



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mediating Role of E-customer Satisfaction between E-Service Quality and E-Customer Loyalty in Digital Marketing among The Youth Segment in Mobile Phone Service Industry

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Sep 16, 2024	The aim of this study is to examine the role of e-customer satisfaction as a mediation variable between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty and the influence of e-service quality and e-customer loyalty in the context of mobile phone industry. The questionnaire was used to collect the data from 103 valid respondents using a simple random sampling method. SPSS was used to analyze the data and Smart PLS was used to test the model. The results of the study show that e-customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty. In addition, the relationship between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty is positively related. The study recommends the need for mobile phone service managers to strive to provide quality electronic services in order to satisfy and retain their customers, in addition to the need to provide appropriate electronic services to young customers, who represent the largest segment of consumers, to maintain their loyalty and maintain competitive advantage.
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INTRODUCTION

Digital channels encompass a plethora of media, including mobile communication channels and diverse advertising platforms, to introduce brands and highlight their advantages. The optimization of marketing strategies through the use of the Internet and Information Technology facilitates substantial business expansion, as emphasized by Fisher (2018). In the current progressive and fiercely competitive business environment, the imperative of value creation is keenly felt (Heskett et al., 1997). Leveraging technology's multifaceted benefits, companies can enhance service quality, as posited by Matidza et al. (2019). Notably, the terminology "digital marketing" often intertwines with "social media marketing" (SMM), as elucidated by Heskett et al. (1997). Social Media Marketing, with its emphasis on the exchange of information between customers and companies, emerges as a potent catalyst for robust communication in digital channels.

In today's competitive business environment, customer loyalty plays significant role in the development of various business organizations. For example Boonlertvanich, (2011) noted that

under a good service relationship chain, profitability and growth of a company is a result from customer loyalty Oliver, (1980) explained that customer satisfaction entails the full meeting of customer expectation of the products and services. Service quality has been postulated to have a great impact on firm's performance (Zafar et al., 2012). Similarly, it is widely accepted that service quality and satisfaction are the most important sources of gaining competitive advantage for manufacturing and service organizations Parasuraman et al. (1991). Therefore, due to countries cultural differences Zafar et al. (2012), recommend future studies to examine service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in different countries. In addition, previous studies conducted on customer loyalty in mobile telecom service (Pumim et al, 2017) were based on different age groups. However, this study is distinct from the previous studies as it focuses primarily on the Youth segment of customers of mobile telecom service industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

Electronic Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty can deliver a number of advantages for a company. They concede a continuous stream of profit, depreciating marketing and operating costs, appreciated referral, and resistant to competitor's promotional activities (Reichheld & Teal, 1996). Furthermore, Brunner et al. (2008) stated that the costs incurred for holding a new customer are much more than those needed for holding an old customer. Therefore, the value of customer loyalty can never be overemphasized in today's ever changing competitive business environment (Reinartz & Kumar, 2000). A significant antecedent of customer loyalty is customer satisfaction. It has a positive impact of satisfaction on customer loyalty which is found in repurchase behavior (LaBarbera & Mazursky, 1983; Sambandam & Lord, 1995), repurchase intent (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Cronin et al., 2000), and positive word-of-mouth (Brunner et al., 2008; Oliver & Swan, 1989; Bitner, 1990, Eggert & Ulaga, 2002). Furthermore, Reichheld & Sasser (1990) mention that an appreciation of 5 percent in customer retention influences will improve about 25-75 percent in profitability. On the other hand, Wills (2009) indicates that the expenses incurred to hold the old customers are five times more than those incurred in retaining new customers. Furthermore, with loyal customers, for example, firms can appreciate their revenue. Primarily, loyal customers are less price-conscious. Secondly, loyal customers are willing to buy again and again, try the firm's services and product, do more positive marketing in terms of positive views and positive word of mouth and bring new customers for the company (Tu et al., 2011; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990).

The term customer loyalty is considered from situational, attitudinal or behavioral perspective (Uncles et al. 2003; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Behavioral loyalty is said to be purchase and usage behavior showed by customers in their previous purchases as well as the use of a product as competing product. Attitudinal loyalty is generally showed through an enduring emotional connection with a brand and strong customer interest in a product. The third type of loyalty is the Situational loyalty which argues against both behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. The situational loyalty effect is influenced by shopping and purchasing circumstances (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2010). Regardless of the fact that attitudinal, behavioral and situational loyalty, all have significant role in marketing, most firms focus on attitudinal loyalty because of its exciting features (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2010).

Electronic Service quality

The quality of e-service providers' internet presence emerges as a strategic imperative for engaging online customers (O'Keefe & Vignare, 2020). Grönroos (2001) views website services as processes yielding various outcomes, shaped by users' perceptions. Thus, the design of a firm's website significantly influences how customers perceive and evaluate the company.

A firm's website serves as a crucial conduit for virtual customer engagement and perception formation (Parasuraman & Zinkhan, 2002). Constantinides (2004) emphasizes the impact of online customer experiences on shaping perceptions and behaviors, ultimately driving traffic to sales outlets. Superior online experiences are determined by a strategic blend of web elements that influence customers' decision-making processes.

Ojo (2010) underscores that while scholars may articulate service quality differently, the fundamental essence lies in determining whether perceived service provision meets, exceeds, or falls short of consumer expectations. Consequently, customer expectations play a pivotal role in evaluating service quality. Asubonteng et al. (1996) argue that delivering robust service quality influences the intention to use a product or service, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction.

A study conducted by Muharam et al. (2021) find a significant positive influence of e-service quality on e-customer loyalty. Additionally, Santika et al. (2020) found that e-service quality has a significant and positive effect on e-customer loyalty among online marketplace customers in Indonesia. In a similar vein, Wibowo (2019) provided evidence that e-service quality has been shown to influence positively e-customer loyalty in Bukalapak.com in Indonesia. Whereas Avania & Widodo (2022) report no significant effect on e-customer loyalty. Maulida & Pradana (2022) similarly conclude that e-service quality has no significant effect on e-customer loyalty. In the same vein, Gotama & Indawati (2019) show e-service quality has no significant influence on e-loyalty in Bebas Bayar Application Users in Indonesian.

Consequently, the hypothesis below is proposed:

H1. E-service quality as perceived by e-customers is positively related to e-customer loyalty to the service provider.

Moreover, satisfaction influences positive attitudes and intentions, as expressed by Xiao & Wilkins (2015). Customer satisfaction encompasses a series of affirmative impressions experienced by customers or trends discerned in their purchasing experiences or consumption, stemming from the comparison between customer expectations and the direction of product or service delivery. Should the perceived performance surpass or fall short of expectations, it automatically elicits positive or negative confirmation (Rumaolat, 2019; Umanailo et al., 2019). For instance, when the performance exceeds expectations, it tends to ensure positive customer satisfaction. Conversely, negative confirmation leads to customer dissatisfaction due to perceived performance falling below expectations.

Researches in different sectors have validated the claim that there is a mediating effect of customer satisfaction between service quality and customer loyalty. There are many studies that have confirmed the positive influence of e-service quality on e-customer satisfaction which eventually leads to e-customer loyalty. A study conducted by Avania & Widodo (2022) illustrates that e-customer satisfaction mediates the impact of e-service quality on e-customer loyalty. Furthermore, Santika et al. (2020) demonstrated that e-customer satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty among online marketplace customers in Indonesia.

Additionally, Maulida & Pradana (2022) find that e-customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect as mediating the relationship between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty for SOCO by Sociolla. In the seam line, Wibowo (2019) indicated evidence that e-service quality has been shown to influence e-customer loyalty which is mediated by e-satisfaction. This influence is positive and pure mediation in Bukalapak.com in Indonesia. Additionally, Gotama & Indawati (2019) report e-service quality have a significant effect on e-loyalty with e-satisfaction as a mediation variable in Bebas Bayar Application Users in Indonesian. Similarly, Kusdibyo & Februadi (2019) found e-

customer satisfaction as mediation is higher influences positively and significantly of e-service quality on e-customer loyalty in online shopping setting in Indonesia.

Consequently, the hypothesis below is proposed:

H2. E-customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty.

According to the Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM), customers' decisions to continue using a specific service or make repeat purchases of a product are largely based on their satisfaction after using it (Anderson & Sullivan 1993; Oliver 1980). Customer satisfaction is essential for attracting and retaining long-term clients. Investing in customer satisfaction can be seen as insurance against unanticipated adversity that may affect the business. Satisfied clients are viewed as supporters of the business and are likely to remain loyal because of their positive past experiences (Anderson & Sullivan 1993). In the current environment, the ECM suggests that customers who are satisfied with the quality of e-services they receive will be highly loyal to those providers.

Study Model:

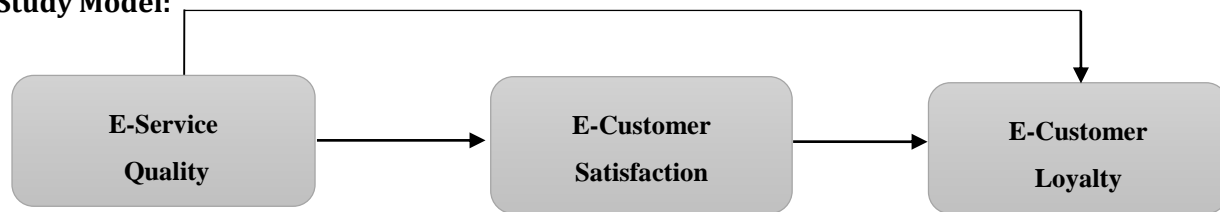


Figure 1: Research Model

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURES

This research concentrated on youth segment as a sample of population, because according to Hanley & Becker (2008), customers within the age group of 18-24 represent the largest group of mobile phone customers compared to all other age groups. All items to measure the variables were adapted from previous researches. Each of the items was accompanied by five-point response format, ranging from 5 =strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. The research population for this study was subscribers who patronize the services provided by mobile phone companies. Specifically, the sample for this research was taken from University students, because the university has a good number of young people that can constitute the sample for a study of this nature. The sample size was 112, and was selected using a simple random sampling technique. The data collection method was based on personally administered questionnaires to the respondents. Out of 112 questionnaires, 103 questionnaires were collected, and 9 questionnaires were not returned by the respondents.

MEASUREMENT

The data used for this study was collected employing the survey questionnaire research design. The research questionnaire was designed based on previous empirical literature. The questionnaire was used as the primary data collection method. A list of measurement items were developed using input from the review of the literature related to our study. E-customer loyalty was adapted from (Dimitriadis, 2006). E-customer satisfaction was adapted from (Walsh et al., 2006; Aydin & Özer, 2005). E-service quality was adapted from (Parasuraman et al., 1991). Each of the adapted items were assessed on a five point likert-scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The researchers that a five point likert-scale in order to ensure consistency among variables and to avoid confusion among respondents. Therefore, all items were measured using one to five point Likert-scales. SPSS has been used for the descriptive data i.e. with respect to the gender of the respondents; the genders of the respondents were 51 (49.5 %) male respondents and 52 (50.5%) female respondents. In terms of the marital status of the respondents; 3 (2.9 %) respondents were

married, and there were 100 (97.1%) respondents unmarried. The ages of the respondents were mainly between 20-30 years. As discussed earlier, this study aims to examine the e-customer satisfaction as a mediator variable that links between e-service quality as an independent variable, and e-customer loyalty as a dependent variable. To be able to obtain valid and reliable results, this study followed the two steps approach of reporting PLS results as suggested by (Chin, 1998). Therefore, the process was to confirm the construct validity before proceeding to test the hypothesis.

