



The Effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty with Brand Trust as a Mediating Variable : A Study of PT. Additon Karya Sembada's Admixture Products

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Abstract

Service quality remains a critical issue for customer retention in business-to-business (B2B) industries where operational failure may directly disrupt project performance. This study investigates how service quality influences customer loyalty and examines the role of brand trust within the Indonesian construction admixture industry, with empirical evidence drawn from PT.Additon Karya Sembada. The study is motivated by recent indications of declining customer acquisition and increasing attrition among project-based clients, suggesting potential weakness in service execution and operational reliability. A quantitative approach was employed using a cross-sectional survey of 112 active B2B customers, including distributors, contractors, and concrete producers. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. Service quality, brand trust and Customer loyalty were measured using established multidimensional scales adapted to the industrial context. The results reveal that service quality has a strong and statistically significant effect on customer loyalty, as well as a significant influence on brand trust. However, brand trust does not demonstrate a significant impact on customer loyalty and does not function as a mediating variable between service quality and loyalty. These findings indicate that, within performance-oriented B2B markets, customer loyalty is primarily shaped by tangible service outcomes such as delivery reliability, responsiveness, and technical problem resolution rather than by trust-based or emotional considerations. This study contributes to the service quality and relationship marketing literature by highlighting the context-dependent role of brand trust in B2B settings. From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that firms in the construction chemical sector should prioritize operational service excellence as a strategic mechanism for sustaining long term customer loyalty

Keywords: Service Quality; Brand trust; Customer Loyalty; B2B



Introduction

In business-to-business (B2B) industrial market, customer loyalty is increasingly shaped by a firm's ability to deliver consistent and reliable service performance rather than by symbolic brand attributes. For companies operating in project-based environments, service failures may lead to production delays, cost overruns, and operational risk, making service quality a decisive factor in sustaining long term business relationship. As competition intensifies within the construction chemical industry, firms are required not only to offer technically sound products but also to ensure dependable service execution that supports customers' operational continuity. Consequently, understanding the mechanisms through which service quality influences customer loyalty has become a critical issue for both research and practitioners.

Service quality framework proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) defines service quality as a multidimensional construct comprising tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. A substantial body of empirical research across different sectors indicates that superior service quality contributes to higher customer satisfaction and supports the developments of enduring customer loyalty. Recent studies further highlight that service quality remains a key determinant of loyalty, even under conditions where product attributes or pricing strategies vary (Sutiono et al.,2025; Theodore & sitinjak, 2024)

Nevertheless, the linkage between service quality and customer loyalty is not always entirely direct. Prior research suggests that brand trust may serve as an important psychological pathway through which service quality influences loyalty outcomes. Brand trust represents customers'belief in a firm's capability to reliably fulfill its promises and to act in a manner that safeguards customer'interests (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 20010. When service encounters are perceived as dependable and responsive, customer tend to develop higher levels of trust which help to mitigate perceived risk and reinforces relational ties. Empirical evidence from business-to-customer (B2C) settings, including e-commerce, hospitality, and financial services, demonstrates that brand trust often operates as a mediating variable in the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty (Affandi et al., 2022; Adawiyah et al.,2024)

Despite the existing body of research, empirical evidence from business-to business (B2B) setting remains mixed and inconclusive. In B2B environments, purchasing decisions are generally characterized by rational evaluation, performance orientation, and project-based considerations. Customer tend to place greater emphasis on factor such as operational dependability, technical assistance, delivery precision, and supply continuity rather than on emotional or symbolic attachment to a particular brand. Several studies have reported that although service quality plays a significant role in building trust, brand trust does not consistently lead to customer loyalty in low-involvement or performance-focused industries (Nana & ending,2016; Gatot & Sri,2025). This divergence in findings points to a theoretical gap concerning the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty within B2B contexts

This issue becomes especially salient in the contrusction chemical sector, where deficiencies in service performance can directly affect project schedules and elevate operational risks. PT.additon Karya Sembada, an Indonesian producer of construction admixture materials, serves a range of B2B clients, including distributors, contractor, ready-mix concrete producers and precast manufacturers. Internal organizational records reveal a sustained decrease in new customer acquisition alongside rising customer attrition, particularly among project-based clients. These patterns indicate possible shortcomings in service consistency and perceived operational reliability, which may adversely influence both customer trust and long term loyalty.

