

Using Digital Marketing Engineering Towards E-Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in Jordanian Malls among Millennials

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing service providers face intense competition. They have to continuously enhance their quality of service depending on the needs of the market. This study investigates the variables that influence the e-customer satisfaction and the e-customer loyalty among millennials in Jordanian malls, since there has not been given sufficient attention to the integrated role of technological perceptions and the quality of e-services in shaping the e-customer satisfaction and loyalty. All data for the current study were collected from 106 valid respondents using simple random sampling. SPSS and PLS-SEM were used for data analysis and model testing. The results show that e-customer satisfaction is the resultant of the e-service quality, technological perceptions, and e-customer loyalty. All these relationships are significant and interact with each other. The study also proposes the future exploration of additional variables, including the impact of artificial intelligence on digital marketing and e-customer satisfaction.

Keywords-digital marketing engineering; e-customer satisfaction; e-customer loyalty; Jordanian malls; millennials

I. INTRODUCTION

Customer engagement has become a major factor for companies seeking to build long-term relationships with consumers in digital environments. Platform interactivity, motivations, and customer engagement are among the most important influencing factors, while trust and satisfaction aim to transform the initial engagement to a long-term customer relationship [1]. There is a strong correlation between e-marketing campaigns and user awareness, which leads to

purchasing products related to such campaigns [2]. The transformation of the communication channels from analog to digital, serves the dual purpose of sustaining an effective communication flow with the customer while showcasing an array of premium products. Moreover, it contributes significantly to the cost efficiency [3-6]. Digital channels of communication create strong and intense engagements between different parties of people. These channels have, therefore, the responsibility to develop and sustain the trust in their customers

and create the desirable loyalty to a brand or a service. Internet and digital media are strategical factors for transcending the geographical boundaries and target specific audiences based on the consumer needs [7]. Marketers have the opportunity to engage in online product marketing, enable a seamless communication, and develop various transactions with customers, irrespective of the physical distance or time constraints. After all, the internet platforms function as 24/7 stores [8].

The rise of digital marketing is a substantial part of the overall marketing activities and plays an important role in the growth of e-retailers. The relationship between the e-service quality and consumer loyalty underscores the need for a deeper exploration. Consequently, this study aims to address existing gaps in literature concerning the consumer loyalty and e-service quality.

The Internet's nature facilitates rapid connections among geographically diverse groups interested in discussing issues concerning organizations and their components. An empirical study is needed to better understand how reliability, information privacy, fulfillment, compensation, and responsiveness in service delivery, impact the customer loyalty.

Despite the apparent significance of these factors, there is a lack of empirical research in Jordan and other developing countries, regarding their influence within the consumption context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Loyal customers are an asset that is highly prioritized by both large corporations and small enterprises. Marketing experts are, therefore, compelled to reassess their strategies to retain faithful consumers [9-11]. Loyal customers emerge as a critical priority also because they serve as vocal advertisers by spreading positive word-of-mouth recommendations about the products they endorse to potential new clients [11-13]. Creating positive loyalty with customers is gaining greater importance along with the massive use of the internet and social media platforms [14-17]. Marketing experts are now ready to develop effective strategies and methods to grow and retain a loyal customer base [18]. The concept of customer satisfaction expresses itself by comparing consumers' expectations with the actual performance of the achieved and perceived service quality [19]. Similarly, satisfaction is explained by comparing the expectations with the performance [20]. When the delivered performance matches the expectations, customer satisfaction is achieved [21, 22]. It is clear that customer satisfaction also forms the cornerstone of business success, generating brand loyalty [23]. This includes the feeling of satisfaction or disappointment resulting from comparing the actual product performance with expectations [24]. Truly satisfied customers are predisposed to extreme loyalty and focus on the company and its products [25].

Customer satisfaction results in repeated purchases and self-perpetuating loyalty, which is characterized by positive endorsement and increased profitability [26]. E-customer satisfaction has a positive influence on e-service quality and loyalty among the e-market customers [27-29].

Individuals attribute different meanings to quality based on their perspectives and understanding. A service in general, needs to satisfy a particular need or desire [30-32]. The quality of an online service is defined as the factor that enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of the shopping operations through a website [33]. An online service is linked to the consumer's perception of a company's relative advantages and the satisfaction created when purchasing a product online among with the delivery process that follows [34-37].