The Content Validity

According to Hair et al., (2010), Chin (1998) that in order to confirm the content validity of the measurement model, researchers could use factor loading of the item. Particularly, in order to measure a particular construct, all items should be loaded highly on the construct, which they were deliberately constructed to measure. Some items can therefore be deleted if they are higher than their respective construct in the loadings. Significantly, too, all the constructs that were measured should be loaded on their constructs respectively. According to Table 1 all the items load significantly and highly on the constructs they were intended to measure. Therefore, the content validity of the measurement, outer, model has been established.

Table 1: Cross-Loading of the items and T value results

Cross-Loading of the items				T value results		
ITEMS	CL	CS	SQ	CL	CS	SQ
CS1		0.608			6.063	
CS4		0.735			8.486	
CS6		0.635			5.664	
CS7		0.864			21.035	
L3	0.679			4.980		
L4	0.853			12.789		
L5	0.616			3.443		
SQ3			0.684			6.439
SQ5			0.723			7.913
SQ17			0.767			9.702
SQ19			0.693			6.475

The Convergent Validity

According to Hair et al. (2010), convergent validity is the degree to which a set of variables converge in measuring the construct. The items reliability and composite reliability are utilized and employed to confirm the convergent validity. Where all the items are importantly significant in the measuring their constructs, the composite reliability values have to be at least 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010), and the average variance extracted (AVE) have to be at least 0.5 after which the convergent validity can be confidently confirmed.

According to the analysis undertaken, the composite reliability value of all the constructs exceeded the cutoff value of 0.7 as well as the AVEs value of 0.5. Therefore, it has been confirmed that the measurement model possesses an appropriate level of convergent validity as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The results of convergent validity analysis

No.	Composite Reliability	R ²	Cronbachs Alpha	AVE
CL	0.763	0.196	0.600	0.522
CS	0.806	0.223	0.683	0.515
SQ	0.809		0.693	0.515

The Discriminant Validity

The degree, to which a set of items differentiates a construct from the rest of the constructs in the model, has been referred to as discriminant validity. According to Compeau et al. (1999), the discriminant validity signifies that the shared variance among each construct and its measures is greater than the variance shared between distinct constructs. The criterion recommended by Fornell & Larcker (1981) has been employed in this study for examining the discriminant validity of the measurement model. The link matrix as shown in Table 3 below shows the square root of the average variance extracted as the diagonal elements. The discriminant validity is understood and assumed when the diagonal elements are higher than other off-diagonal elements in their respective rows and columns. This situation appears to be the case in the relationship matrix and therefore the discriminant validity is confirmed.

Table 3: Correlations among constructs and discriminant validity

No.	CL	CS	SQ
CL	0.722		
CS	0.443	0.717	
SQ	0.478	0.473	0.717

RESULTS

The Structural Model & Hypothesis Testing

Once the validity & reliability of the measurement model has been established, hypothesized relationship also needs to be tested as a further step. This test has been conducted by running Bootstrapping in PLS algorithm in Smart PLS 2.0.

