

## **Moment of Truth: Hotel Operation in The New Normal Time Towards Customer Loyalty Mediated by Customer Satisfaction**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of Zero Moment of Truth on the satisfaction of prospective hotel guests, analyze the First Moment of Truth's influence on the satisfaction of prospective hotel guests, analyze the Second Moment of Truth that affects the satisfaction of hotel guests, analyze the Ultimate Moment of Truth that affect the satisfaction of hotel guests and analyze the effect of satisfaction on loyalty. This study uses a quantitative approach with SEM analysis methods and uses the Smart PLS 3.2.9 program. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique with 150 respondents, specifically for hotel guests in Jakarta who stay in the new normal period. The results of the study stated that the First Moment of Truth has a positive influence on the satisfaction of prospective hotel guests, the Ultimate Moment of Truth has a positive influence on the satisfaction of hotel guests, and the satisfaction of hotel guests has a positive influence on loyalty. Meanwhile, Zero moment of truth does not positively influence the satisfaction of prospective hotel guests, and the Second moment of truth does not positively influence hotel guest satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Moments of truth; Customer satisfaction; Customer loyalty; Hotel.

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### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism in Indonesia decreased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The most affected industry is the hospitality industry. Based on Indonesia statistical center agency in 2021, the room occupancy rate (TPK) for star classification hotels in January 2021 was recorded at 30.35 percent or decreased by 18.82 points compared to the TPK in January 2020, which reached 49.17 percent. Compared to the previous month, December 2020, the TPK in January 2021 also decreased by 10.44 points. The TPK in Bali Province is still the lowest at only 11.15 percent, while the TPK in DKI Jakarta only reaches 41.12 percent (BPS, 2021; Kemenparekraf, 2021).

Hotel Star classification based on the average length of stay of foreign and Indonesian guests during December 2020 was recorded at 1.61 days, or a decrease of 0.15 points compared to December 2019. Meanwhile, the average length of stay of foreign and Indonesian guests in star-classification hotels during January 2021 reached 1.86 days or a decrease of 0.02 points compared to the average stay in January 2020. After the PSBB period, Indonesia is now entering a new average period (Kemenparekraf, 2021). The condition of the hotel industry is getting worse due to the PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions) recommendations not to leave home to reduce the spread of the virus. This has exacerbated the growth of the hospitality industry in Indonesia. With the government's support, including the hospitality sector, hotels can continue operating during the PSBB; hotels continue to adapt to the situation by providing the best service for their guests. By

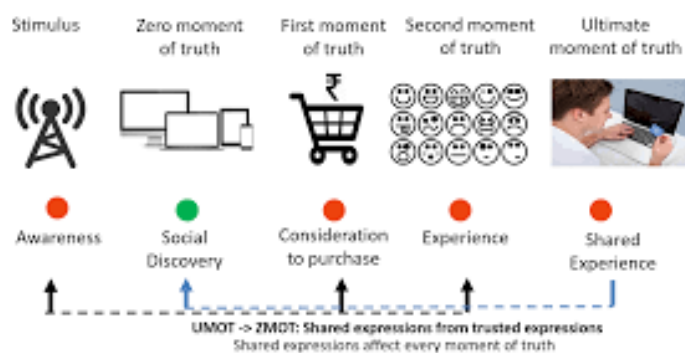
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implementing strict health protocols, the hotel industry ensures the health of its guests and employees (Khoiri, 2020).

New Normal is a change in behavior or habits to continue to carry out activities as usual but by consistently implementing health protocols amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Hotel operations started new regulations after the pandemic of COVID-19 from the check-in & check-out process for hotel guests, restaurant service processes, the process of cleaning hotel rooms and the hotel environment, the service process in the sports areas, employee work systems, the process of Meeting, Incentive, Conference, Event (MICE) to adapt health protocols and social restrictions (Khoiri, 2020). These are all procedures to increase and attract hotel guests to return and stay after the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing health protocols, ensuring guests' safety and health, and improving hotel hygiene standards. However, Indonesian consumer sentiment during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant decline in consumer interest in Indonesia to stay in hotels, down by 83%. In comparison, domestic travel decreased by 83% and international travel by 80% (Dahiya et al., 2020).