Field evidence indicates that long-standing clients of PT.Additon Karya Sembada tend to sustain their business relationship not merely because of pricing or product characteristics, but largely due to the company's responsive technical assistance, effective problem-solving, and punctual delivery performance. In contrast, newly acquired customers are more susceptible to switching to alternative suppliers when service responsiveness deteriorates or when competitors introduce more attractive offers. This pattern suggests that customer loyalty within this industry is not static and is influenced more strongly by the quality of service execution than by brand image or reputation alone.

From an academic perspective, most prior studies examining the mediating role of brand trust have focused on B2B sectors, such as retail, hospitality, fintech, and digital platforms. Empirical research within B2B construction-related industries particularly the admixture sector remains limited. Moreover, few studies explicitly test whether brand trust mediates the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in performance-driven industrial markets.

In performance-driven B2B contexts, customer loyalty may be shaped more directly by service execution than by psychological mechanisms such as trust. As a result, brand trust may not function as a mediator but rather as a parallel outcome of service quality. Therefore, this study aims to address this empirical and theoretical gap by examining the effect of the service quality on customer loyalty, with brand trust as a mediating variable, in the context of PT.Additon Karya Sembada's admixture products. By employing structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), this research seeks to clarify whether customer loyalty in the B2B construction chemical industry is driven directly by service quality or indirectly through the development of brand trust. The findings are expected to contribute to the service quality and relationship marketing literature while offering practical insights for firms seeking to strengthen customer retention in highly competitive B2B environments.

Research Methods

This research utilized a quantitative explanatory design to investigate the causal connections among service quality, brand trust and customer loyalty. The explanatory method is suitable since the study aims to evaluate hypotheses based on theory and assess the strength and direction of connections among hidden variables. A cross-sectional survey approach was utilized, during which data were gathered at one specific moment from participants who fulfilled established criteria.

The participants in this research include all current clients of PT.Additon Karya Sembada who have bought admixture products. Due to the business-to-business (B2B) characteristics of the sector, clients generally consist of distributors, contractors, producers of ready-mix concrete, and precast manufacturers. A purposive sampling method was used to ensure that participants had adequate experience and understanding of the company's service quality. The criteria for sampling were outlined as follows :

- (1) Customers who have bought admixture products from PT Additon Karya Sembada no fewer than two times, and
- (2) Customers who have conducted business dealings with the company in the previous 12 months.

According to these standards, 112 valid responses were gathered and considered appropriate for analysis. This number of participants fulfills the basic criteria for Partial Least Squares

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS), which is appropriate for predictive analysis and smaller sample sizes (hair et al.,2021).

Primary data was gathered utilizing a formal survey that was shared through various methods, such as online messaging apps, emails, and in-person visits to clients. The survey was created utilizing recognized measurement tools from previous research and tailored to fit the specific environment of the construction chemical sector. Every question in the survey was evaluated using a five -point Likert scale, with options from 1 (strong disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Before the full rollout, the survey was examined to verify its clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research goals.

The constructs used in this study were operationalized as follows:

- **Service Quality (X):**

Service quality was measured using the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), which includes five indicators tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions were selected due to their widespread application and empirical validation across various service industries, including industrial and B2B contexts.

- **Brand Trust (Z):**

Brand trust was measured using indicators adapted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), covering three dimensions: competence, integrity, and benevolence. These indicators capture customers' confidence in the firm's ability, honesty, and genuine concern for customer interests.

