the increasing number of F&B industries, the interest in seafood, and the awareness of the health benefits of fish consumption, the seafood processing provider industry with a business-to-business (B2B) system has a massive opportunity to acquire many customers from the F&B industry. One such company is CV XYZ. This CV is a seafood processing provider focused on the B2B business model. Established in 2012 and supported by 800 workers and over 100 staff, the company is capable of producing up to 10 tons of final products in the form of frozen shrimp per day. The products offered include various types of processed shrimp, such as Raw Peeled and Deveined (RPND), Cooked Peeled and Deveined (CPND), and dory fillets, all customized to customer requests.

The problem faced by CV XYZ is that sales trends have shown fluctuations with an increasing tendency over the last 3 years. Although total sales show significant growth, challenges remain, particularly regarding the limited number of customers. Currently, there are only 54 active customers, but not all of them consistently make repeat purchases. Based on the 54 existing customers, only an average of 20 customers, or 37% of customers, make repeat purchases daily. The company's production capacity also shows limitations. Currently, the company's ability to provide seafood (shrimp, fish, crab) is limited to 10 tons per day. Although the company has attempted to maximize output by optimizing production processes and prioritizing the best-selling commodities, this limitation causes some demands to go unmet. This potentially results in the loss of existing business opportunities.

This phenomenon highlights the challenges faced by CV XYZ; therefore, maintaining emotional closeness with customers who are not actively making repeat purchases becomes crucial. Customers with the potential to repurchase need to be identified and managed well. Customer attitudinal loyalty is key to creating mutually beneficial long-term relationships. Building attitudinal loyalty is essential for CV XYZ in its efforts to maintain strong relationships with B2B customers, especially those who are inactive in making repeat purchases. In line with the opinion of Dick & Basu (1994), attitudinal loyalty is based on strong beliefs and positive assessments of a brand or company, so it can persist despite changes in price or market conditions. Customers who are loyally attitudinal are more likely to remain faithful even when there are more attractive offers from competitors.

Many factors influence loyalty in a B2B context, including: product and service quality, customer satisfaction, commitment, customer perceived value, interpersonal communication, customer experiences, and switching costs (Çelik & Karakaş, 2021; Chen, 2021; Dikcius, Kirse, Casas, & Koncanina, 2019; Jayasankaraprasad, 2022). One of the important factors influencing CV XYZ's attitudinal loyalty is interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, and emotions between two or more people. In a business context, this often occurs between the company and the customer, where effective communication can create better relationships. Communication is central to service activities because, through the communication process, business actors can understand customer desires precisely (Wiranti, 2023). Good communication can create an emotional connection between the customer and the company. When customers feel emotionally connected, they are more likely to remain loyal despite other options (Çelik & Karakaş, 2021). Consistent with this, Jayasankaraprasad (2022) revealed that good interpersonal communication in the context of loyalty programs can strengthen the relationship between customers and retailers, contributing to higher emotional loyalty and helping companies retain customers despite alternative choices in the market.

Another important factor that can influence customer attitudinal loyalty is customer experiences. Customer experiences are the overall interactions a customer has with a company, from start to finish. This includes every touchpoint, whether before, during, or after the purchase (Jayasankaraprasad, 2022). Research results have found that customer experiences have a significant positive impact on customer emotional

loyalty (Jayasankaraprasad, 2022). Other studies also show that customer experiences have a significant positive influence on customer loyalty (Ahmad et al., 2022; Karim et al., 2022; Manyanga, Makanyeza, & Muranda, 2022; Sudiyono, Utomo, & Severesia, 2022; Urdea & Constantin, 2021).

This study also develops a research model by adding the moderating role of Switching cost. Switching cost is the cost that customers must bear when moving from one service provider to another (Dick & Basu, 1994). In the context of B2B companies, understanding the role of switching cost is crucial because high switching costs can strengthen customer ties with the company (Iqbal, Hasan, Bukhari, & Ramish, 2023). Additionally, switching costs increase customer affective loyalty, making customers emotionally bound to the company (Li, Ndubisi, Li, & Xu, 2024). Switching cost creates a higher commitment from customers because they feel that moving to another provider would be detrimental to them. Moreover, switching cost can influence customer perceptions of experience, where customers tend to value existing relationships more if they feel there is a significant cost to switch (Anisa & Tjhin, 2023).