Hotels need to restore consumer interest in staying at the hotel, and it is necessary to create an impressive effect on potential guests so they can decide to stay at the hotel. To make an impression on prospective hotel guests, the hotel uses the concept of a moment of truth. Moments of truth are various opportunities/meeting interactions between companies and customers where the customer will experience and assess the company's services (Monroe, 2007; Lawrence, 2007).



**Figure 1. Stages of Moment of Truth**  
Source: Customerthink (2016)

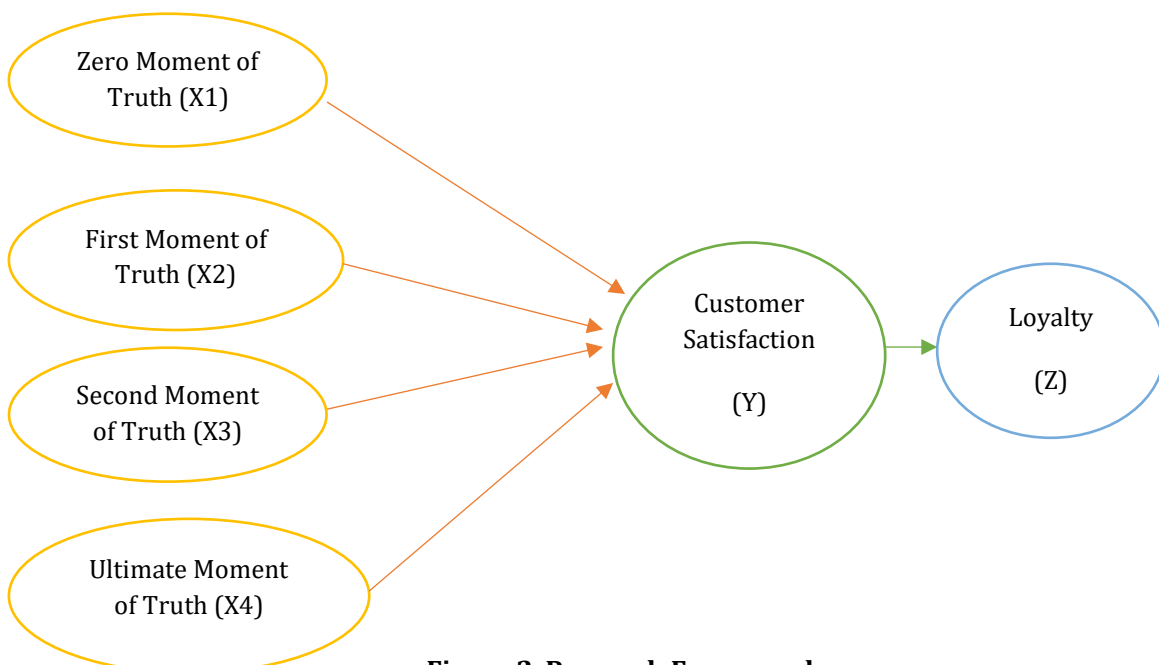
A moment of truth creates an impressive memory effect that makes an impression on customers' minds (memorable experience) (Lawrence, 2007). The stages in the moment of the truth start from the Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT), where other consumers use this ZMOT to review or review other consumer goods or services in need (Figure 1). The work of ZMOT is like testimonials given by consumers who have tried a company's products or services (Lecinski & Flint, 2011). These testimonials will be used by other consumers who want to try it as material for consideration and decision-making on usage. Then the stage of The First Moment of Truth (FMOT) is what people think of when they see a product or brand, which is the impression they form when they read words or see artwork that describes a product or brand or when customers buy the development and use it. After that, the Second Moment of Truth (SMOT) stage is what hotel guests feel, think, see, hear, touch, and smell about a product from time to time or when customers believe and use it for real. Moreover, the final stage of The Ultimate Moment of Truth (UMOT) is a shared moment at every step of the experience that becomes the next person's ZMOT.