- **Customer Loyalty (Y):**

Customer loyalty was measured based on Oliver's (1999) four indicators loyalty framework, comprising cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty. This multidimensional approach reflects both attitudinal and behavioral aspects of loyalty, which are particularly relevant in B2B relationships.

Data examination was performed utilizing Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) through the SmartPLS application. The choice of SEM-PLS was based on its capability to manage intricate models that involve latent variables, its appropriateness for both exploratory and forecasting studies, and its strength in dealing with non-normal data distributions (hair et., 2021).

The evaluation followed a two-stage procedure :

- (1) Outer Model Evaluation : Convergent validity was assessed using indicator loadings (>0.70) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE >0.50), Reliability was evaluated using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha, with values exceeding 0.70 indicating acceptable internal consistency. Discrimant validity was examined using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio <0.90
- (2) Inner Model Evaluation : the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess the explanatory power of endogenous constructs. Effect size (f^2) was calculated to determine the relative impact of exogenous variables. Predictive relevance was assessed using Q^2 values obtained through blindfolding procedures. Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping method with a significant level of a 5% and obtain t-statistics and p-values.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their responses would be treated confidentially, and used solely for academic purposes. No

personal or sensitive information was disclosed, ensuring compliance with ethical research standards.

Result

Measurement Model (Outer Model) Evaluation

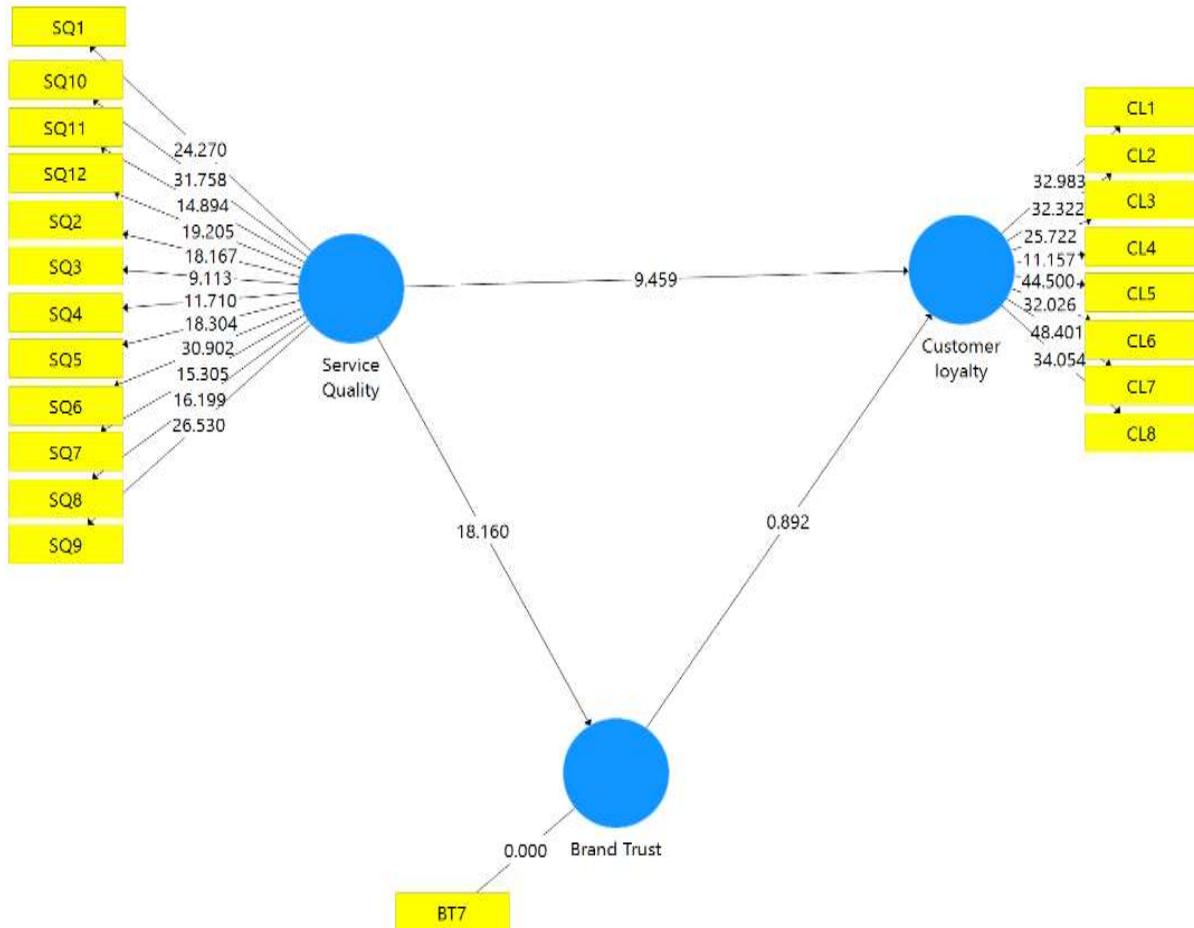


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: SmartPLS vr 3.2.9, data processed by researcher, 2025

