

## The Effect of User Experience (UX) and E-Service Quality (ESQ) on Customer Loyalty Through Customer Satisfaction as a Mediating Variable (A Study of Gen-Z Users of the McDonald's App)

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### Abstract

*This study seeks to investigate the impact of user experience on customer satisfaction, the effect of e-service quality on customer satisfaction, the relationship between user experience and customer loyalty, the influence of e-service quality on customer loyalty, and the effect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty among Gen-Z users of the McDonald's app. This study utilizes the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory and the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) to elucidate how external stimuli, such as user experience and e-service quality, affect users' internal assessments and behavioral responses. The research strategy utilized is a correlational study using a quantitative methodology, and hypothesis testing was performed using a Structural Equation Model (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS). The sample consisted of 120 respondents who are current users of the McDonald's app in Indonesia, chosen through unintentional sampling. The study's results indicate that service experience positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction; e-service quality positively and significantly affects customer satisfaction; user experience positively and significantly impacts customer loyalty; and e-service quality positively and significantly influences customer loyalty. Moreover, customer satisfaction exerts a positive and substantial influence on customer loyalty and serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between user experience and e-service quality.*

**Keywords:** User Experience, E-Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Gen-Z

### INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has driven significant changes in the consumption behaviour of the Indonesian public, particularly in the use of mobile applications to meet daily needs. High internet penetration, reaching 221.5 million users or 79.5% of the population, with 34.4% of these coming from the Gen-Z demographic (APJII, 2024). This situation is accelerating the adoption of digital services across various sectors, including the fast-food industry, and encouraging consumers to switch to app-based services that offer convenience, speed and efficiency in the food ordering process.

Gen Z is a generation that has grown up in a digital environment (born between 1997 and

2012) and tends to prioritise speed, ease of navigation and interactivity when using digital platforms (Arum et al., 2023). This is reflected in their relatively high consumption of fast food, with the majority eating it 1-2 times a week, 3-4 times a week, or even daily (Yonatan, 2025), thus demonstrating Gen-Z intensity and reliance on digital services to meet their needs.

Among various fast-food restaurant brands, McDonald's is one of the most popular with Gen-Z. Research into culinary preferences shows that 46.6% of Gen-Z choose McDonald's as their favourite fast-food restaurant, followed by KFC at 30.7%, and Richeese Factory and Burger King at 9.8% and 5% respectively (Naurah, 2022). Naturally, such high levels of preference have encouraged companies in the

fast-food sector to develop digital services in the form of mobile apps to meet the needs of customers who prioritise speed and ease of transaction.

In Indonesia, the McDonald's app is among the most popular, with over 100 million downloads. However, a high number of users does not always guarantee the development of customer loyalty. Suhartanto et al., (2018) define customer loyalty as a form of customer commitment manifested through repeat purchases and sustained positive behavior toward a product or service, whether in the form of actual actions or the intention to continue using and recommending it. Therefore, companies need to ensure that the digital services provided are capable of delivering an optimal user experience and quality of electronic service.

Based on the author's observations, the rating of the McDonald's app on the Play Store and App Store in 2025 ranked 4th with an average rating of 2.75. The McDonald's app also continues to receive various complaints regarding system performance, such as errors during ordering and payment, unresponsive navigation, device limitations, and difficulties in accessing features, redeeming points, and using promotions all of which reflect issues with the user experience. Furthermore, there are also issues with e-service quality, such as inconsistencies in service information, limited payment methods, difficulties contacting couriers, and inaccuracies in order tracking and delivery. This indicates that despite having a large user base, the quality of the app's digital experience and services has not yet fully met

user expectations, thereby potentially reducing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Conceptually, User experience is closely related to the level of usability and the satisfaction felt after using a product or service. (Deacon, 2020). Olivia et al. (2025) assert that user experience reflects users' comfort and satisfaction when engaging with a specific product, system, or service. E-service quality pertains to a website's capacity to effectively and efficiently streamline the purchasing process from initiation to delivery, encompassing all consumer interactions before and following the transaction, including fulfillment and refunds (Parasuraman et al., 2005). Areiza-Padilla and Galindo-Becerra (2022) assert that the quality of electronic services significantly impacts consumer perceptions and behaviors in the digital domain. E-service quality encompasses the effectiveness of online communication, the service's ability to meet client expectations, and the overall quality of the digital experience, which can ultimately foster customer loyalty, repeat purchases, and favorable word of mouth. In e-commerce, the quality of electronic services is essential for enhancing customer retention and fostering loyalty through positive user experiences (Jeon & Jeong, 2017). Both aspects significantly influence customer satisfaction, particularly when digital services meet or exceed customer expectations through service quality, convenience, and an efficient user experience (Demirel, 2022).

The relationships between variables in this study can be explained through the framework outlined in the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) theory, whereby user experience and e-

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service quality do not directly lead to customer loyalty, but rather first pass through a process of internal psychological evaluation by the user. The SOR theory proposed by Mehrabian & Russell, (1974), explains that individual behaviour is the result of environmental (stimuli) that are first processed within the individual's internal psychological state (organism), subsequently generating a behavioural reaction (response). In the context of this study, user experience and e-service quality are positioned as stimuli (S), customer satisfaction (O) as an organism, and the resulting customer loyalty as a behavioural response (R). The customer process. Satisfaction development is elucidated by the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) proposed by Oliver (1980), which posits that satisfaction emerges from a juxtaposition of initial expectations and the actual delivery of the service. Performance that surpasses expectations results in satisfaction, whilst performance that falls short of expectations results in dissatisfaction.

Besides empirical facts, a research gap exists in prior studies, revealing contradictions in findings. A study by Nasution & Adiwijaya (2024) illustrates a substantial impact of user experience on customer loyalty, however other research by Karunia et al. (2023) reveals non-significant findings. Multiple studies have demonstrated that e-service quality significantly influences customer loyalty, however research conducted by Sari et al. (2025) and Siddiqi et al. (2024) suggests that this influence is not significant. Research presented by Elsiana & Maradona, (2024) indicates that e-service quality also has a significant effect on customer

satisfaction, whilst research conducted by Nasution & