



Strategies for Building Customer Engagement and Brand Experience: A Case Study of Nipah Park Mall

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Abstract. In an era of increasingly fierce competition in the retail industry, customer engagement and brand experience are key factors that determine the success of a business. Nipah Park Mall, as one of the growing shopping centers in Indonesia, has implemented various strategies to increase customer engagement and brand experience. This study aims to analyze these strategies and their impact on customer engagement at Nipah Park Mall. Using a qualitative approach, this study reveals that unique and interactive experiences can increase customer loyalty and create stronger relationships between customers and brands. In an ever-evolving digital age, customer engagement and brand experience are key factors in retaining and attracting new customers. This journal examines the strategies implemented by Nipah Park Mall in building positive customer engagement and brand experience. Through in depth analysis, this study aims to provide insights into how these elements can be optimized to increase customer loyalty and competitive advantage.

Keywords: Brand Experience, Customer Engagement, Customer Loyalty, Brand Community, Shopping Mall Retail.

1 Introduction

In the era of customer centrist experiential marketing, the retail industry paradigm has fundamentally shifted from simply selling products to providing holistic and unforgettable experiences. This transformation is a response to drastic changes in consumer behavior, with consumers now seeking more than just functional needs. They want emotional and personal interactions with a brand. In this context, shopping centers can no longer rely on old business models that focus solely on renting space and selling products. Instead, they must transform into “lifestyle centers” that offer multidimensional experiences involving sensory, emotional, cognitive, and social aspects. These experiences ultimately become the main drivers of physical visits and create strong competitive differentiation amid online commerce.

Nipah Park Mall Makassar, as a representation of a new wave in retail transformation, is an interesting case study in the application of this concept. Amidst Makassar’s highly competitive retail landscape, where large malls such as Trans Studio Mall and Panakukkang Mall already have strong market positions and established

images, Nipah Park Mall must build unique differentiation to attract and retain visitors. This differentiation does not rely solely on tenant completeness, but focuses on strategies that enhance the overall visitors experience by providing space.

For community gathering points like Night Run Ver City & Sunset Yoga Ja&Joy, creating spaces for yoga that adopt a green concept and integrated open spaces, Nipah Park Mall consciously strives to create a different atmosphere, a strategy designed to build emotional bonds and create experiences that go beyond shopping, encompassing recreation, social interaction, and even relaxation. This is crucial for building brand loyalty and fostering emotional connections with consumers. The mall was established in 2018 with an urban Eco mall concept. Nipah Mall is one of the largest mall in Makassar, featuring a basement, five floors of retail space, and ten floors of office space above. The tenant details for each floor are follows:

Table 1. Basement and Lower Ground Nipah Park Mall

No.	Basement	No.	Lower Ground & Mezzanine
1	Toyota Workshop	1	H&M
2	PMI	2	Uniqlo
3	Office	3	Pancious
4	Civil Registry Office	4	My Kopi O
5	SIM Outlet	5	Exelso
		6	Fore
		7	Yoshinoya
		8	Hyundai
		9	Pizza Hut
		10	Backhaus
		11	Bonia
		12	Melissa
		13	Frank & Co
		14	Erha Pharmacy
		15	The Body Shop
		16	C&F
		17	KOI
		18	Timur Restaurant
		19	Kalla Toyota Garage

Source : Primary Data by Amirah, 2025

Table 2. Ground Floor and Upper Ground Nipah Park Mall

No.	Ground Floor	No.	Upper Ground
1	Ace Hardware	1	Bata
2	Guardian	2	Erafone
3	Sleep N Co	3	Manzone
4	Samsung	4	Minimal
5	Boots	5	Planet Surf
6	Marugame Udon	6	Payless
7	Solaria	7	BLT
8	Ichiban Sushi	8	Gokana
9	Ramen	9	BeeKids

10	D'Cost	10	Es Teler 77
11	Raacha Suki	11	Sport Station
12	Watsons	12	Gaudi
13	Digi Store	13	Torch
14	M3Gallery	14	Skeechers
15	White Mode	15	Wacoal
16	Single Optics	16	Zap
17	Seis Optics	17	Hardware
18	MelawaiOptics	18	Hava
19	Oh!Some	19	Urban
20	Everbest	20	Gymnastics
21	Gosh	21	Chilin Chick
22	Mixue	22	OBread
23	Gulu-Gulu	23	Cocopuff
24	Bello Gelato	24	Quickly
25	Janji Jiwa	25	Korea Haengbong
26	Kaku Food		