Figure 1 displays the structural model that shows the connections between service quality, brand trust, and customer loyalty, as assessed through the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS_SEM). The model illustrates the direct connections between service quality and both brand trust and customer loyalty, along with the indirect connection from service quality to customer loyalty through brand trust.

Table 1 Convergent Validity and Measurement Reliability Indicators (Outer Loading Values)

Variables	Item	Brand Trust	Customer Loyalty	Service Quality	Valid
Brand Trust (Z)	Z1.1	0.774			
	Z1.2	0.776			
	Z1.3	0.860			
	Z2.1	0.815			
	Z2.2	0.846			
	Z3.1	0.881			
Customer Loyalty (Y)	Z3.2	0.847			
	Y1.1		0.838		
	Y1.2		0.826		
	Y2.1		0.819		
	Y2.2		0.718		
	Y3.1		0.893		
Service Quality (X)	Y3.2		0.866		Valid
	Y4.1		0.885		
	Y4.2		0.864		
	X1.1			0.804	
	X1.2			0.798	
	X1.3			0.707	
Service Quality (X)	X2.1			0.725	
	X2.2			0.791	
	X2.3			0.884	
	X3.1			0.809	
	X3.2			0.788	
	X4.1			0.857	
Service Quality (X)	X4.2			0.804	
	X5.1			0.706	
	X5.2			0.798	

Source: SmartPLS vr 3.2.9, data processed by researcher, 2025

The loading values for the indicators vary between 0. 706 and 0. 893, surpassing the suggested minimum level of 0. 70. This suggests that all indicators sufficiently reflect their corresponding constructs and exhibit acceptable convergent validity. Hair et al. (2021) state that loading values greater than 0. 70 validate that the indicators are dependable and appropriate for additional examination.

Table 2 Average Variance Extracted

Variables	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Customer Loyalty	0.706
Brand Trust	0.688
Service Quality	0.632

Source: SmartPLS vr 3.2.9, data processed by researcher, 2025

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores for every construct are greater than 0.50 (customer loyalty = 0.706; brand trust = 0.688; service quality = 0.632), which shows sufficient convergent validity since each construct accounts for over 50% of the variance in its indicator (Hair et al., 2021).

Discriminant validity was assessed through the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, with all measurements falling under the important cutoff of 0.90, signifying sufficient discriminant validity across the constructs. While the HTMT value connecting service quality and customer

loyalty is fairly elevated (0.851), it says under the strict criterion of 0.90, demonstrating satisfactory discriminant validity.