The moderating role of switching cost in the relationship between interpersonal communication and customer experiences with attitudinal loyalty is very important because high switching costs can make customers more bound to the company. When customers feel that switching to another provider will incur costs, whether financial, time, or effort, they tend to remain loyal. This increases emotional commitment and positive attitudes toward the company. High switching costs can also make customers appreciate their experiences with the company more. Customers tend to view positive experiences as valuable investments, which encourages stronger attitudinal loyalty. Several studies also show that switching cost plays an important role as a moderating variable on loyalty (Anisa & Tjhin, 2023; Kang & Lee, 2022; Rinenggo, Sudiro, Sunaryo, & Hussein, 2024; Shen & Ahmad, 2022).

Based on the entire description above, the novelty of this research lies in the addition of switching cost as a moderating variable. This study not only explains the relationship between interpersonal communication and customer experiences on attitudinal loyalty but also provides new insights into how high switching costs can strengthen the relationship between interpersonal communication and customer experiences with attitudinal loyalty in a B2B context. This offers a significant contribution to existing literature and provides a basis for more effective marketing practices in building long-term relationships with loyal customers and ultimately improving CV XYZ's sales performance.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Interpersonal Communication

Communication is central to service activities because, through the communication process, business actors can understand customer desires precisely. Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, and emotions between two or more people. In a business context, this often occurs between the company and the customer, where effective communication can create better relationships (Wiranti, 2023). Good communication can create an emotional connection between the customer and the company. When customers feel emotionally connected, they are more likely to remain loyal despite other options. Through good communication, companies can better understand customer needs and expectations (Çelik & Karakaş, 2021). Research by Çelik & Karakaş (2021) revealed that interpersonal communication has a significant and positive influence on customer loyalty. This indicates that good interaction between the company and the customer can increase customer loyalty. Research by Jayasankaraprasad (2022) also revealed that interpersonal communication helps create a sense of community and meaningful dialogue between customers and the company, which in turn increases customer emotional loyalty. Research by Magatef et al. (2023) also shows interpersonal communication as part of personalization significantly influences customer loyalty. This study suggests that good communication and personalized interaction contribute to increased customer loyalty.

2.2. Customer Experiences

Customer experiences are the overall interactions a customer has with a company, from start to finish. This includes every touchpoint, whether before, during, or after the purchase (Jayasankaraprasad, 2022). Customer experience has consistently been the most important source of long-term competitive advantage for suppliers (Ahmad et al., 2022). Positive customer experiences can result in increased organizational commitment, reflected in customer loyalty (Ahmad et al., 2022). Because customer experience has a positive impact on loyalty, companies gain various benefits, including increased trust, customer satisfaction, loyalty, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth (Manyanga et al., 2022; Sudiyono et al., 2022; Urdea & Constantin, 2021). Customer experiences also form emotional associations, thereby developing trust, anticipating needs, and extending retention, which shows an important role in attracting loyalty intentions (Karim et al., 2022).

2.3. The Moderating Role of Switching Cost

Switching cost is the cost that customers must bear when moving from one service provider to another (Dick & Basu, 1994). In the context of B2B companies, understanding the role of switching cost is crucial because high switching costs can strengthen customer ties with the company (Iqbal et al., 2023). Additionally, switching costs increase customer affective loyalty, making customers emotionally bound to the company (Li et al., 2024). Switching cost creates a higher commitment from customers because they feel that moving to another provider would be detrimental to them. Moreover, switching cost can influence customer perceptions of experience, where customers tend to value existing relationships more if they feel there is a significant cost to switch (Anisa & Tjhin, 2023). Meanwhile, attitudinal loyalty in a B2B context refers to emotional attachment and deep customer commitment to the service provider. This loyalty reflects a relationship that is more than just a transaction, where customers feel satisfied and have a positive attitude toward the brand. The process of developing attitudinal loyalty begins with prior knowledge and experience, which then forms a positive emotional attitude and encourages the intention to make repeat purchases (Bardauskaite, 2014).

The moderating role of switching cost in the relationship between interpersonal communication and customer experiences with attitudinal loyalty is very important because high switching costs can make customers more bound to the company. When customers feel that switching to another provider will incur costs, whether financial, time, or effort, they tend to remain loyal. This increases emotional commitment and positive attitudes toward the company. High switching costs can also make customers appreciate their experiences with the company more. Customers tend to view positive experiences as valuable investments, which encourages stronger attitudinal loyalty. Several studies also show that switching cost plays an important role as a moderating variable on loyalty (Anisa & Tjhin, 2023; Kang & Lee, 2022; Rinenggo et al., 2024; Shen & Ahmad, 2022).

2.4. Hypothesis Development

H1: Interpersonal communication has a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty.

H2: Customer experiences have a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty.

H3: High switching cost strengthens the relationship between interpersonal communication and attitudinal loyalty.

H4: High switching cost strengthens the relationship between customer experiences and attitudinal loyalty.

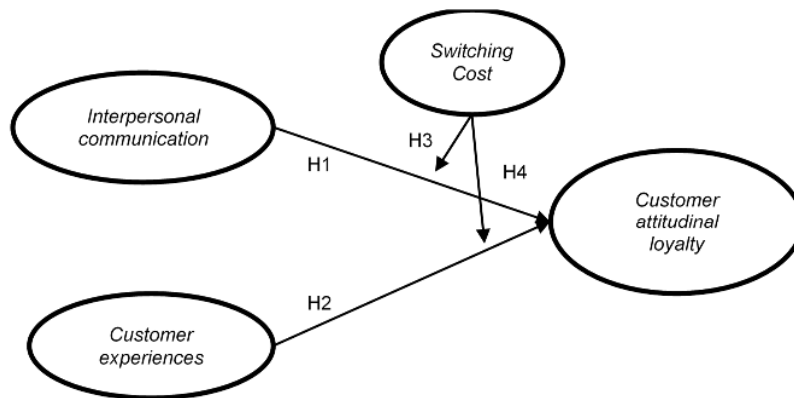


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

III. Research Method

3.1. Research Design

This study uses a quantitative explanatory research approach with a cross-sectional design. A cross-sectional design is a research design that measures exposure variables (causes) and outcome variables (effects) simultaneously at a single point in time in a specific population, rather than over a long period.

3.2. Sample and Procedure

The population of this study consists of 54 customers of CV XYZ, who are business actors such as restaurants, cafes, and food service providers requiring seafood raw materials from the company. These business actors were chosen because they have direct experience interacting with CV XYZ, allowing them to provide valuable insights into interpersonal communication, customer experiences, and attitudinal loyalty. Given the limited population size, the sampling technique used was saturated sampling (census), where all existing business actors were included in this study. The data collection process was carried out by distributing questionnaires directly to all CV XYZ customers between May 1, 2025, and May 15, 2025. The questionnaire was designed to measure the variables of interpersonal communication, customer experiences, attitudinal loyalty, and switching costs.

3.3. Instrument

The survey questionnaire instrument was adapted from measurement scales established in the literature to assess interpersonal communication, customer experiences, customer attitudinal loyalty, and switching cost. All items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale.

3.4. Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique used in this study is quantitative data analysis using the Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) model with the assistance of SmartPLS version 3. The researcher's consideration in using PLS is because PLS can be used to perform theoretical confirmation (theoretical testing) and recommend relationships that do not yet have a theoretical basis (exploratory), and PLS can analyze constructs formed with reflective indicators and formative indicators simultaneously.

IV. Result and Discussion



4.1. Respondent Profile

The respondents of my research are 54 B2B customers of CV XYZ, which is a company providing high-quality seafood products, including shrimp, fish, and crab, to various industry players, such as restaurants, cafes, and food service providers needing seafood raw materials from the company. The respondents of this study were dominated by males (70.4%), indicating that the decision-making for purchasing seafood raw materials among CV XYZ customers is mostly done by male respondents. In terms of business type, most respondents came from restaurants (44.4%), followed by cafes and catering services. Based on position, respondents were dominated by business owners and managers. In terms of length of being a customer, the majority of respondents have worked with CV XYZ for 1–3 years (40.7%). Meanwhile, based on business scale, most respondents are medium-sized enterprises (48.1%).

4.2. Moderated Regression Analysis (MRA) Evaluation

This study used SmartPLS software to analyze the data. This section covers two parts of the research results. The first segment explains factor loading, construct authenticity, and effectiveness (measurement model); whereas the second segment explains the directional study and assumption tests (structural model) as shown in “Figure 3. Structural model”. In SmartPLS, data is permanently approved following the multivariate outlier test. Figure 2 shows the measurement model, and Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) values are shown in Table 1.