The purpose of this moment of truth is to produce satisfaction. Satisfaction is a person's pleasure or disappointment after comparing the performance or perceived results to the expected performance (outcome) (Kotler and Keller, 2009). According to Solomon (2009), customer satisfaction is a set of beliefs or outputs related to customer experiences with products and services. The creation of customer satisfaction can provide several benefits for harmonious relationships between companies and customers, providing a reasonable basis for repeat purchases and creating customer loyalty, and forming a word-of-mouth recommendation that is profitable for service providers (Wardhana, 2016).

Customer satisfaction with a service depends on the interaction process or the time the customer and service provider meet. The creation of customer satisfaction can provide several benefits for harmonious relationships between companies and customers, providing a reasonable basis for repeat purchases and creating customer loyalty, and forming a word-of-mouth recommendation that is profitable for service providers (Tjiptono 2002; Griffin, 2005).

Customer satisfaction is the main factor in forming customer loyalty. Experts have proven the positive influence of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty (Ndubisi, 2007; Ringle et al., 2011; Haumann et al., 2014; Bejou, 2013). Satisfied customers will buy the products offered and influence other potential customers to purchase products and services from a company (Pollack, 2014). In line with Bunker et al., (2013) research, satisfied customers will suggest and say a positive word about the company to others through word of mouth (WOM).

The case studies in this research focus on hotels in Jakarta. Because Jakarta, the nation's capital and business city in Indonesia, has experienced a decline in hotel occupancy below 50 percent since the COVID-19 pandemic. The research aims to analyze the effect of the Zero Moment of Truth, the First Moment of Truth, the Second Moment of Truth, and the Ultimate Moment of Truth affecting Loyalty mediated by satisfaction (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Research Framework**

Source: Author Elaboration

**HYPOTHESIS:**

- H1: Zero Moment of Truth has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.
- H2: Frist Moment of Truth has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.
- H3: Second Moment of Truth has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.
- H4: Ultimate Moment of Truth has a positive influence on customer satisfaction.
- H5: Customer satisfaction has a positive influence on Loyalty.

**B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The study uses a quantitative approach with an SEM analysis using the Smart PLS 3.2.9 program. According to (Sugiyono, 2018), Quantitative Research is a research method based on the philosophy of positivism used to examine specific populations or samples; sampling techniques are generally carried out randomly, data collection uses research instruments, and data analysis is quantitative/statistical with the aim of test the established hypothesis.

**Table 1. Respondent Profile**

<b>Response Profile</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Presentation</b>
Gender	Men	68	68.0
	Woman	83	83.0
Age	< 21 years	10	10.0
	21- <31 year	45	45.0
	31- <41 year	50	50.0
	41- <50 year	35	35.0
	>50 year	10	10.0
Last Education	Diploma	50	50.0
	Bachelor	65	65.0
	Panca Undergraduate (S2/S3)	35	35.0
Work	PNS	10	10.0
	Lecturer	15	15.0
	Private Employees	45	45.0
	Freelance	20	20.0
	Honorary	10	10.0
	Entrepreneur	35	35.0
	Etc	15	15.0
Monthly Income	5.000.000 - <10.000.000	10	10.0
	10.000.000 - <15.000.000	25	25.0
	15.000.000 - <20.000.000	55	55.0
	20.000.000 - <25.000.000	45	45.0
	25.000.000 - <30.000.000	10	10.0
Length of Stay	35.000.000 more	5	5.0
	1-3 Night	75	75.0
	3-5 Night	65	65.0
	5-10 Night	10	10.0

Source: SPSS data processing results, (2021)

### Data Collection

The independent variable is the Moment of Truth; the intervening variable or mediation variable, Customer Satisfaction; and the dependent variable, Customer Loyalty. The population in this study are hotel guests who have stayed, especially in hotels in Jakarta, during the new normal. According to (Hair et al., 2013), in determining the number of samples, the researcher can use the criteria for the number of indicators multiplied by 5 (five) to 10 (ten). Then, utilizing the Structural Equation Model (SEM) equation, the recommended number of samples is determined in the example ranging between 100 -200 pieces. In this study, the number of indicators is 28, so when multiplied by 5, the minimum number of samples is 140 respondents, then rounded up to 150 respondents.

### Data Analysis Method

Data collection techniques in this study use Nonprobability Sampling. According to (Ghozali, 2016), Nonprobability Sampling is an element in the population that does not have the same chance of being selected as a sample. Therefore, the number of people is unknown. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling. The sample contains people who can provide the desired information; either that person is the only one who knows, or that person meets the criteria determined by the researcher. According to (Ghozali and Fuad, 2012) purposive sampling is sometimes necessary to obtain information from certain target groups. The sample in this study uses specific measures: hotel guests who have stayed at hotels, especially in Jakarta, from August 2020 to May 2021. Questionnaires are distributed evenly online using google forms, which are 150 questionnaires.

**Table 2. Validity Test, Reliability Test, Average Variance Extracted (Ave) Test, Composite Reliability Test**

Variable/Indicator	Loading Factor	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
<b>Moment of Truth</b>					
<b>Zero Moment of Truth</b>		0.709	0.907	0.863	Reliable
ZMOT 1	0.845				Valid
ZMOT 2	0.856				Valid
ZMOT 3	0.851				Valid
ZMOT 4	0.815				Valid
ZMOT 5					Valid
<b>First Moment of Truth</b>		0.722	0.928	0.904	Reliable
FMOT 1	0.854				Valid
FMOT 2	0.900				Valid
FMOT 3	0.906				Valid
FMOT 4	0.803				Valid
FMOT 5	0.779				Valid
<b>Second Moment of Truth</b>		0.676	0.912	0.880	Reliable
SMOT1	0.748				Valid
SMOT2	0.799				Valid
SMOT3	0.832				Valid
SMOT4	0.854				Valid
SMOT5	0.872				Valid

<b>Ultimate Moment of Truth</b>		0.587	0.875	0.825	Reliable
UMOT1	0.633				Valid
UMOT2	0.645				Valid
UMOT3	0.840				Valid
UMOT4	0.838				Valid
UMOT5	0.842				Valid
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>		0.733	0.916	0.878	Reliable
KP1	0.826				Valid
KP2	0.830				Valid
KP3	0.875				Valid
KP4	0.892				Valid
<b>Loyalty</b>		0.695	0.871	0.779	Reliable
L1	0.914				Valid
L2	0.853				Valid
L3	0.724				Valid

Source: Results of Smart PLS program data management, (2021)

### C. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

#### Moment of Truth Hypothesis Testing

The test results using the bootstrapping method based on Partial Least Square (PLS) analysis can be seen in figure 3.