Table 2 Discriminant Validity Assesment using HTMT

	Brand Trust	Customer loyalty	Service Quality
Brand Trust			
Customer loyalty	0.649		
Service Quality	0.753	0.851	

Source: SmartPLS vr 3.2.9, data processed by researcher, 2025

Table 3 Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Brand Trust	1.000	1.000	1.000
Customer loyalty	0.940	0.944	0.950
Service Quality	0.946	0.949	0.954

Source: SmartPLS vr 3.2.9, data processed by researcher, 2025

The values of Cronbach's Alpha, rho-A and Composite Reliability for all constructs are greater than the suggested minimum of 0.70, demonstrating robust internal consistency. The ideal reliability values of 1.00 for brand trust indicate that the indicators measuring this construct are very similar and are being measured consistently (Hair et al., 2021)

Structural Model (Inner Model) Evaluation

The structural model was assessed by reviewing the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and effect size (f^2).

Table 5 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Trust	0.542	0.537
Customer loyalty	0.664	0.658

Source: SmartPLS vr 3.2.9, data processed by researcher, 2025

The R^2 and adjusted R^2 values suggest that the structural model shows a moderate to strong ability to explain brand trust ($(R^2 = 0.542$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.537$) and has a strong ability to explain customer loyalty ($(R^2 = 0.664$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.658$). This implies that the model sufficiently accounts for the variation in the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4 Hypothesis Test Summary Direct Effects

No	Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Inference
H1	Service Quality -> Customer loyalty	0.757	0.764	0.069	10.943	0.000	Supported
H2	Service Quality -> Brand Trust	0.736	0.737	0.048	15.448	0.000	Supported
H3	Brand Trust -> Customer loyalty	0.077	0.072	0.082	0.942	0.346	Not supported

Source: SmartPLS vr 3.2.9, data processed by researcher, 2025

The hypothesis testing results indicate that service quality has a strong and significant positive effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.757$; $t = 10.943$; $p < 0.001$) and brand trust ($\beta = 0.736$; $t = 15.448$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H1 and H2. In contrast, Brand trust does not have a significant effect on Customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.077$; $t = 0.942$; $p = 0.346$), indicating that H3 is not supported. These results suggest that customer loyalty is driven primarily by service quality rather than by brand trust in this research context.

Table 5 Hypothesis Test Summary Specific Indirect Effect

No	Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Inference
H4	Service Quality -> Brand Trust -> Customer loyalty	0.057	0.052	0.060	0.941	0.347	Not supported

Source: SmartPLS vr 3.2.9, data processed by researcher, 2025

The mediating role of brand trust was assessed by examining the indirect effect of service quality on customer loyalty through brand trust. The results indicate that brand trust does not mediate the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. Although service quality significantly enhances brand trust, this trust does not function as a behavioral mechanism leading to customer loyalty in studied context.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that service quality is the dominant determinant of customer loyalty in B2B admixture industry. While brand trust is influenced by service quality, it does not function as a behavioral driver of loyalty. This suggests that customer loyalty in this context is shaped primarily by operational performance, such as responsiveness, delivery reliability, and technical support, rather than relational or emotional trust.

Discussion

This section discusses the study's findings by linking the empirical results to relevant theoretical perspectives and prior research. The discussion begins by addressing the direct effect of service quality on customer loyalty, followed by an evaluation of how service quality influences brand trust. It then explains why brand trust does not function as an intervening variable in the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty within the B2B construction admixture context. Through this structured approach, the discussion aims to clarify the underlying mechanisms that shape customer loyalty in performance-oriented industrial markets.

The results indicate that the quality of service has a strong and favorable impact on customer loyalty. This result aligns with the core principles of the service quality theory, which highlight that excellent services enhance customer loyalty and promotes ongoing buying behavior. In line with the service quality model suggested by Parasuraman and colleagues. In 1988, factors like reliability and responsiveness become especially important in determining customer loyalty in industrial markets. This outcome corresponds with earlier research that has recognized service quality as an essential factor influencing loyalty in both service-heavy and B2B environments (Sutiono et al., 2025; Theodore and Sitinjak 2024). In the operational setting of PT. Additon Karya Sembada, reliable delivery, prompt technical assistance, and steady service execution are crucial to maintaining project continuity, which encourages customers to uphold long-term business associations.

