

Customer Journey Optimization with Design Thinking Method to Develop Customer Relations and Loyalty at Distrik Berisik as a Creative Agency

Fadhil Adam Dzaky

Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia

Email: adzaky.fadhil@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Digitalization and rising demand for branded content have reshaped Indonesia's creative industry over the past decade. Competition has grown not only among established agencies but also with the rise of large-scale freelance collectives, making client loyalty a critical differentiator. Agencies now need to prioritize long-term, meaningful relationships rather than focusing solely on acquiring new clients. Distrik Berisik, a Jakarta-based creative agency founded in 2021, operates within this dynamic environment and serves Indonesia's youth market with end-to-end creative solutions. Although customer acquisition is strong, the agency faces retention challenges, maintaining only a 30–40% retention rate. At the same time, many business leaders believe that overly digital approaches often fail to align with real customer needs. This study addresses these issues by optimizing the customer journey through a Design Thinking approach. The research is guided by three questions: mapping the current customer journey from the first interaction to post-service stages; identifying key pain points and opportunities; and developing an improved journey model to strengthen customer experience and loyalty. A qualitative method is used, with Design Thinking's five stages *Empathize*, *Define*, *Ideate*, *Prototype*, and *Test* serving as the main framework. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using thematic and descriptive analysis to reveal patterns, satisfaction levels, retention potential, and repurchase intentions. Combining the concepts of Customer Journey, Customer Loyalty, and Design Thinking, the study proposes a practical, human-centered customer journey model tailored to the creative industry and aimed at enhancing long-term loyalty.

KEYWORDS Creative Agency; Design Thinking; Distrik Berisik; Customer Retention; Customer Loyalty; Customer Journey; Qualitative Method.



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INTRODUCTION

The state of affairs, the creative industry in Indonesia has undergone tremendous change and booming dynamism in the last ten years in response to the digitalization and the growing demand of branded content. Prior to the pandemic, a characteristic of the industry was the use of traditional advertising and media services. Nonetheless, the post-pandemic era has increased the transition to online content, social media marketing and unified creative solutions which puts pressure on agencies to constantly innovate. The period is characterized by a strong rivalry, not only with the existing actors but also the arrival of the new and nimble studios and freelance groups.

The creative agency industry is in the period of integration and even more intensive competition. There is no longer a need to make only new customers, but to keep them and to make them creative and provide a measurable Return on Investment (ROI). The clients have become more critical and demanding; they do not only need creative content but integrated, data-driven approaches, which have the ability to survive the mess of the digital information stream. The effect of this phenomenon has been sparked off advanced operational pressures Customer Journey Optimization with Design Thinking Method to Develop Customer Relations and Loyalty at Distrik Berisik as a Creative Agency

whereby the prices of obtaining talent and clients have become highly exorbitant, with the pressure to be innovative ever mounting on the pressure side.

Distrik Berisik is a creative agency headquartered in Jakarta which specializes in offering end to end creative solutions to brands that are interested in reaching the younger demographic in Indonesia. Being a part of the creative ecosystem, Distrik Berisik provides the services of content development, as well as social media management, and the execution of a digital campaign on a full scale. Just like ed-tech companies, creative agencies are currently relevant in the competition, not only based on output quality but also in terms of the capacity to provide a steady and entertaining client experience.

On the other hand, the problem of customer retention is faced by the creative agency market in Indonesia, whereas, conversely, the industry has been rising in terms of the need of their services, with the examples of infipop, youtz media, Dentsu, Malaka Project, and Samara Group, social media campaigns and events, being struggling to scale and retain customers following the scale-up, and having to reorganize their services offering in 2023. On the same note, Infipop which was commended due to creative events and media work had difficulties in terms of retaining clients over the long term in the light of increasing project-based workload and internal creative exhaustion. The cases point to a problem on a sector-wide scale: the challenge of retaining loyalty to clients in a fast-paced and project-oriented industry.

In this highly competitive environment, client loyalty has become a crucial differentiating factor for the sustainability of a creative agency's business. Agencies can no longer focus solely on acquiring new clients, but must build deep, valuable, long-term relationships with existing clients. Human-centered innovation, both internally in managing talent and externally in understanding client needs and satisfaction, is key to analyzing conditions and designing the right strategies for understanding ever-changing market trends.

Distrik Berisik, established in 2021, is a creative agency in Indonesia that focuses on transforming community issues into impactful narratives and collective movements. With a “back to basics” creative philosophy, the agency positions itself not only as a service provider but also as a collaborative partner for clients seeking authentic and strategic content. Its strength lies in its ability to develop initiatives rooted in real community concerns and supported by a broad network of regional communities, enabling campaigns that resonate both nationally and locally.

The agency specializes in three core pillars: Event Organizer, Social Media Specialist, and Creative Content Development. Its portfolio includes annual events and consistent digital content production that strengthens audience engagement. Although Distrik Berisik has achieved notable progress in customer acquisition, the agency faces persistent challenges in long-term customer retention. Internally, the company records only a 30–40% retention rate in its early years, a figure lower than the industry’s median retention for similar B2C professional services.