Source: Primary Data by Amirah, 2025

Table 3. 1st Floor and 2nd Floor Nipah Park Mall

No.	1 st Floor	No.	2 nd Floor
1	Timezone	1	Fithub
2	Archery Orchid	2	Laku
3	Star	3	Ja & Joy
4	Cindy Yayang	4	Kalla Institute
5	Strawberry	5	Mushollah
6	Fun World	6	Espresso Chill
7	Canva		
8	Kidzilla		
9	Minzoo		
10	BNI ATM		
11	XXI		
12	De Sound		
13	TOP Salon		
14	International Watch		
15	BikinBikin Creative Hub		
16	Shislin		
17	Vela Gelato		
18	ADR Fruit Salad		
19	Origins		
20	The Clean Bar		

Source: Primary Data by Amirah, 2025

Established in 2018, Nipah Park Mall carries the concept of an urban eco-mall and has become one of the largest shopping centers in Makassar. The mall consists of a basement area, five retail floors, and ten office floors integrated within a single complex. The distribution of tenants across different floors is presented in Tables 1–3. Table 1 presents the tenants located in the Basement and Lower Ground areas, Table 2 summarizes the tenants on the Ground Floor and Upper Ground levels, while Table 3 describes the tenants located on the 1st and 2nd Floors. These tenant compositions

reflect the mall's strategy in combining retail, culinary, entertainment, lifestyle, and community-oriented facilities within an integrated experiential environment.

Nipah Park Various global and regional studies have proven that strategically designed brand experiences have a significant impact on customer engagement. This engagement is not limited to purchases, but also includes behaviors such as active participation, brand advocacy (positive word of mouth), and deep emotional connections.

Keller [1] and Brodie et al [2] have provided a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the dimensions of brand experience and how it influences consumer behavior. However, despite the importance of this concept being widely discussed, there are still significant gaps in research, especially in the context of local and specific markets such as Makassar. Previous studies have tended to focus on global markets or other large cities, leaving little in depth exploration of how malls in Indonesia, particularly in Makassar, implement brand experience strategies as a competitive advantage. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by specifically and thoroughly examining the strategies of Nipah Park Mall and their impact on visitor engagement. This study not only contributes to marketing literature but also provides practical insights for mall managers and other retail industry stakeholders in Indonesia.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Brand Experience

The concept of brand experience was first introduced by Schmitt [3], who defined brand experience as the sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses elicited by brand related stimuli. These stimuli can include visual design, brand identity, marketing communications, store environment, and interactions with services.

In the context of shopping centers, brand experience is not only related to the products sold, but also includes the mall atmosphere, interior design, tenant service, and promotional activities that create a multidimensional experience. This experience has been proven to shape positive perceptions, increase satisfaction, and encourage customer loyalty.

2.2 Customer Engagement

According to Sylvia et al [4], customer engagement is a psychological process that occurs when consumers build an interactive relationship with a brand. The dimensions of customer engagement include cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects that are manifested in the form of interest, participation, and loyalty.

In the retail industry, customer engagement is a key element because engaged customers tend to make repeat visits, recommend their experiences to others, and become active members of the brand community. Malls as public spaces, have the advantage of building engagement through events, customer experiences, and social interactions created within them.

2.3 Shopping Mall Retail and Experiential Marketing

The development of modern malls has shifted their function from being mere shopping centers to lifestyle centers. According to Pine and Gilmore [5], the concept of experiential marketing emphasizes that consumers seek memorable experiences, not just the utilitarian function of products or service.

In the context of malls, the application of experiential marketing can be seen in the unique design of the space, entertainment activities, thematic restaurants, and family friendly areas. Malls are not only places to shop, but also social spaces and lifestyle destinations. Therefore the mall managements strategy in providing a pleasant experience will greatly influence customer engagement and the image of the mall itself.