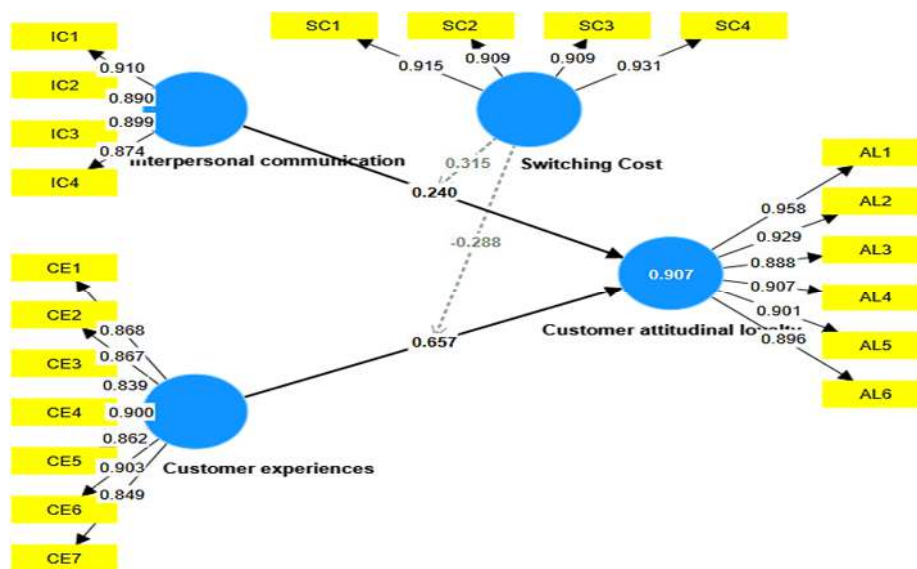


Figure 2. Measurement Model

Table 1 Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Loading	Cronbach’s alpha	CR	AVE
Interpersonal communication	IC1	0,910	0,916	0,917	0,798
	IC2	0,890			
	IC3	0,899			
	IC4	0,874			
Customer experiences	CE1	0,868	0,946	0,947	0,757
	CE2	0,867			
	CE3	0,839			
	CE4	0,900			

	CE5	0,862			
	CE6	0,903			
	CE7	0,849			
Switching cost	SC1	0,915	0,936	0,936	0,839
	SC2	0,909			
	SC3	0,909			
	SC4	0,931			
Customer attitudinal loyalty	AL1	0,958	0,960	0,961	0,834
	AL2	0,929			
	AL3	0,888			
	AL4	0,907			
	AL5	0,901			
	AL6	0,896			

Next, the discussion section delves into interpreting the meaning and implications of the results. This is where the researcher explains what the findings mean and how they relate to the existing body of research in the field. The discussion should go beyond simply restating the results and instead focus on evaluating the significance and broader context of the findings. (Ghasemi et al., 2019)

4.3. Validity and Reliability Analysis

Effectiveness and authenticity values were evaluated in this study. The threshold value for an element is 0.7 or greater and is considered sustainable (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). In this study, element values were within the intended range. The Cronbach's Alpha threshold of 0.7 or 0.6 is considered sustainable (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017), while this study states that the lowest Cronbach's Alpha value, 0.916, is acceptable. The composite reliability threshold is 0.70. In this study, the composite reliability value is greater than 0.70, which is considered higher than the threshold value. In this study, the smallest composite reliability value is 0.817, which is considered exceptional, and the smallest average variance extracted (AVE) value is 0.757, which is considered to meet the threshold value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017).

Tabel 2. Cross Loading Evaluation

Items	Customer attitudinal loyalty	Customer experiences	Interpersonal communication	Switching cost
AL1	0,958	0,894	0,870	0,871
AL2	0,929	0,860	0,827	0,738
AL3	0,888	0,827	0,801	0,716
AL4	0,907	0,819	0,777	0,735
AL5	0,901	0,805	0,762	0,749
AL6	0,896	0,865	0,808	0,767
CE1	0,818	0,868	0,840	0,715
CE2	0,828	0,867	0,762	0,767
CE3	0,780	0,839	0,717	0,632
CE4	0,799	0,900	0,777	0,785
CE5	0,781	0,862	0,732	0,758
CE6	0,825	0,903	0,758	0,753
CE7	0,806	0,849	0,739	0,715
IC1	0,837	0,832	0,910	0,765
IC2	0,764	0,751	0,890	0,793
IC3	0,797	0,747	0,899	0,703
IC4	0,761	0,796	0,874	0,811
SC1	0,771	0,775	0,826	0,915
SC2	0,766	0,789	0,779	0,909