The urgency of this research stems from the precarious position of creative agencies in Indonesia's rapidly evolving market. With increasing competition from freelance collectives and digital-native studios, agencies that fail to build sustainable client relationships risk being marginalized. The low retention rates observed at Distrik Berisik and across the industry signal an urgent need for systematic approaches to understanding and improving the customer experience. This urgency is compounded by the creative industry's significant contribution to

Indonesia's economy and employment, making the sustainability of creative agencies a matter of broader economic importance. Without evidence-based strategies for enhancing client loyalty, agencies may struggle to maintain viability in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Externally, many businesses in Indonesia experience similar issues, often caused by an excessive focus on digital transformation projects that prioritize technology over customer value. A significant portion of leaders believe that digital initiatives fail because they are not aligned with customer needs, often due to insufficient research in the planning stage. This misalignment leads to weak engagement and increases the risk of churn. For Distrik Berisik, the lack of a structured and comprehensive customer journey mapping process contributes to fragmented experiences and missed opportunities for deeper customer connection.

The absence of a unified customer experience framework creates several problems, such as unidentified pain points, declining engagement after program completion, and inconsistent service delivery across divisions. These issues hinder the agency's ability to optimize cross-selling, up-selling, and long-term loyalty development. Although Distrik Berisik has successfully established a strong market position, the gap between customer expectations and delivered experiences signals the need for systematic improvement and customer-centered strategies.

Based on these challenges, the research aims to map the current customer journey, identify pain points and opportunities, and develop an optimized model using the Design Thinking approach. The study focuses on customers within the creative industry context, applying the five stages of Design Thinking empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. The research is limited to Distrik Berisik as a single case study and will produce a validated customer journey model rather than a full implementation, offering insights that may guide improved customer loyalty and retention strategies.

METHOD

Customer loyalty in today's competitive and customer-centric environment can no longer be achieved merely through product quality or pricing strategy. Modern loyalty is built on meaningful experiences and emotional connections formed through every interaction between customers and brands (Siebert et al., 2020). Because of this, the focus of the research is placed on understanding the overall customer experience, analyzed through the Customer Journey framework. Mapping this journey allows companies to identify crucial touchpoints, challenges, and opportunities to design a smoother and more personalized experience that stimulates loyalty, retention, and repurchase intention (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

To examine the customer journey comprehensively, this study adopts a qualitative approach supported by the Design Thinking methodology. Design Thinking offers a structured yet flexible process *Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test* which enables researchers to gain deep insights into user motivations, expectations, and challenges (Micheli et al., 2019). Through in-depth interviews, observations, and case studies, the research aims to uncover specific pain points and behaviors of Distrik Berisik customers. These findings then serve as the foundation for designing a prototype solution that reflects real customer needs and improves their overall experience across touchpoints.

Data collection involves purposive sampling of three customer segments active, inactive, and potential users to provide a multidimensional perspective on loyalty dynamics. Two main Customer Journey Optimization with Design Thinking Method to Develop Customer Relations and Loyalty at Distrik Berisik as a Creative Agency

instruments are used: questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Questionnaires capture initial behavioral trends, satisfaction levels, and early indicators of loyalty, while interviews explore deeper motivations and emotional responses. This dual method ensures both breadth and depth in understanding the customer journey. Part of the questionnaire structure includes mapping awareness, experience, satisfaction, and loyalty through Likert scales and open-ended questions, helping researchers identify intention to repurchase and likelihood of recommendation.

Data analysis is carried out using Thematic Analysis and descriptive statistics. Thematic Analysis identifies patterns and themes derived from interview transcripts and open-ended responses, revealing customer perceptions, pain points, and factors influencing loyalty. Complementing this, descriptive analysis of frequency and percentage provides a numerical overview of satisfaction rates, repurchase intentions, and retention potential. Integrating both methods produces holistic findings that reflect not only what customers feel but also why they behave as they do, enabling Distrik Berisik to develop a more accurate and impactful loyalty-oriented customer journey model (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics (Quantitative Analysis)

1. Customer Satisfaction Analysis

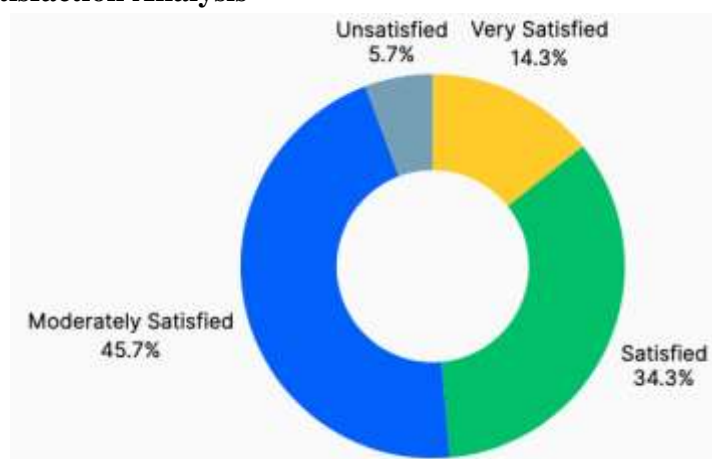


Figure. 1 The answers : satisfaction level of customers

The following graphic of customer satisfaction levels, which are separated into four major groups, was created based on the questionnaire responses from respondents: 14.3% were Very Satisfied, 34.3% were Satisfied, 45.7% were Moderately Satisfied, and 5.7% were Unsatisfied. Overall, this data shows that just a small portion of consumers are unsatisfied, with the majority (94.3%) reporting medium to high levels of satisfaction. This shows that the majority of customers' expectations have been satisfied by the given service or product. To handle and enhance customer concerns to a higher level, it is necessary to carefully analyse a number of touchpoints and pain areas.

From a descriptive statistical perspective, the mode value falls within the "Moderately Satisfied" category because it has the largest proportion (45.7%). This means that customer experience is generally at a "quite good" level of satisfaction but has not reached maximum satisfaction. The mean satisfaction value can also be estimated to be between categories 3 and

4 (on a scale of 1–5), reflecting a positive perception but with room for improvement in certain aspects.

Conversely, the 5.7% of customers who reported being Unsatisfied serve as a crucial indicator for organizations to evaluate the factors contributing to dissatisfaction, such as service quality, response time, or communication clarity. Although small in number, dissatisfied customer segments have the potential to negatively impact reputation or word-of-mouth if not addressed.

The dominant distribution in the Moderately Satisfied and Satisfied categories also indicates that customers already see value and benefits from the service, but there is still a small gap between expectations and the realization of the user experience. This means the organization needs to focus improvement efforts on dimensions that can elevate the customer experience to Very Satisfied, for example, thru service personalization, loyalty incentives, or more efficient digital interaction improvements.

Overall, the results of this analysis indicate that customer satisfaction levels are already quite good, but not yet optimal. To ensure business sustainability and increase customer loyalty, companies are advised to implement continuous improvement based on customer feedback, particularly from the segment falling between the "Moderate" and "Very Satisfied" categories (Witell et al., 2020).

2. Customer Retention Analysis

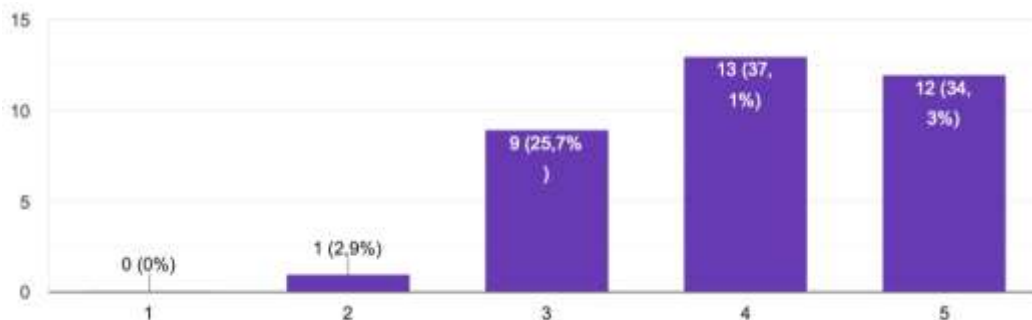


Figure. 2 The answers : The possibility to recommend Distrik Berisik

Based on the results obtained from the questionnaire data on respondents, the customer recommendation shows that 37.1% of respondents gave a score of 4, and 34.3% gave a score of 5. This indicates that more than two-thirds of customers (71.4%) show a high level of tendency to remain using the product or service, but overall these customers have the perception that Distrik Berisik still has several things at the touchpoint and pain point stages that need to be improved. In contrast, only 2.9% of customers gave a score of 2, and none gave a score of 1, which means there is no indication of very low retention.

From a descriptive statistical perspective, the average (mean) customer retention score is estimated to be close to 4, with low variance, as the data distribution tends to cluster around scores of 4 and 5. This indicates the stability of customer perceptions of the value received from a product or service, thus the company can be said to have a relatively loyal customer base.

This distribution also shows that some customers (25.7%) remain in the middle category (score 3), indicating this group is "vulnerable" and can remain or switch depending on increases

in perceived value. Therefore, this group requires special attention, for example by strengthening product value communication, providing loyalty incentives, or enhancing the post-transaction experience (Kuehnl et al., 2019).

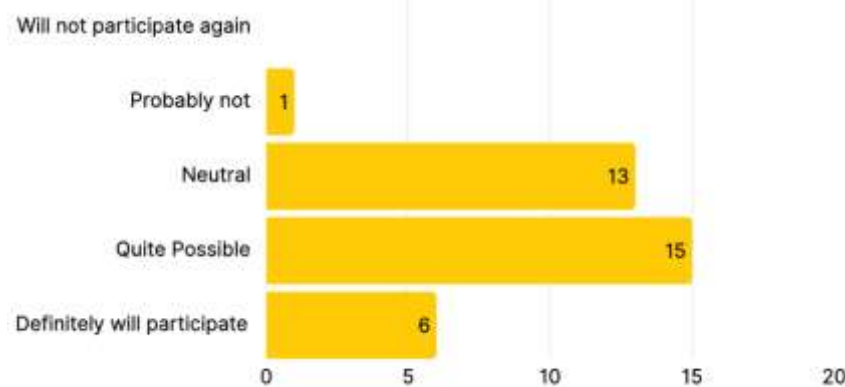


Figure. 3 The answers : Potential to Re-participating of customers

Based on the horizontal bar chart, the distribution of customer retention shows that 6 respondents (17%) definitely will participate again, 15 respondents (43%) quite possibly, 13 respondents (37%) are neutral, and only 1 respondent (3%) probably will not participate again. This indicates that more than half of the customers (approximately 60%) have a positive inclination to repurchase or participate in future activities. The mean value of the repurchase intention scale can be estimated to be around 3.7–3.8 (on a scale of 1–5), reflecting positive intentions, but with most customers still in the consideration zone (neutral to likely). This presents a significant opportunity for organizations to translate these positive intentions into concrete actions thru engaging retention strategies and post-purchase programs.