2.4 Previous Research

Several studies have shown the correlation between brand experience and customer engagement. For example:

- Brakus et al [6] found that brand experience has a significant influence on customer satisfaction and loyalty
- Hollebeek [7] emphasized that customer engagement plays an important role in creating long term relationships between consumers and brands
- Local research by Astrid and Agus [8] on shopping centers in Indonesia shows that mall interior design, event programs, and tenant services play a major role in enhancing the consumer experience.

3 Research Methodology

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with thematic analysis to examine Nipah Park Mall Makassar marketing strategies in building customer engagement and brand experience. This approach was chosen because it is able to explore in depth the experiences and perspective of customers, as well as identify the meaning behind the marketing strategies used by Creswell and Poth [9]. The research participants consisted of two main groups. First, customers who were selected as the main informants because they had direct experience interacting with Nipah Mall's marketing strategies. Second, managers and tenant owners as supporting informants to provide internal perspective on the communication strategies used. The planned number of participation's ranged from 10 to 15 loyal customers and 2 to 3 people from Nipah Park Mall's internal team. This number is in line with the principle of qualitative research, which emphasizes depth rather than breadth, with the sample size determined based on data saturation, Guest et al [10].

The sampling technique used is purposive sampling where participants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research focus, such as : (1) visitors to Nipah Park Mall who have visited at least five times in six month, (2) actively interact in community activities or events held by Nipah Park Mall, such as sport activities. For example, the Night Run Ver City (NRVC) and sunset yoga running community,

exhibitions, or social activities. (3) visitors who showed interaction with the mall's facilities or marketing programs. Palinkas et al [11], Purposive sampling was considered appropriate for this study because it allowed researchers to obtain rich and relevant data from individuals who truly understood the phenomenon being studied. Data was collected through observation of Nipah Park Mall activities and in depth interviews with participants. Interviews were conducted in semi structured manner to allow participants to explain their experience and views more openly.

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis based on the six stages proposed by Naeem et al [12], familiarization: rereading interview transcript and observation notes to understand the context of the data. Coding: identifying initial codes related to storytelling strategies, community roles, and forms of customer loyalty. Theme: development grouping codes into main themes. Reviewing themes: evaluating the suitability of themes with the overall data. Defining and naming themes: giving clear labels to each theme. Producing the report: compiling findings with direct quotes from participants to strengthen the validity of the interpretation to maintain the credibility of the research, several validation techniques were used, including: data triangulation, by combining the results of interviews, observations, and social media documentations. Member checking: which is reconfirming preliminary findings with participants to ensure that the researchers interpretations are consistent with their experiences, and audit trail by keeping records of the analysis process and research decisions so that they can be traced transparently, Candela [13].

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Overview of the empirical material and analytical procedure

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to examine how Nipah Park Mall cultivates customer engagement and brand experience within a competitive urban retail setting. Data were generated through semi structured interviews with two principal participant groups, namely repeat visitors and relevant internal stakeholders (mall management and selected tenant representatives), complemented by non participant observation of on site activities and a review of publicly available digital communications. The sampling logic followed purposive selection, prioritising participants who could speak directly to recurrent visitation, event participation, and interaction with the mall's facilities and programmes, consistent with established guidance on purposeful sampling in qualitative inquiry [11]. Data collection proceeded iteratively until thematic sufficiency was reached in line with the principle of saturation in qualitative sampling [10].

The dataset was analysed using thematic analysis, moving from familiarisation and coding to theme development, review, and refinement, as recommended in contemporary qualitative method guidance [12]. To strengthen trustworthiness, the study incorporated triangulation across interviews, observation notes, and digital artefacts, and applied member checking to validate interpretive accuracy [13]. The resulting analysis yielded three interlinked strategic domains that participants

associated with an enhanced mall experience and sustained engagement: event engagement, experiential retail design, and digital interaction.

4.2 Informant profile and data sources

Table 4 summarises the informant groups and supporting sources used to generate the empirical material. The table is presented as a results object because it provides the evidentiary basis for the thematic claims that follow and clarifies the provenance of the study’s interpretations.