In [38], it is stated that the quality of information and the systems that support it, are significant factors for the success of a purchase. The integration of technology into business operations has empowered organizations to gain competitive advantages and facilitate the global communication through the Internet [39-41]. Customers seek access to companies that provide internet-based support. The transformative effects of technology enable global electronic communication, information gathering, transaction processing, and data interchange across businesses. The advantages of technology also extend to substantial cost reductions [42].

Factors, such as the required service levels, the pace of technological adoption, customers' quality consciousness, and the competitive market environment, influence the market in general [43 – 47]. Mobile technologies offer numerous benefits to organizations, including connectivity, flexibility, and interactivity [48-49]. Values, such as curiosity, novelty, or acquired knowledge, serve as significant motivators for purchasing specific products and services [50-52]. Customers sometimes purchase technology out of curiosity and novelty rather than specific objectives [53, 54].

In this study, customer loyalty was assessed through behavioral intentions, specifically focusing on the intention of repurchasing, word-of-mouth recommendations, and top-of-mind recalls [55-57]. Consequently, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) serves as the theoretical base to understand the customer loyalty dynamics [58]. The TPB suggests that intention serves as a primary characteristic of the individual behavior. This study investigates the relationship between the e-service quality, technology perceptions, and e-customer satisfaction and loyalty.

III. SURVEY

The study utilized a survey questionnaire to gather data. The questionnaire was developed based on existing literature related to this domain of research. It served as the primary method for data collection. A set of measurement items was formulated following a review of the literature relevant to the present study. The customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, electronic service quality, and technological perceptions were adapted from [59-62]. Each of these adapted items was evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (scale 1) to "strongly agree" (scale 5). The five-point Likert scale helped to ensure consistency across the variables and to minimize the confusion between the respondents. Hence, all items were gauged using this standardized scale.

A. Study Population and Sample

The study population consists of mall customers, focusing specifically on millennials. These individuals were born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s to early 2000s. This generation is known to be digitally literate and highly connected. These people grew up during the rise of digital technology and Internet which shaped their behaviors significantly, especially regarding the digital marketing and online services [63]. The sample included 106 participants selected via simple random sampling. Sample sizes between 100 and 150 are considered acceptable and meet the general rule of thumb for the PLS-SEM analysis. All data were collected through personal questionnaires, 88 of which were returned successfully, 12 were not returned, and 6 were incomplete.

B. Study Framework

The study framework can be seen in Figure 1.

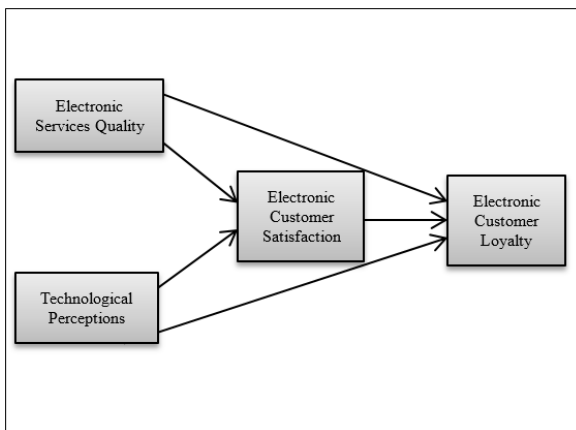


Fig. 1. Study framework.

IV. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The descriptive analysis using SPSS revealed that among the respondents, 39 (44.3%) were male and 49 (55.7%) were female. 49 respondents (55.7%) were married, whereas 39 (44.3%) were unmarried. All 103 respondents fell within the age range of 22-47 years. Their educational background was: 4 (4.5%) had a high school education, 10 (11.4%) held diplomas, 58 (65.9%) had Bachelor's degrees, 7 (8.0%) had Master's degrees, 4 (4.5%) held Ph.D. degrees, and 5 (5.8%) fell into the "other" category.

Additionally, PLS-SEM was employed to analyze the relationships between the electronic service quality, technological perceptions, customer loyalty, and customer satisfaction as a moderating variable. A two-step approach was adopted to ensure the validity and reliability of the results [64]. Validity confirmation procedures were carried out before any hypothesis test was conducted.