From a business interpretation perspective, the neutral customer group is of primary concern because they haven't yet developed strong preferences. Companies need to identify the factors that make them hesitant, such as a lack of innovation, limited product variety, or insufficient added value. According to consumer behavior literature, neutral groups can often be converted into loyal customers thru consistent positive experiences and targeted value communication (De Keyser et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the proportion of customers with negative intentions is very small, so the risk of losing customers is relatively low. However, if not followed by a strategy to improve experience or a sustained retention campaign, the neutral group could shift to non-participants. Therefore, it is important for companies to create a continuous customer experience "loop," for example, thru loyalty programs or community engagement.

Overall, the results of this descriptive analysis indicate good growth potential in terms of repurchase intention. Most customers expressed a desire to participate again, indicating that their previous experience was quite satisfactory. The next recommended step is to strengthen long-term customer relationships thru a value-based approach and service personalization to increase conversion from intention to real action.

Business Solution

The business solution proposed in this project focuses on strengthening customer loyalty by optimizing the customer experience at every point of their journey (Tueanrat et al., 2021). Based on an in-depth analysis of touchpoints and pain points in Distrik Berisik, it was found

that long-term loyalty is not only influenced by the quality of core services, but also by the consistency of experience, the relevance of communication, and the company's ability to create emotional connections that are valuable to customers. Therefore, the approach used is not only operational but also strategic, comprehensively connecting the aspects of experience, data, relationships, and the economic value of customers.

Based on the data obtained from the respondents, they selected several service points that they felt needed improvement to support an enhanced customer experience during the customer journey process for each activity at Distrik Berisik. This is because these points are related to the quality, comfort, and satisfaction levels that can be provided to customers.



Figure. 4 Feed customers to Distrik Berisik performances

Several aspects of the service were of primary concern to participants and emerged as the most dominant proposals for improvement, particularly regarding proactive communication, post-project/follow-up, service/program variations, and participant activity level. These four elements reflect users' need for a more targeted, informative, and continuous service experience after the program concludes. This finding indicates that business solutions need to offer services that are more dynamic, flexible, and easier for users to understand.

To achieve this transformation, solutions were designed using a Design Thinking approach, which allows companies to empathically understand customer needs, accurately formulate core problems, and develop creative solutions that are relevant to the creative industry context (Micheli et al., 2019). This process resulted in a new, more structured Customer Journey model that is focused on increasing engagement, reducing friction, and strengthening customer connections at every phase: pre-project, during-project, and post-project. This model serves as the foundation for establishing new service standards that are more consistent and easily replicated by all internal divisions of Distrik Berisik.

This business solution also includes developing a more integrated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) framework. Because CRM doesn't just serve as data storage, but as a system for understanding customer preferences, managing project history, personalizing communication, and providing higher relevance to every interaction. With a structured CRM, Distrik Berisik can build more proactive, rather than reactive, relationships; ensuring that every customer feels recognized, valued, and treated according to their contextual needs. Implementing CRM is also the foundation for strengthening loyalty programs based on the 3Rs: Rewards, Relevance, and Recognition.

Ultimately, this entire solution is aimed at increasing Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) thru a systematic continuous engagement strategy (Dandis & Al Haj Eid, 2022). By improving experiences at critical touchpoints, building more personal communication, and continuously

measuring loyalty, Distrik Berisik can transition from a transactional to a relational business approach. This transformation will not only lower churn rates and increase repeat purchases, but also create strong customer advocacy, which in the creative industry has a significant impact on reputation, credibility, and long-term business growth.

1. Mapping Value Proposition

In introducing the Optimized Customer Journey Map stage that will be proposed in this project, so that it can function not only as a map of customer interactions but also as a strategic instrument for creating a competitive advantage for Distrik Berisik. Where, considering the abundance of businesses related to the creative industry, and specifically those focused on creative agencies in Indonesia (e.g., infipop, youtz media, Dentsu, Malaka Project, Samara Group), this business sector has entered the red ocean, but still offers some opportunities to create blue ocean strategies. Based on the Lemon & Verhoef (2016) framework, the customer journey should be developed considering value differentiation and industry characteristics (Tueanrat et al., 2021). In the highly competitive creative industry context, customer experience often becomes the main differentiator between agencies because of clients' difficulty in objectively distinguishing service quality and micro-value differentiation. Therefore, this new journey is designed in alignment with the Loud District's Value Proposition: "Delivering Creative Confidence thru Personalized and Insight-Driven Collaboration." This value proposition serves as the foundation for how every touchpoint is shaped, enriched, and standardized.