SC3	0,753	0,721	0,761	0,909
SC4	0,775	0,801	0,778	0,931

4.4. Discriminant Validity Analysis

Discriminant validity can be evaluated through the cross-loading values of indicators. In this approach, each indicator is expected to have the highest loading value on the construct it measures compared to loadings on other constructs (Hair et al., 2017). The analysis results show that all indicators have the highest cross-loading values on their respective constructs, as well as a sufficient difference compared to other constructs. These findings confirm that each indicator is capable of representing the measured construct precisely and that there is no measurement overlap between constructs.

Table 3. Hypothesis Assessment Summary

Variabel	Original sample (O)	T statistics	P values
Interpersonal communication -> Customer attitudinal loyalty	0,240	2,171	0,030
Customer experiences -> Customer attitudinal loyalty	0,657	4,601	0,000
Switching cost x Interpersonal communication -> Customer attitudinal loyalty	0,315	1,965	0,049
Switching cost x Customer experiences -> Customer attitudinal loyalty	-0,288	1,893	0,058

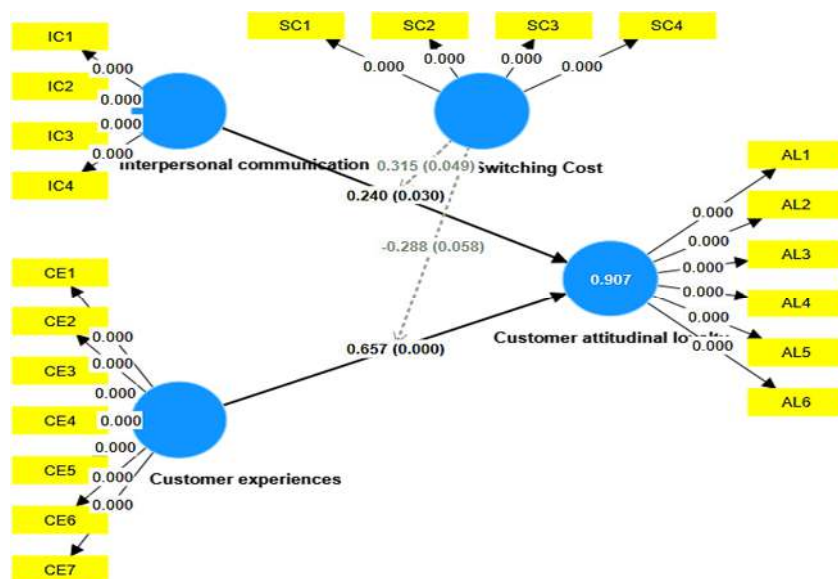


Figure 3. Structural Model

4.5. Hypothesis Testing

This study accommodates four hypotheses testing the influence of interpersonal communication and customer experiences on customer attitudinal loyalty with switching cost as a moderating variable. Hypothesis 1: The results support Hypothesis 1, showing that Interpersonal communication has a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty ($\beta=0.240$, $p=0.030$). The better the interpersonal communication established between CV XYZ and the customer, the higher the level of customer attitudinal loyalty, reflected in positive attitudes, trust, and customer commitment to the company. This is supported by research by Çelik & Karakaş

(2021), Jayasankaraprasad (2022), Magatef et al. (2023), which revealed that interpersonal communication has a significant and positive influence on customer loyalty.

Hypothesis 2: The statement that customer experiences have a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty is supported ($\beta=0.657$, $p=0.000$). The more positive the customer experience in interacting and transacting with CV XYZ, the higher the level of customer attitudinal loyalty. This is supported by previous research showing that positive customer experiences can result in increased organizational commitment, reflected in customer loyalty (Manyanga et al., 2022; Sudiyono et al., 2022; Urdea & Constantin, 2021). Hypothesis 3: The statement that high switching cost strengthens the relationship between interpersonal communication and attitudinal loyalty is supported ($\beta=0.315$, $p=0.049$). This finding indicates that the positive influence of interpersonal communication on customer loyal attitude becomes stronger when customers face high switching costs, whether in the form of financial costs, time, or operational risks, so customers tend to maintain business relationships with CV XYZ. This is supported by research by Kang & Lee (2022), Rinenggo et al. (2024), stating that the level of switching costs can influence a customer's decision to remain loyal to a brand. When switching costs are high, customers tend to stay despite other options, provided the interpersonal communication experience received is positive.