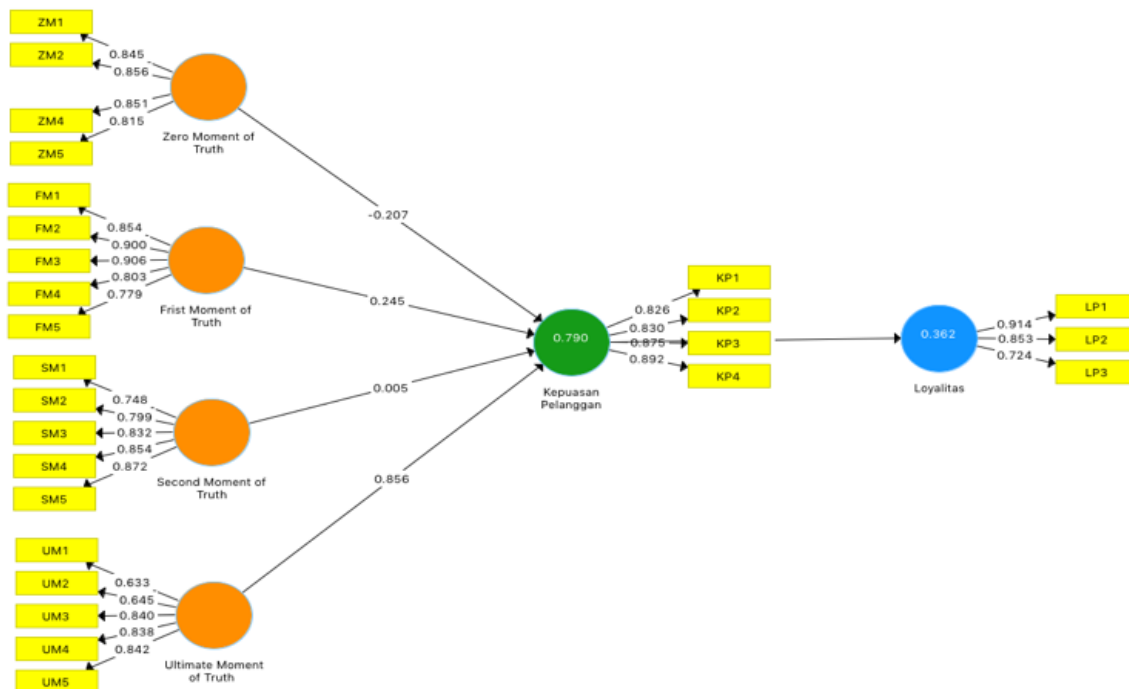


Figure 3. Bootstrapping Results of Moment of Truth Hypothesis Testing

Source: Results of data processing with Smart PLS 3.2.9 Software, (2021)

**Table 3. Moment of Truth Hypothesis Testing Direct Effect Output of Partial Least Square**

	<b>Hypothesis test</b>	<b>Original Sample Estimate</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>
<b>H1</b>	Zero Moment of Truth has a positive influence on customer satisfaction	-0.207	0.115	0.073	H1 Rejected
<b>H2</b>	First Moment of Truth has a positive influence on customer satisfaction	0.245	0.119	<b>0.041</b>	H2 Accepted
<b>H3</b>	Second Moment of Truth has a positive influence on customer satisfaction	0.005	0.081	0.949	H3 Rejected
<b>H4</b>	Ultimate Moment of Truth has a positive influence on customer satisfaction	0.856	0.064	<b>0.000</b>	H4 Accepted
<b>H5</b>	Customer satisfaction has a positive influence on Loyalty	0.602	0.061	<b>0.000</b>	H5 Accepted

Source: Results of Smart PLS program data processing, (2021)

**Hypothesis 1: Zero Moment of Truth has a positive effect on customer satisfaction**

Zero Moment of Truth occurs when you want to buy or search for something and look for information on the internet by comparing with each other and looking at reviews from other customers to make sure the decision is made. The findings of this study conclude that Zero Moment of Truth has no positive effect on customer satisfaction (see Table 3). It happened at the ZMOT stage; prospective hotel guests will seek information about hotel service operations during the new average period. In the future, hotel guests will seek as many testimonials as possible from guests who have stayed, not just one or two testimonials but more than that. Prospective hotel guests have yet to find testimonials stating that staying at a hotel in the new standard era makes them feel satisfied with the service. Future guests only get testimonials that provide an overview of check-in and check-out procedures with the application of standard health protocols. Likewise, it happened to the service process in restaurants, the process of cleaning hotel rooms and the hotel environment, sports services, as well as the process of MICE. The testimonials from hotel guests are not as expected from guests who have stayed and are not a consideration for potential hotel guests. Supported by the age of the most dominant respondents, namely 31-<41 years and 21-<31 years, these ages have many considerations in deciding to stay at a hotel.

Solomon (2004) argues that consumer satisfaction is determined by a person's overall feeling or behavior about a product after buying and consuming it. Therefore, satisfaction cannot be separated from consumer perceptions of product quality. According to Tjiptono (2008), customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the customer's responsibility to evaluate perceived dissatisfaction or disconfirmation between previous or other performance expectations and the product's actual performance after using it.

Meanwhile, dissatisfied customers can do several things that can harm the service provider; unhappy customers will act or not act (Quester et al., 2007). Therefore, the customer decides to be in an unpleasant situation by not taking action. However, the customer will misbehave toward the

service provider or company even if action is not taken. Therefore, the zero moment of truth stage, namely testimonials from hotel guests who have stayed, is not the primary consideration for hotel guests to stay at hotels during the new normal.

### **Hypothesis 2: First Moment of Truth has a positive effect on customer satisfaction**

The first Moment of Truth is what customers think when they see a product or brand. FMOT is also the first impression formed when they read words or see artwork that describes a product or brand. After the ZMOT process, where prospective guests seek information through reviews of guests who have stayed, prospective guests enter the FMOT stage, where the FMOT phase of this study focuses on hotel operations. Prospective guests get a first impression of hotel operations that implement health protocols. In this study, the most dominant first impression is the service process in sports. Hotel guests can spend more time improving their health, so hotel sports equipment and facilities are a significant concern. Likewise, the restaurant service process and the approach to meeting and seminar activities emphasize the application of health protocols. This is supported by the age of the most dominant respondents, namely 31-41 years and 21-31 years, and the length of stay of 1-3 nights is very concerned with aspects of satisfaction.