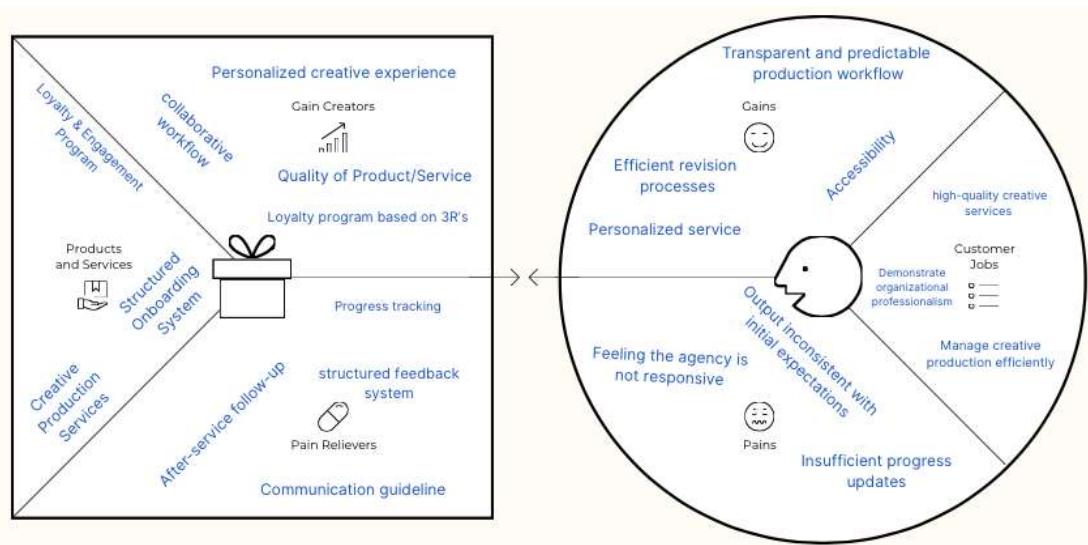


Figure. 5 Result Value Proposition Distrik Berisik

Based on a thematic analysis of the respondent questionnaires, the Value Proposition for the Distrik Berisik is designed as a solution that tackles the key gaps in the customer experience, particularly in terms of personalization and the efficiency of the creative process. Qualitative findings revealed that customer desire a more structured but flexible approach, with proactive and transparent communication at every stage of the project and consistent value delivered to customers (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This Value Proposition Canvas framework focuses on these needs by offering a personalized creative experience and efficiently managed production workflows.

On the Customer Jobs side, the Distrik Berisik audiens needs to effectively manage creative production while ensuring results that align with their brand expectations. Identified

pain points included inefficient revision processes, a feeling that the agency was less responsive, and a lack of clear communication guidelines. Meanwhile, the expected gains include a desire for personalized service, transparent collaborative processes, and efficiency in project completion. All of these things are expectations that customers can have and that Distrik Berisik consistently delivers as a company value in the creative agency field.

As a solution, Distrik Berisik offers Pain Relievers in the form of a structured feedback system, clear communication guidelines, and systematic process tracking from activity documentation up to the event execution data that has been collected. On the Gain Creators side, customizable creative production services, an efficient revision process, and a personal approach at every stage of the project ensure that clients not only receive high-quality creative results but also a comprehensive and satisfying partnership experience. This Value Proposition positions Distrik Berisik as a creative partner that not only gets the job done but truly understands and addresses each client's specific needs thru a human-centered approach and standardized processes.

2. The Proposed Optimized Customer Journey Map

1) Customer Journey Map

		Step	Key Activities	Step	Tools	Output
Pre Project	Emphasize & Define	Diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Journey identification - Pain point analysis - Impact assesment 	Diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer journey analytics - Behavioral Analytics - Value stream mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prioritized journey list - Data Users for analysis
		Observe & Define	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional mapping - Moment-of-truth analysis - Root cause analysis 	Observe & Define	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Behavioral/Thematics analytics - Fishbone Methods - Ethnographic research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive journey understanding - Key improvement opportunities
During Project	Ideate & Prototype	Redesign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideation workshop - Rapid prototyping - Segment, Target, Position 	Redesign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design thinking - A/B testing - Strategy Marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Redesigned blueprint & added value - Implementation roadmap
		Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agile deployment - Performance tracking - Change management 	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agile methodology - KPI & SOP dashboard - Project management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved customer experience - Measurable business results
Post Project	Test	Sustainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous improvement - Capability building - Customer Engagement 	Sustainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer Relationship Management - Performance management - Learning programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) - Organizational capability

Figure. 6 Customer journey map

The next step in developing a data-driven customer journey transformation, which has been obtained and elaborated using other methods to provide the best strategy at each touchpoint stage with the customer, can be interpreted thru the following flow:

A. Diagnosis

The Diagnosis phase is the initial stage for identifying the customer journey, key pain points, and the impact of each touchpoint. In the image, activities such as journey identification, pain point analysis, and impact assessment are used to objectively understand the customer experience conditions. Distrik Berisik, as a creative agency, also utilizes customer journey analytics, behavioral analytics, and value stream mapping as tools to gather relevant data. This

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approach can be aligned with the initial stage of design thinking, which is empathize, to identify needs from customer perspectives (Dam & Teo, 2021).