Hypothesis 4: The statement that high switching cost strengthens the relationship between customer experiences and attitudinal loyalty is not supported ($\beta=-0.288$, $p=0.058$). This finding indicates that although customers have positive experiences with CV XYZ, high switching costs do not significantly increase the influence of those experiences on customer loyal attitudes. In fact, the negative coefficient indicates that high switching costs tend to weaken the relationship between customer experiences and attitudinal loyalty, although the effect is not statistically significant. Theoretically, customer experiences are affective and evaluative constructs, reflecting the customer's overall assessment of interactions, service quality, and long-term relationships with the provider (Jayasankaraprasad, 2022). When customer experiences are already positive and consistent, the loyalty formed is intrinsic, driven by satisfaction, trust, and emotional commitment. In this condition, switching cost becomes less relevant as a reinforcing factor, because customers stay not because they are "forced," but because they "want to" (Karim et al., 2022). Furthermore, in the context of B2B business relationships, customers are generally more rational and strategic in evaluating suppliers. Customers with good experiences will remain loyal even if switching costs are relatively low, as long as the supplier is able to provide superior value sustainably (Manyanga et al., 2022; Sudiyono et al., 2022; Urdea & Constantin, 2021).

V. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the influence of interpersonal communication and customer experiences on customer attitudinal loyalty, as well as to test the role of switching cost as a moderating variable in the context of B2B business relationships among CV XYZ customers. The hypothesis testing results show that both interpersonal communication and customer experiences play an important role in shaping customer attitudinal loyalty. The research findings show that interpersonal communication has a positive and significant effect on attitudinal loyalty. This indicates that the more effective the interpersonal communication established between CV XYZ and the customer—characterized by openness, understanding of needs, and support in business processes—the stronger the customer's loyal attitude toward the company. This finding confirms the importance of communication as a main foundation in building long-term relationships in a B2B context. Furthermore, the research results also show that customer experiences have a positive and significant effect on attitudinal loyalty, with a relatively stronger influence coefficient compared to interpersonal communication. This finding confirms that positive, consistent, and valuable customer experiences in every interaction and transaction with CV XYZ are capable of forming deeper attitudinal loyalty, reflected in trust, commitment, and the intention to maintain business relationships.

Moreover, this study found that switching cost significantly strengthens the relationship between interpersonal communication and attitudinal loyalty. This indicates that when customers face high switching

costs, the influence of interpersonal communication on attitudinal loyalty becomes even stronger. In other words, the combination of positive interpersonal communication and high switching costs encourages customers to maintain business relationships with CV XYZ. However, the research results also show that switching cost does not significantly moderate the relationship between customer experiences and attitudinal loyalty. This finding indicates that attitudinal loyalty formed from positive customer experiences is intrinsic and does not depend on switching barriers. Customers remain loyal not because of compulsion due to high switching costs, but because of the superior value and experience perceived from the business relationship with CV XYZ. Overall, these research results confirm that attitudinal loyalty in a B2B context is more effectively built through relationship quality and customer experiences, compared to relying solely on switching barrier mechanisms.

These research findings have important policy and managerial implications for companies operating in the B2B seafood raw material supplier industry, particularly CV XYZ. First, CV XYZ management needs to prioritize strengthening interpersonal communication with customers by improving the quality of interaction between the sales team, operations team, and customers. This can be done through interpersonal communication training, improving the ability to understand customer needs, and implementing transparent and responsive communication in every business process. Second, the company needs to focus its business strategy on creating superior and consistent customer experiences, ranging from seafood product quality, delivery accuracy, service flexibility, to customer complaint handling. Since customer experience is proven to have the strongest influence on attitudinal loyalty, investing in customer experience management is key to building sustainable long-term relationships. Third, although switching cost is proven to strengthen the influence of interpersonal communication on loyalty, research results show that the use of switching cost should not be the main strategy in building customer loyalty. Therefore, company policy should direct switching cost as a supporting factor, for example through long-term contracts, ordering system integration, or service adjustments based on customer needs, without creating a sense of compulsion that can negatively impact attitudinal loyalty.

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