Solomon (2004) argues that consumer satisfaction is determined by a person's overall feeling or behavior about a product after buying and consuming it. Therefore, happiness cannot be separated from consumer perceptions of product quality. Customers who are satisfied with a service provided by a service provider tend to return to using the service if they experience problems in the future. The desire to return to use services due to satisfaction is to repeat good experiences and avoid bad experiences (Quester et al., 2007).

It can be concluded that the first moment of truth stage in this study has met the expectations of prospective hotel guests (see Table 3), especially in hotel services and operations in Jakarta during the new normal, thus affecting customer satisfaction.

### **Hypothesis 3: Second Moment of Truth has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.**

Second Moment of Truth is the moment when the consumer uses the product that has been purchased. This moment is a moment that dramatically affects consumer loyalty. The findings of this study conclude that the SMOT does not positively impact customer satisfaction (see Table 3). This happens because, at the Second Moment of Truth stage, hotel guests have experienced the services provided from the check-in & check-out process. Likewise, with the service process in restaurants, cleaning of hotel rooms and hotel surroundings, the process of sports services, and the process of events, meetings, & seminars, the results differ from the FMOT stage. It turns out that hotel guests are dissatisfied with the check-in & check-out process after staying that does not apply strict health protocols that are used only standards; likewise, with the service process in restaurants, cleaning of hotel rooms and the hotel environment, the process of sports services, and the process of events, meetings, & seminars. Supported by the age of the most dominant respondents, namely 31-41 years and 21-31 years, these ages can see & feel well how hotel operations are in the new normal period, so they can immediately conclude whether they are satisfied or not.

Solomon (2004) argues that consumer satisfaction is determined by a person's overall feeling or behavior about a product after buying and consuming it. Therefore, happiness cannot be separated from consumer perceptions of product quality. According to Tjiptono (2008), customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the customer's response to the evaluation of perceived dissatisfaction or disconfirmation between previous expectations or other performance



expectations and the product's actual performance that is felt after using it. Meanwhile, dissatisfied customers can do several things that can harm service providers; unhappy customers will act or not act (Quester et al., 2007). By not taking any action, the customer decides to be in an unhappy situation. However, even if no action is taken, the customer will lead to unpleasant behavior toward the service provider or company.

It can be concluded that the second moment of truth stage in this study does not affect customer satisfaction because hotel guests feel and see that the procedures applied do not match what hotel guests expect and want.

#### **Hypothesis 4: Ultimate Moment of Truth positively influences customer satisfaction.**

The findings in this study conclude that the ultimate moment of truth positively affects hotel guest satisfaction (see Table 3). Hotel operations in Jakarta are carried out starting from the check-in and check-out process, the restaurant service process, the cleaning process for hotel rooms and the hotel environment, the service process in the sports area, and the process of event activities, meetings, & seminars at the hotel. This affects the ultimate moment of truth (UMOT) stage, where UMOT focuses on customer feedback about hotel services.

In this study, the ultimate moment of truth is where the hotel can meet the needs of hotel guests who stay in the new normal period and provide a pleasant experience during their stay at the hotel. Hence, hotel guests want to give testimonials during their stay at the hotel. This can influence hotel guests to stay again, and UMOT is the highest moment for customers who have experienced the service.

The most dominant ultimate moment of truth variable is the check-in and check-out process and the service process at the restaurant; the reason is that during the COVID-19 pandemic, and hotel guests are very concerned about the implementation of health protocols starting from the check-in & check-out process and the restaurant service process, this is very important because guests want health insurance. This is supported by the age of the most dominant respondents, 31- <41 years and 21- <31 years, which can provide input on hotel products and services.