This approach aligns with the literature by Lemon & Verhoef (2016), which emphasizes that the process of understanding customer experience should begin with mapping touchpoints and identifying barriers that affect customer perception. Additionally, Rother & Shook (2003) support the use of value stream mapping as a method for identifying non-value-added activities and bottlenecks in the customer experience flow. The result of this stage is a prioritized list of customer journeys that require improvement, aligning with the theory that diagnosis is the foundation for transforming the customer experience.

B. Observe & Define

The Observe & Define stage focuses on a deep understanding of customer emotions, motivations, and behaviors thru methods such as emotional mapping, moment-of-truth analysis, and root cause analysis. Tools such as thematic analytics, fishbone methods, and ethnographic research are used to uncover patterns and root causes of problems. The goal is to generate a holistic understanding of customer needs and opportunities for improvement. This is similar to the design thinking approach in the define stage to begin mapping the results of customer behavior identification.

This approach is consistent with the view of Stickdorn et al. (2018), who state that direct observation and behavioral analysis are at the heart of effective service design. Meanwhile, Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014) emphasize that qualitative analyzes such as thematic analysis can help uncover insights that are not visible thru quantitative approaches. The output at this stage is a comprehensive understanding of the journey and key improvement opportunities, aligning with the literature that emphasizes the importance of in-depth data for accurately defining the problem.

C. Redesign

At the Redesign stage, Distrik Berisik can begin advanced development for redesigning the customer experience using activities such as ideation workshops, rapid prototyping, and determining the Segmenting, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) strategy. Tools like design thinking, A/B testing, and marketing strategy support the process of exploring solutions to meet customer needs that were understood in the previous stage. Where this redesign stage can be combined with the ideate and prototype approaches found in the design thinking stage, resulting in a more exploratory elaboration.

This approach is supported by Brown (2008), who states that design thinking can generate innovative solutions thru an iterative approach of empathy, ideation, and prototyping (Dell’Era et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Ries (2011), thru the concept of lean startup, emphasizes the importance of rapid prototyping and A/B testing to validate solutions before full implementation. The output, consisting of a redesigned blueprint and implementation roadmap, demonstrates alignment with the literature on the importance of structured and data-driven redesign.

D. Implementation

The Implementation phase is the execution stage that can be carried out with several key activities options, such as thru agile deployment, performance tracking, and change management, which aim to record each stage of implementation on a regular basis, serving as

the internal data bank for the Distrik Berisik company. By using tools such as agile methodology, KPI & SOP dashboards, and project management practices to ensure changes can be implemented adaptively and measurably (Rigby et al., 2018).

This approach aligns with the theory of Rigby, Sutherland, & Takeuchi (2016), which explains that Agile methodologies help organizations respond to change more quickly and adjust solutions based on real-time feedback. Additionally, Kerzner (2017) emphasizes the importance of project management and performance measurement in ensuring effective implementation and clear business impact. The output, which includes improved customer experience and measurable business results, indicates that this stage aims to create a direct impact on customers and the business.

E. Sustainment

The Sustainment phase emphasizes the importance of continuous improvement through capability development, performance management, and increased customer engagement. In its implementation, tools such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM), performance management, and learning programs can be strategies for maintaining the quality of the customer experience in the long term.

This aligns with the view of Payne & Frow (2005) who stated that CRM plays an important role in maintaining customer relationships and creating long-term value. Additionally, Kaplan & Norton (1996) emphasized that strengthening internal capabilities and continuously monitoring performance are necessary for organizations to improve their ability to meet customer expectations. The output, consisting of Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) and increased organizational capabilities, demonstrates the success of the Sustainment phase in creating sustainable value.

2) Critical Touchpoint Enhancement

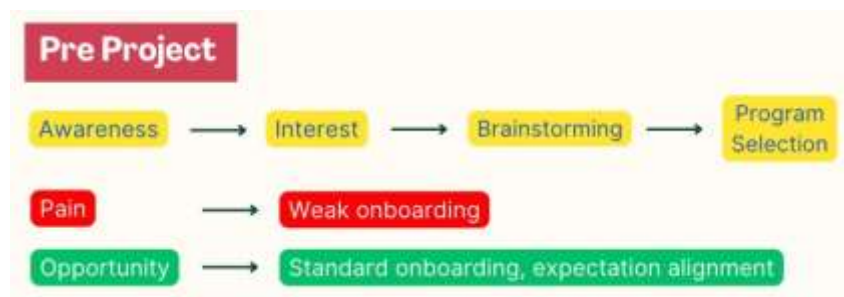


Figure. 7 Pre project touchpoint (customer journey)

The Pre-Project phase includes the customer's initial journey from awareness, interest, brainstorming, to program selection. At this stage, new customers are learning about the program and starting to build expectations. The main problem that arises in the image is weak onboarding, which means the orientation process is not optimal, leading to customers having a poor understanding of the program's flow, benefits, and expectations. However, there is an opportunity to improve onboarding through standard onboarding and expectation alignment to ensure more consistent participant understanding.

Next, according to Kotler & Keller (2016), the initial stage of the customer journey is a very crucial phase because the first impression will influence subsequent participation

decisions. This aligns with the concept of customer onboarding according to Johnston & Kong (2011), which emphasizes that strong onboarding can increase customer trust and minimize confusion in the early stages. In the context of the image, the lack of an onboarding structure leads to a mismatch of expectations, a common issue in service management.