Table 4. Informant Profile and Data Sources

Data source	Code	Inclusion criteria	Material generated	Analytical role
Repeat visitors	C1–Cn	Visited at least five times within the last six months; engaged with events or community activities	Interview transcripts; short reflective field notes	Primary evidence of lived brand experience and engagement
Mall management	M1–Mm	Involved in planning events, tenant activation, or digital communications	Interview transcripts; programme descriptions where available	Strategic intent, implementation logic, and governance of experience design
Tenant representatives	T1–Tt	Participated in events, promotions, or experiential activations	Interview transcripts; interaction observations	Verification of touchpoint delivery and customer facing execution
On site observation	OBS	Event and non event days, including community gatherings and peak trading periods	Observation notes and structured checklists	Behavioural corroboration of engagement and experience cues
Digital artefacts	DIG	Social media posts, announcements, promotional materials	Screenshot log and document review notes	Evidence of omnichannel messaging and continuity of engagement

4.3 Thematic results: three strategic domains shaping engagement and experience

Theme 1: Event engagement as a social mechanism for participation and belonging. Participants described events not merely as promotional instruments but as experiential encounters that organised social interaction and encouraged repeated participation. Informants consistently positioned activities such as community based sports gatherings, exhibitions, and short workshops as moments where the mall became a site of shared practices rather than a purely transactional setting. Across the dataset, this event layer was linked to visitors' perceived sense of inclusion, emotional connection, and willingness to return, which are central characteristics of customer engagement as a multidimensional psychological process [2]. Observation notes further indicated that events created structured reasons to visit, supported longer dwell time, and increased the density of social interaction in public areas.

Theme 2: Experiential retail design as an embodied, multisensory stimulus. A second theme concerned the mall's spatial and aesthetic configuration, especially the green concept, interactive areas, and visually distinctive "photo spots". Participants framed these design cues as producing a sense of comfort, novelty, and enjoyment that exceeded functional shopping needs. These accounts map closely onto established definitions of brand experience as responses elicited by brand related stimuli embedded in the environment [3], including sensory and affective responses that support positive perceptions and loyalty. Respondents reported that the experience was "more than shopping" because the environment enabled leisure, relaxation, and socialising. Observations corroborated that visitors actively used open and semi open spaces for informal congregation, suggesting that design operated as a behavioural affordance that supported engagement through use and exploration rather than solely through consumption.

Theme 3: Digital interaction as continuity and amplification of the on site experience. The third theme captured the role of digital communication in maintaining continuity between visits. Participants highlighted the mall's social media updates as a practical mechanism for awareness, anticipation, and coordination of attendance, particularly for events and tenant activations. This digital layer supported an ongoing relationship with the mall by extending touchpoints beyond the physical site. Interview material suggested that digital prompts reduced informational frictions and facilitated planning, while observation and artefact review indicated that online content often mirrored and reinforced offline experience cues. In aggregate, the results indicate an emergent omnichannel pathway where digital touchpoints amplify the perceived coherence of the mall experience.

4.4 Integrated results table: linking strategies to engagement and brand experience dimensions

To make the results auditable and analytically explicit, Table 5 synthesises themes, sub themes, and their theorised linkage to engagement and brand experience dimensions.

Table 5. Thematic Findings Linking Strategies to Engagement and Brand Experience

Strategic domain (theme)	Sub themes (observed or reported practices)	Customer engagement dimension	Brand experience dimension	Consolidated outcome pattern	Evidence base
Event engagement	Community activities; creative exhibitions; entertainment programmes; short workshops	Emotional and behavioural participation , supported by cognitive involvement	Affective and behavioural responses	Stronger sense of belonging; repeated interaction; increased intention to revisit	C, M, T, OBS, DIG
Experiential retail design	Eco green ambience; interactive spaces; aesthetic zones; comfort and leisure affordances	Cognitive and emotional immersion	Sensory, affective, and cognitive responses	Enhanced memorability ; positive perceptions; exploration beyond retail transactions	C, OBS
Digital interaction	Social media announcements ; event reminders; promotion diffusion; online to offline coordination	Cognitive salience and behavioural follow through	Cognitive experience and perceived convenience	Continuity between visits; awareness and anticipation; reinforced experience consistency	C, M, DIG