A. Measurement Variables

The validity of the measurement variables was established through the content and the convergent validity.

B. Content Validity

In order to validate the content of the measurement outer model, factor loadings of the items were utilized [64, 65]. All items were intended to measure a specific construct exhibit, which was highly loading on that construct. Items that demonstrated higher loadings on other constructs than their intended ones might be considered for removal. Additionally, each construct should exhibit significant loadings on its respective constructs. Table I demonstrates that all items were loaded significantly and substantially on the constructs they were designed to measure. This proves that the content validity of the measurement outer model was confirmed.

TABLE I. CROSS-LOADING OF THE ITEMS AND T VALUE RESULTS

Variables	Cross-loading of the items				T value results			
	ECL	ECS	ESQ	PT	ECL	ECS	ESQ	PT
ECL1	0.757				11.66			
ECL3	0.776				11.58			
ECL4	0.795				11.81			
ECL5	0.790				13.53			
ECS1		0.819				12.73		
ECS2		0.883				36.99		
ECS4		0.803				16.08		
ESQ10			0.802				18.91	
ESQ11			0.803				15.10	
ESQ12			0.787				16.36	
ESQ13			0.746				12.74	
ESQ14			0.755				12.87	
ESQ15			0.792				15.82	
ESQ16			0.733				11.62	
PT1				0.705				8.56
PT2				0.747				9.78
PT3				0.776				12.14
PT4				0.819				23.87
PT5				0.734				12.02
PT6				0.805				16.30
PT7				0.845				30.21

C. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is defined as the extent to which a group of variables aligns when measuring a construct. To validate the convergent validity, researchers employ measures, such as item reliability and composite reliability. It is crucial that all items contribute to measuring their respective constructs, with composite reliability values reaching at least 0.7, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) attaining a minimum of 0.5 [65]. Upon analysis, it was found that the composite reliability values of all constructs surpassed the threshold of 0.7, and the AVEs exceeded 0.5. It has therefore been established that the measurement model of the current study exhibits a satisfactory level of convergent validity, as indicated in Table II.

R² serves as a metric for evaluating the structural model's quality by showing the extent of variation in the internal construct as explained with the help of external variables. In this context, the results shown in Figure 2 reveal that the R² is statistically significant at 0.260. This indicates that the e-service quality, technological perception, and e-customer satisfaction collectively account for 26% of the variation in customer loyalty. Authors in [66] provided an assessment criterion, with values of 0.02 to be considered weak, 0.13 moderate, and 0.26 substantial. In the current study, having an R² equal to 0.260 means that it is within the substantial level,

indicating a noteworthy explanation of the external variables on customer loyalty.

TABLE II. THE RESULTS OF CONVERGENT VALIDITY

Variables	Composite reliability	R ²	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
ECL	0.792	0.260	0.786	0.608
ECS	0.800		0.785	0.699
ESQ	0.893		0.889	0.600
PT	0.912		0.892	0.604

D. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a set of items distinguishes one construct from the others in the model [67, 68]. It indicates that the shared variance between each construct and its measures, is greater than the variance shared between different constructs. This study's criterion was utilized to assess the discriminant validity of the measurement model. The correlation matrix presented in Table III displays the square root of the AVE as the diagonal elements. The discriminant validity is established when these diagonal elements exceed the other off-diagonal elements within their respective rows and columns. Based on the relationship matrix, this condition is observed, confirming the presence of discriminant validity.