Referring to the reference presented by Stickdorn et al. (2018), it is mentioned that expectation alignment needs to be done before the project begins so that customers have a clear understanding of what they will receive. Therefore, the opportunities for improvement at the Pre-Project stage, as shown in the diagram, namely the development of standard onboarding and the alignment of expectations, are consistent with the scientific approach to improving customer experience. Implementing these two things will result in a more efficient initial journey and increase customer commitment from the start.



Figure. 8 During project touchpoint (customer journey)

The During Project phase includes processes from preparing, kickoff, maintenance, to closing (Kuehnl et al., 2019). At this stage, customers are very actively interacting with the program. The main problem that emerged in the case, which were customer pain points, was inconsistent engagement, meaning the lack of consistency in participant involvement, compounded by issues of expectations and a lack of follow-up. However, there are opportunities for progress tracker development, audience activation, and performance improvement to maintain participant engagement throughout the program.

Where a strong customer experience stage occurs when customers are emotionally and actively engaged during the service process, according to Pine & Gilmore (1999). In practice, the challenges arising from inconsistent engagement lead to a fragmented experience, which can diminish the overall value of the program. This aligns with Lemon & Verhoef's (2016) statement that the consumption or usage phase is the most critical in the customer journey, as it shapes customer perceptions of service value.

Also using performance tracking and progress monitoring is crucial for maintaining customer motivation. The solutions offered by the image, such as a progress tracker and audience activation, align with best practices in experience management, where engagement monitoring systems can improve outcomes and provide feedback that drives project success. Thus, the opportunity for improvement at this stage aligns with modern service management theory.



Figure. 9 Post project touchpoint (customer journey)

The Post-Project phase includes follow-up, evaluation, brainstorming, and development activities (Meena & Sahu, 2021). This stage focuses on ensuring customers remain engaged after the program is completed. The problems that arise in the image are weak follow-up, untracked program results, and low audience engagement after the activity is completed. However, opportunities for improvement include loyalty programs, personalized offers, and CLV (Customer Lifetime Value) tracking to enhance long-term relationships. In the CRM literature, Payne & Frow (2005) state that the post-experience phase is often overlooked, yet it is the key to retaining customers and creating long-term value. The lack of follow-up makes customers feel less valued, leading them to be less likely to return for subsequent programs. This aligns with the condition in the image, which shows that weak follow-up leads to low engagement.

Next, the concept of Customer Lifetime Value according to Gupta & Lehmann (2003) emphasizes the importance of retaining customers after the initial interaction to maximize their long-term contribution to the organization. By implementing loyalty programs and personalized offers, organizations not only improve the post-project experience but also increase retention potential. Thus, the opportunities presented in the diagram are very much in line with CRM theory and long-term customer value enhancement strategies.

3. Customer Relationship Management & Loyalty Framework

In the context of Distrik Berisik as a creative agency, the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) & Loyalty Framework serves as a strategic foundation to ensure that the relationship between the agency and customers runs consistently, purposefully, and provides a wonderful experience. Through this approach, the Distrik Berisik not only focuses on the quality of creative products such as content, social media management, or event organization, but also on how each interaction with customers provides long-term value. CRM becomes a tool for comprehensively understanding customers needs, preferences, and behaviors, enabling agencies to offer creative solutions that are relevant, personalized, and data-driven. In the highly competitive and dynamic creative industry, the ability to maintain solid relationships with clients becomes a strategic advantage directly related to revenue stability and business sustainability.

The Loyalty Framework then complements CRM by providing a systematic mechanism for retaining clients thru superior experiences and strong emotional connections (Lamrhari et al., 2022). The cycle consisting of targeting & marketing, offering development, delivery/sales, superior experience, and retention ensures that Distrik Berisik is able to provide consistent service from the beginning of the collaboration until after the project is completed. By implementing this framework, companies can reduce churn rates, increase repeat orders, and

strengthen Distrik Berisik position as a long-term "creative partner" for various brands. This approach is highly relevant because the creative industry relies not only on the final product but also on the client's perception of reliability, communication, and satisfaction throughout the collaboration process.

1) Customer Relationship Management Approach

To develop a business solution by using a customer relation management (CRM) approach in building customer experience for the Distrik Berisik audience as a creative agency can serve a strategic reference in the implementation process. Where effective CRM is not solely about technology or tools, but rather about an integrated strategy that stems from a deep understanding of customers. In the context of the Distrik Berisik, this approach means that CRM must begin with a clear identification of customer needs what motivates them to join agency activities, what challenges they face, and what kind of results they want to achieve from each campaign or creative project. Before choosing a system or designing a program, Distrik Berisik needs to determine its priority client segments and what unique value it wants to offer them (Meena & Sahu, 2021). This aligns with the Harvard Business Review (HBR) principle: customer strategy must be determined before CRM is implemented.