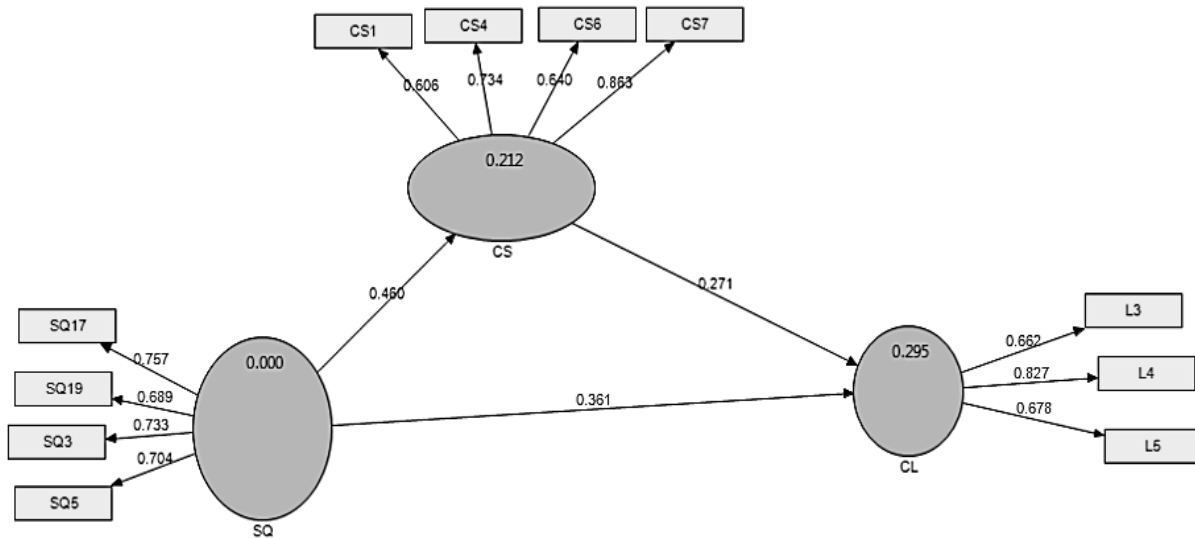


Figure 2: Items Loadings, Path Coefficient and R² Values

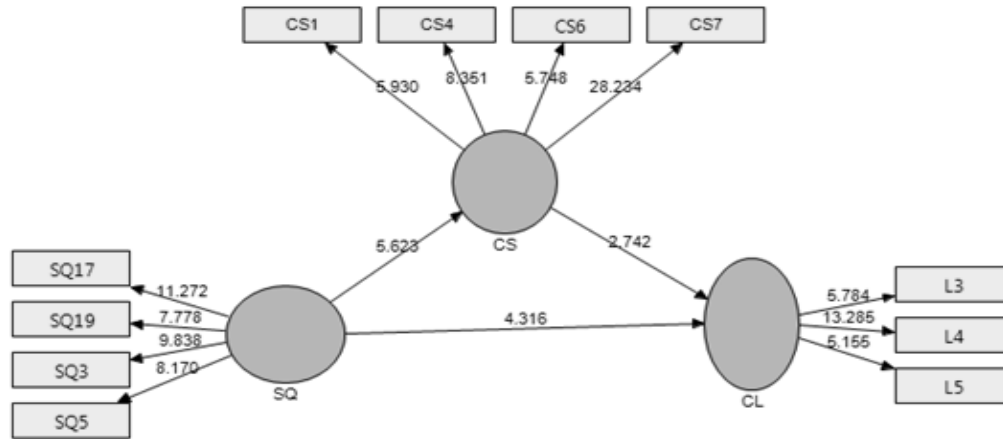


Figure 3: PLS Bootstrapping (t-values) for the Study Model

Table 4: Hypothesis testing result

No.	Path coefficient	St. Error	T value	P Value	Decision
Hypothesis 1	0.489***	0.063	7.661	0.001	Supported
Hypothesis 2	0.13**	0.076	2.59	0.014	Supported

Note. * (p < 0.10); ** (p < 0.05); *** (p < 0.01)

According to Table 4, e-service quality has significant relationship with e-customer loyalty ($\beta=0.489$, $t= 7.661$, $p<0.01$). This indicates that e-customer loyalty improves by e-service quality. In addition, Figure 3 and Table 5 shows that the mediation of e-customer satisfaction between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty is significant ($\beta=0.13$, $t= 2.5$, $p<0.05$). This result shows the importance of e-customer satisfaction in explaining the relationship between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty and thus supported hypothesis H2.

Predictive Relevance of the Model

R square (R2) can be used to assess the quality of the structural model as it shows the level of variation in the endogenous construct, which is explained by the exogenous variables. In this sense, the results shown in Figure 2 above indicate that R2 is significant at 0.295, indicating that service quality accounts for 29% variation of the customer loyalty. Based on the assessment criterion suggested by Cohen (2013), 0.02 is consider as weak, 0.13 is moderate and 0.26 as substantial. The finding R2 (0.295) of this study is substantial level. The effect sizes (f2) values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35, were used to interpret small, medium and large effect sizes respectively of the predictive variables, as recommended by Cohen (2013). Thus, the f 2 (0.129) of service quality obtained has a medium effect, while the f 2 (0.079) for e-customer satisfaction indicates a small effect.