Solomon (2004) argues that consumer satisfaction is determined by a person's overall feeling or behavior about a product after buying and consuming it. Therefore, happiness cannot be separated from consumer perceptions of product quality. Customers who are satisfied with a service provided by a service provider tend to return to using the service if they experience problems in the future. The desire to return to use services due to satisfaction is to repeat good experiences and avoid bad experiences (Quester et al., 2007).

It can be concluded that the ultimate moment of truth stage in this study has met the expectations of hotel guests, especially regarding hotel service and operational standards in Jakarta during the new normal, affecting customer satisfaction.

#### **Hypothesis 5: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on Loyalty**

This study's findings conclude that hotel guest satisfaction has a positive effect on loyalty (see Table 3). During the new normal period, hotel operations in Jakarta are carried out starting from the check-in & check-out process, the restaurant service process, the cleaning process for hotel rooms and the hotel environment, the service process in the sports area, the process of event activities, meetings, and seminars at the hotel. The results showed that hotel guests were satisfied with hotel services and operations in Jakarta during the new normal period, and hotel guests were willing to recommend the hotel to others. The length of stay of hotel guests is 1-3 nights.

Solomon (2004) argues that consumer satisfaction is determined by a person's overall feeling or behavior about a product after buying and consuming it. Therefore, satisfaction cannot be separated from consumer perceptions of product quality. Customers who are satisfied with a service provided by a service provider tend to return to using the service if they experience problems in the future. The desire to return to use services due to satisfaction is to repeat good experiences and avoid bad experiences (Quester et al., 2007; Soemarso, 2011).

According to Griffin, 2005 Loyalty is a customer's commitment to re-subscribe or re-purchase the selected product/service consistently in the future, even though the influence of the situation and marketing efforts have the potential to cause behavior change. Loyalty, in general, can be interpreted as a person's Loyalty to a product, goods, and certain services.

Meanwhile, according to Lovelock (2011), Loyalty is aimed at repeat purchases and recommending the company's products to friends or partners, known as word of mouth. Adherence will reduce competitors' attacks from similar companies, not only a product battle but a perception battle. Customer loyalty starts from the customer's assessment of the quality of the product or service that the customer receives or perceives based on the expectations that have been conceptualized in customers' minds (Valenzuela et al., 2006). These expectations arise from previous products, services, experiences, and word of mouth that reaches customers. It can be concluded that hotel guest satisfaction positively affects customer loyalty. This can be seen from the study's results that when satisfaction increases, guest loyalty will increase, and hotel guests will share experiences with other customers.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that in this study of the five hypotheses proposed; there are three accepted hypotheses, namely First Moment of Truth has a positive effect on the satisfaction of prospective hotel guests, Ultimate Moment of Truth has a positive effect on hotel guest satisfaction. Hotel guest satisfaction has a positive effect on loyalty. And there are two rejected hypotheses; namely, zero moment of truth does not have a positive effect on the satisfaction of prospective hotel guests, and Second Moment of Truth does not positively affect hotel guest satisfaction. This happens because the ZMOT stage is a testimony from hotel guests who have stayed and is not the primary consideration for prospective hotel guests to decide to stay at a hotel during the new normal period.

The FMOT stage in this study has met the expectations of prospective hotel guests, especially in hotel services and operations in Jakarta during the new normal period, thus affecting the satisfaction of prospective hotel guests. The SMOT stage in this study did not affect hotel guest satisfaction because guests had not fully experienced the expected service, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and saw that the procedures implemented had yet to be fulfilled. In the end, the UMOT stage in this research is that the hotel can meet the needs of hotel guests during the COVID-19 pandemic and provide a pleasant experience while staying at the hotel. Hotel guests are willing to give testimonials during their stay at the hotel. The hotel guest satisfaction has a positive effect on customer loyalty. This can be seen from the study results that when satisfaction increases, the loyalty of hotel guests will increase, and hotel guests will share experiences with other customers.

The managerial implications of this research are as follows: First Moment of Truth and Ultimate moment of truth positively affect customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, it is expected that the hotel can maximize hotel operations starting from check-in and check-out for hotel guests, the restaurant service process, the hotel room cleaning process, the hotel

environment, the service process in the sports area, and the MICE process. The Ultimate Moment of Truth stage, hotel guests will give good reviews about hotel operations.

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