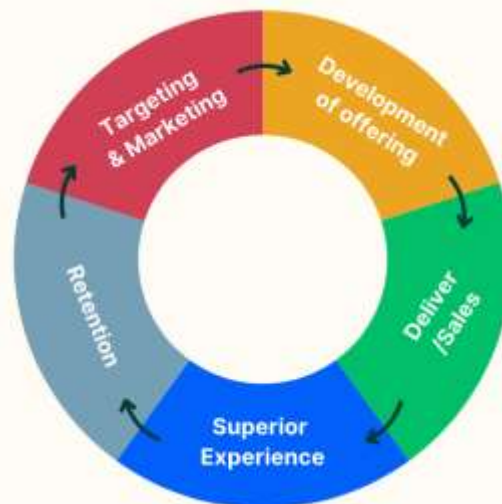


Figure. 10 Customer Retention Management (CRM) cycle

Adapted from Rigby and Ledingham (2004), there are things that highlight that CRM failures usually occur because companies adopt technology without improving the supporting business processes. From Distrik Berisik perspective as creative agency, this means that CRM must be supported by integrated workflows between the team's internal processes, production processes, and the "Dewan Perwakilan Distrik (DPD)" community. Every point of contact with the client should provide a consistent and harmonious experience, from the initial pitch, brief development, communication throughout the project, to the final results. By harmonizing processes like this, Distrik Berisik can create a wonderful experience that makes customers can feel heard, valued, and get professionally served for the long-term.

By utilize relevant data, Distrik Berisikt, can dedvelop their interactions process and analyzed to understand patterns: what projects they like, their communication preferences, when they tend to place repeat orders, and any pain points that arose in previous collaborations. With that data, agencies can offer more personalized solutions, increase service relevance, and

predict potential churn more quickly. This approach supports the transformation of Distrik Berisik from a "creative vendor" to a "strategic partner" for clients or customers.

Therefore, the Distrik Berisik needs to develop structured templates and measurement patterns for each customer touchpoint in order to organize every relationship process with customers. So that it can be monitored and become a data collected in real-time. That is several steps that can start, such us:

- a) improving the client follow-up system post-project,
- b) creating new communication standards,
- c) developing a simple dashboard system to monitor client satisfaction.

When the first phase shows positive results is the system expanded into more sophisticated loyalty programs, service personalization, or digital CRM integration. With this phased and outcome-oriented approach, Distrik Berisik can build a strong foundation of loyalty while also strengthening its competitiveness in the rapidly changing creative industry.

2) Customer Loyalty Approach

In formulating strategic business solutions based on questionnaire results and thematic analysis, Distrik Berisik can adopt frameworks from McKinsey & Company and PwC to strengthen customer loyalty. A value-based loyalty program can serve as the primary foundation for improving retention, while personalized experiences play a critical role in enhancing customer satisfaction. These approaches address Distrik Berisik's current challenges by aligning loyalty-building activities with customer expectations. Key solutions include implementing tiered membership programs, offering exclusive access to events and content, providing redeemable rewards, delivering personalized communication, maintaining proactive post-program engagement, and building active alumni communities through exclusive networking groups.

The value-based loyalty program is central to increasing retention, as it enhances perceived value and provides tangible incentives for customers to remain loyal. Personalized experiences further reinforce this by enabling tailored content, recommendations, and communication based on customer behaviors and participation history, thereby making each customer feel recognized and valued. Proactive communication also plays a vital role in addressing pain points. Regular post-program satisfaction surveys, accessible feedback channels, and quick response times—ideally within 24 hours—can convert negative experiences into trust-building opportunities. These solutions collectively ensure continuous engagement throughout the customer lifecycle.

Community-driven engagement and post-service strengthening provide additional layers of loyalty reinforcement. Establishing exclusive groups, such as alumni WhatsApp communities, and organizing regular networking sessions can deepen emotional bonds and create a strong sense of belonging. Involving customers in co-creating new programs elevates their role from passive participants to active creative partners, fostering long-term commitment. Furthermore, post-service initiatives such as access to materials, post-event activation, and collaborative content ideation can extend customer lifecycle and support repeat participation. This aligns with McKinsey's emphasis on "post-purchase engagement" as a vital factor in customer retention, helping Distrik Berisik cultivate a sustainable and mutually beneficial ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Distrik Berisik's challenges in maintaining long-term customer loyalty can be effectively addressed by applying the Design Thinking approach to optimize the customer journey, as the research successfully mapped the existing journey, identified key pain points, and developed a human-centered model aligned with the creative agency context. The findings highlight strong initial engagement driven by community-based activities and social media exposure, yet reveal weaknesses in communication consistency, post-event follow-up, and underutilized professional service offerings, all of which contribute to declining customer retention. The optimized journey model, enhanced through structured onboarding, increased interaction during project execution, and comprehensive post-project engagement supported by CRM and the 3R Loyalty Framework (Rewards, Relevance, Recognition), provides a strategic foundation for improving customer lifetime value and repurchase intention. Based on these insights, several recommendations are proposed: strengthening managerial and talent development skills, implementing knowledge management supported by Design Thinking, fostering entrepreneurial and problem-solving capabilities among team members, and conducting ongoing evaluations to measure long-term loyalty impact over 12–24 months. By adopting these strategies, Distrik Berisik and similar creative agencies can shift from project-based service providers to strategic creative partners, achieving sustainable competitive advantage through consistent, value-driven, and loyalty-enhancing customer experiences.

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