Furthermore, Blind-folding procedure can be used to assess the quality of the model since it can generate cross-validated redundancy and cross-validated communality. This procedure is constructed to remove data amount and treat them as missing value in order to estimate model parameters. The assumed missing data are later reconstructed using the parameters. Therefore, the Q2 values could be calculated after a comparison is made between real and implied results. By using the underlying latent variables scores, a cross-validated communality Q2 can be obtained especially when the data points are predictive. However, a cross-validated redundancy Q2 is always the end product, if the data is predicted using endogenous LVs. According to Cha (1994), for the predictive relevance and predictive quality of the model to be sustained, the cross-redundancy value must be more than 0. Based on the findings shown in Table 5, the observed cross-validated redundancy find

are 0.083 and 0.079. This is evidence proving that the model has the power to predict adequate quality.

Table 5: Prediction Relevance of the Model

Endogenous	R Square	Cross-Validated Communality	Cross-Validated Redundancy
Customer loyalty	0.295	0.092	0.083
Customer satisfaction	0.212	0.224	0.079

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The finding of this study shows significant relationship between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty. It is the same line with previous studies conducted on e-customer loyalty such as Santika et al. (2020), Wibowo (2019). The finding indicates that customers will be more loyal to their operators if they are satisfied with the e-service quality provided by the operators. The service providers' provision of high level of e-service quality will keep long term customer relationship. High level of e-service quality also keep existing customer and attract new customers to the service provider. Consequently, more profit, stable dynamic share and increase e-customer loyalty. In the other hand, when e-service providers provide low level of e-service quality their customers will be looking to other e-service provider to have better e-service. Thus, customers will be ready to switch to another service provider. Manager of mobile phone service could concentrate on continuous improvement of their e-services to their young customers to meet their needs or wants.

This study finds e-customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty. This result is in the same vein with previous studies conducted on e-customer loyalty such as Avania & Widodo (2022), Santika et al. (2020), and Maulida & Pradana (2022). This means that e-service quality significantly influences e-customer satisfaction and e-loyalty. In other words, customers are willing to stay with the e-service provider for long term if the service providers provide a good e-quality of service (Dick & Basu, 1994). On the other hand, when customers are not satisfied about the e-service provided by their operators they will switch to another service providers and will seek for providers that able to meet their satisfaction. Managers of mobile phone service should seek to deliver e-quality services in order look to satisfy and retain their customers (Callarisa et al., 2009).

The current study contributes to knowledge on e-customer loyalty among youth (customers) in the mobile phone service industry. This study considers the age group of respondents between 20-30. The young people seem to be predominant users of typical mobile phone services, for example short messages service, chatting, games, using applications and other e-services. They are also interested in using the mobile phone more than the older people. Manager of mobile phone service could provide e-services suitable to young customers to keep them loyal and sustain competitive advantage. Future research should explore the influence of other antecedents that can lead to e-customer loyalty in service sector.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, H.H.A.; M.M.A.; and M.A.S.; methodology, M.M.A. and M.A.S.; software, A.N.A.; M.M.A. and S.A.E; validation, M.A.S and S.A.B.; formal analysis H.H.A.; M.A.S.; M.M.A. and S.A.E; investigation, A.N.A. and M.M.A.; resources, H.H.A. and M.A.S; data curation, S.A.E. and S.A.B; writing—original draft preparation, M.M.A. and M.A.S.; writing—review and editing, H.H.A.; and A.N.A; supervision, S.A.E and S.A.B.; project administration, M.A.S. and M.M.A.; funding acquisition,

H.H.A.; M.A.S.; M.M.A. and S.A.B; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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