The results further indicate that service quality has a significant effect on brand trust. This finding is consistent with relationship marketing theory, which posits that dependable, and consistent service performance strengthens customers' perceptions of a firm's competence and integrity (Chauhuri & Holbrook, 2021). When customers experience high levels of service quality, they are more inclined to believe that the company is capable of delivering on its commitments and acting in accordance with their interests. Similar empirical evidence has been documented in prior studies across different industry settings, which identify service quality as a key antecedent of trust (Affandi et al., 2022; Adawiyah et al., 2024). Within the context of the B2B admixture sector, service quality serves as an indicator of operational proficiency and professional reliability, thereby strengthening trust at the level of transactional interactions.

Unlike what is often assumed in business-to-consumer (B2C) studies, the results show that brand trust does not significantly affect customer loyalty. This result indicates that trust alone is inadequate to encourage loyal behavior in the situation studied. In B2B markets, buying choices are usually driven by logical evaluations, formal agreements, and criteria based on performance instead of emotional connections to a brand. Customers often highlight practical factors like the reliability of supply, compatibility with technology, and responsiveness of service. This finding aligns with earlier research carried out in industrial environments and low-involvement service contexts, indicating that brand trust does not always foster loyalty when customers perceive little difference among rival providers (Nana and Endang, 2016; Gracia and Santoso, 2020).

The lack of a strong link between brand trust and customer loyalty also explains why brand trust does not act as a mediator in the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. While improved service quality leads to higher trust levels, this trust does not function as a behavioral driver that results in loyal actions. Service quality directly affects customer loyalty, regardless of trust acting as a mediator. This discovery supports the idea that in B2B settings focused on performance, customer loyalty is mainly influenced by tangible service results rather than by emotional connections or relationships. Comparable findings have been observed in research focused on industrial markets and professional services, indicating that practical performance tends to be more influential than trust-related perceptions in determining loyalty behavior.

From a theoretical viewpoint, this study enhances the literature on service quality and relationship marketing by emphasizing that the role of brand trust as a mediator significantly depends on various contextual factors. While brand trust frequently serves as crucial linking factor in business-to-consumer (B2C) settings and in areas involving high commitment services, its influence tends to diminish in business-to-business (B2B) sectors that are marked by technical complexity, uniform products, and increased operational risks. These results help to provide a better understanding of the situations in which brand trust successfully acts as a mediating factor.

From a management perspective, the results indicate that PT. Additon Karya Sembada ought to concentrate on improving service delivery instead of mainly emphasizing brand-focused projects. Enhancing the responsiveness of services, increasing the accuracy of deliveries, and bolstering technical support functions are expected to lead to more prompt and lasting relationship, consistently delivering high-quality service becomes the key factor in encouraging long-term customer loyalty.

Conclusion

This research examined how service quality affects customer loyalty and evaluated the intermediary role of brand trust in a business-to-business (B2B) construction admixture company. The research results demonstrate that the quality of service has a powerful and direct effect on customer loyalty and also greatly increases trust in brand. Nevertheless, brand trust does not have a substantial impact on customer loyalty and thus does not act as a mediating factor in the connection between service quality and customer loyalty. These findings indicate that in the B2B admixture industry, customer loyalty is primarily influenced by the efficiency of service operations—specifically, reliability, responsiveness, and technical assistance—rather than by the emotional trust customers have in the brand.

Despite its contribution, this study has several limitations. The study focused only on active customers from one organization, which could restrict the general use of the results. Additionally, the research concentrated exclusively on service quality and brand trust, omitting other possible factor influencing customer loyalty—like product performance, pricing strategies, customer satisfaction, and barriers to switching—from the analysis. Future studies are recommended to tackle these limitations by adding more explanatory variables, expanding the research to various companies or industries, and using longitudinal research methods to more effectively track changes in customer perceptions and loyalty throughout time. From a managerial perspective, the results show that managers in performance-focused B2B markets ought to prioritize improving service delivery and technical responsiveness as key strategies to boost customer loyalty.

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