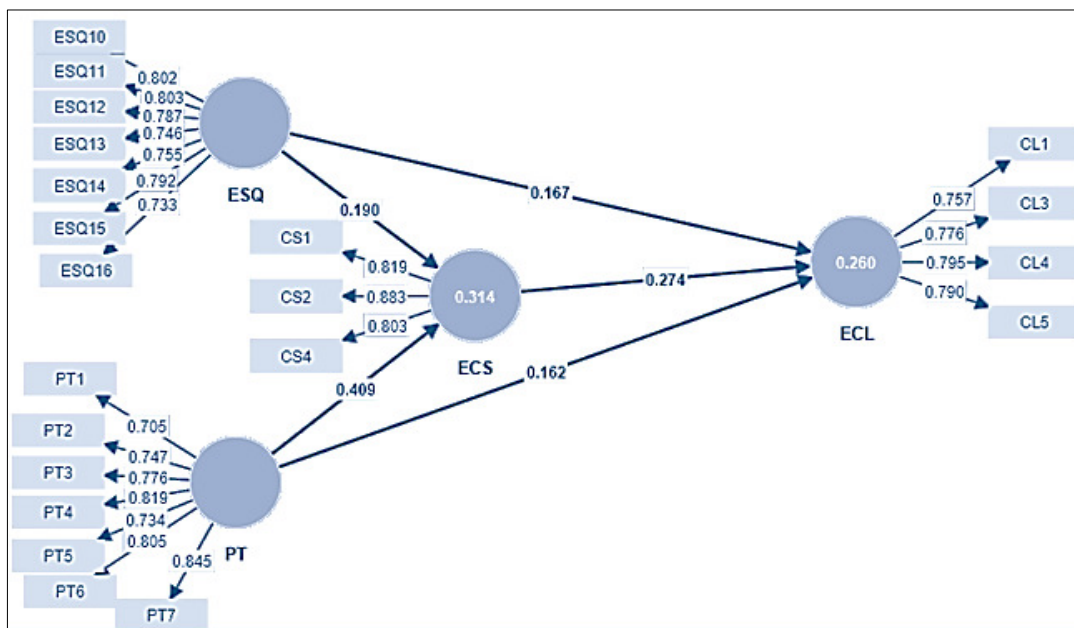


Fig. 2. Item loadings, path coefficient, and R² values.

TABLE III. CORRELATIONS AMONG CONSTRUCTS AND DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

Variables	ECL	ECS	ESQ	PT
ECL	0.780			
ECS	0.443	0.836		
ESQ	0.415	0.483	0.774	
PT	0.431	0.545	0.717	0.777

E. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

After establishing the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the next step involves testing the hypothesized relationships. This testing process was carried out by implementing Bootstrapping within the PLS algorithm using PLS-SEM 4.0. Figure 2 shows the item loadings, path coefficient, and R² values. In Figure 3, the PLS bootstrap (t-values) for the study model are presented.

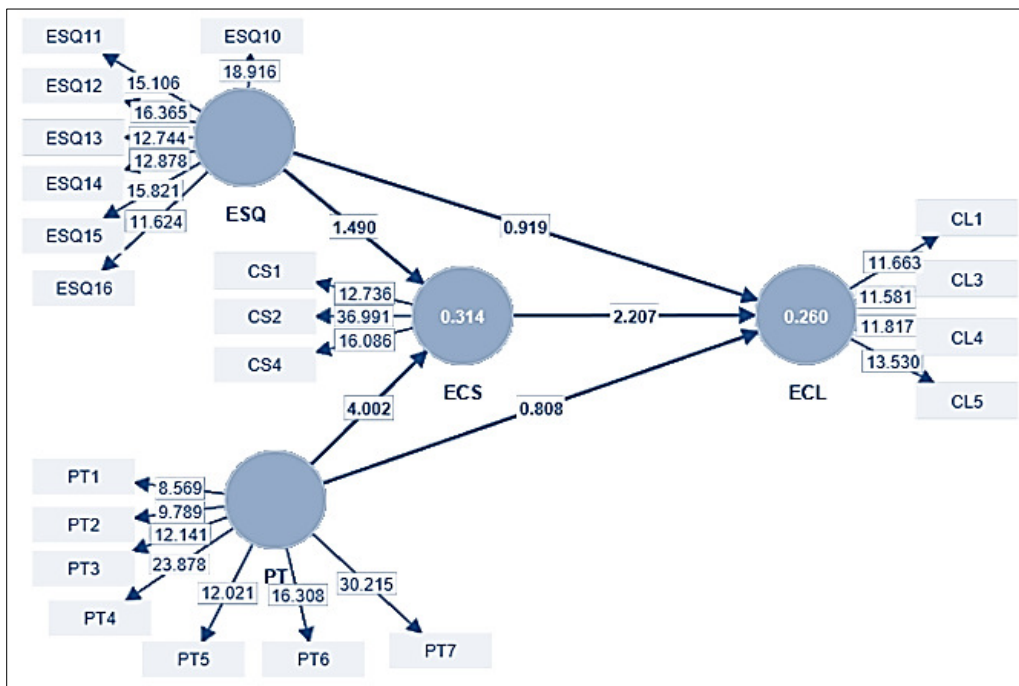


Fig. 3. PLS bootstrapping (t-values) for the study model.