5 Discussion

The findings indicate that Nipah Park Mall’s engagement capability is structured as an integrated system in which social programming, spatial design, and digital communication operate as mutually reinforcing mechanisms. First, the prominence of event engagement aligns with the proposition that customer engagement emerges

through recurring interactions that blend cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions [2]. In this case, events functioned as engagement infrastructures by providing routinised opportunities for participation, peer affiliation, and identity reinforcement, rather than acting solely as episodic marketing stimuli. This supports prior conceptual work that views engagement as relational and processual, shaped through repeated interaction over time [14]. The results further suggest that the mall's community oriented activities facilitate what can be interpreted as a form of brand community formation in situ, where visitors' attachment is strengthened through shared practices and social recognition, consistent with the broader engagement literature [7].

Second, experiential retail design appears to operate as the embodied foundation of the mall's brand experience. Participants' emphasis on comfort, novelty, and aesthetic pleasure is consistent with the claim that brand experience is elicited through sensory and affective responses to environmental stimuli [3], and that such experiences can contribute to satisfaction and loyalty formation [6]. The mall's eco oriented and interactive spatial cues can therefore be understood as a strategic investment in experiential differentiation, consistent with experiential marketing arguments that competitive advantage in physical retail increasingly depends upon the orchestration of memorable experiences rather than the mere provision of goods [5]. Importantly, the results indicate that design does not operate independently of social programming. Instead, design provides the stage on which events become meaningful, and events in turn activate and animate the designed environment, strengthening the coherence of the overall experience system.

Third, the digital interaction layer extends engagement temporally and informationally, reinforcing the continuity of the relationship between visits. The results suggest that social media communications perform two linked functions. They reduce uncertainty and facilitate behavioural follow through, and they symbolically maintain the mall's salience in visitors' everyday attention. This pattern resonates with the experience economy perspective, which emphasises that experience creation increasingly entails coordination across multiple touchpoints and contexts [5], and with the argument that contemporary experiential strategies must integrate physical and mediated forms of interaction to sustain engagement [15]. From a managerial standpoint, the implication is that digital activity should not be treated as a separate promotional stream, but rather as a continuity mechanism that sustains anticipation, directs participation, and reinforces experiential meaning.

Taken together, the study offers a narrative contribution to retail and engagement scholarship by illustrating how a mall in a non capital Indonesian city can compete through an integrated experiential architecture that combines participatory events, embodied design stimuli, and digitally mediated continuity. Conceptually, the findings are consistent with established frameworks of customer engagement [2], brand experience [3], and experience economy logics [5], while demonstrating how these constructs cohere in an applied lifestyle centre context. Methodologically, the use of purposive sampling and triangulated thematic analysis strengthens interpretive credibility [11], [12], while also foregrounding a key limitation. As a single case study, the findings prioritise analytical depth over statistical generalisation. Future research could extend this work through comparative multi site designs across malls with

different positioning strategies, and through longitudinal approaches that track how engagement trajectories evolve as event portfolios and digital ecosystems change over time [9].

6 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the success of Nipah Park Mall Makassar in building customer engagement and brand experience is not solely determined by tenant completeness or sales promotions, but rather by a holistic strategy that emphasizes emotional interaction, aesthetic design, and effective digital communication. Three main aspects were found to be effective in strengthening customer attachment and loyalty: Event Engagement through the organization of community activities, entertainment programs, and creative events that foster emotional closeness between visitors and the mall. Experiential Retail Design by presenting interactive spaces, eco-friendly concepts, and multi sensory experiences that provide aesthetic satisfaction while differentiating Nipah Park Mall from its competitors. Digital Interaction the utilization of social media and digital platforms to maintain customer connectivity, thereby creating synergy between offline and online experiences.

Overall, these integrated strategies have successfully created memorable shopping experiences, built strong emotional bonds, and enhanced customer loyalty. The findings reaffirm that the success of modern shopping malls is not merely shaped by the number of tenants or promotional activities, but by delivering holistic experiences that emphasize social, emotional, and digital value. Beyond contributing to marketing literature, this study also provides practical implications for shopping mall managers in Indonesia, highlighting the importance of integrating experiential design, community engagement, and digital strategies as sources of competitive advantage in the increasingly competitive retail industry.

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