TABLE IV. HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESULTS

Hypotheses	Path coefficients	St. error	T value	P value	Discussion
H. 1 ECS -ECL	0.274***	0.124	2.207	0.027	Supported
H. 2 ESQ - ECL	0.167***	0.181	0.919	0.358	Supported
H. 3 PT - ECL	0.162***	0.201	0.808	0.136	Supported
H. 4 ESQ-ECS-ECL	0.052***	0.045	1.149	0.250	Supported
H. 5 PT-ECS- ECL)	0.112***	0.064	1.748	0.081	Supported

According to Table IV, there is a significant positive association between e-service quality and e-customer loyalty ($\beta=0.274$, $t=2.207$, $p<0.10$). This indicates that the e-customer loyalty is positively influenced by the e-service quality. Furthermore, Figure 3 reveals that the mediation of e-customer satisfaction between the e-service quality and e-customer loyalty is supported ($\beta=0.052$, $t= 1.149$, $p<0.10$). This finding underscores the significance of the e-customer satisfaction in explaining the relationship between the e-service quality and e-customer loyalty, thus confirming hypothesis 4 (H. 4 ESQ-ECS-ECL).

Furthermore, the technological perception exhibits a highly significant relationship with the e-customer loyalty ($\beta=0.162$, $t=808$, $p<0.10$), suggesting that the e-customer loyalty is positively impacted by the technological perception.

Moreover, Figure 3 indicates that the mediation of the e-customer satisfaction between the technological perception and e-customer loyalty is supported ($\beta=0.112$, $t= 1.748$, $p<0.081$). This underscores the importance of the e-customer satisfaction in explaining the relationship between the technological perception and e-customer loyalty, thus affirming hypothesis 5 (H. 5 PT-ECS- ECL).

Additionally, according to Table IV, the e-customer satisfaction demonstrates a highly significant relationship with the e-customer loyalty ($\beta=0.167$, $t=0.919$, $p<0.10$), indicating that the e-customer loyalty is enhanced by the e-customer satisfaction.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal a positive correlation between the e-service quality and customer loyalty, complying with previous research. This suggests that customers are more likely to exhibit loyalty to a mall if they are satisfied with its e-service quality. High-quality e-services by malls create long-term customer relationships, retain existing customers, and attract new ones. Consequently, this leads to increased profitability, a stable market share, and increased customer loyalty.

On the contrary, malls with lower levels of e-service quality may prompt customers to seek better service elsewhere, potentially leading them to other malls. It is, therefore, significant for mall managers to focus on continuously improving their e-service quality to meet the needs and preferences of their millennials customers.

This study exhibits that the e-customer satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between the e-service quality,

technological perception, and e-customer loyalty, complying with previous research. This underscores the significant impact of the e-customer satisfaction on e-customer loyalty. Essentially, customers are inclined to maintain long-term relationships with malls that offer high-quality e-service and technological experiences. Conversely, when customers are not satisfied with the e-service quality and the technological aspects provided by their mall, they are likely to switch to alternative options that better meet their needs. Therefore, mall managers should prioritize the delivery of high-quality e-services and technological innovations to ensure customer satisfaction and retention.

This research makes a valuable contribution to understanding the e-customer loyalty among millennial customers in the malls. By focusing on respondents between 22-47 years old who are the predominant customer database of typical malls, it investigates the technological awareness and characteristics of this generation.

Mall managers can take advantage of this understanding to create customized e-services that satisfy these customers and increase their level of loyalty, thus gaining a competitive edge among their competitors.

Future researchers should investigate additional factors that could influence the customer loyalty across various sectors beyond the mall environment. In addition, there are many proposed future studies such as:

- The Impact of Artificial Intelligence in Digital Marketing on E-Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty
- Gender Differences in Millennials' Response to Digital Marketing Strategies in Jordanian Malls
- Developing a Predictive Model for Digital Marketing Effectiveness Using Big Data Analytics in the Jordanian Retail Sector
- The Effect of Social Media Engagement on E-Purchase Decisions and Customer Loyalty in Jordanian Malls.

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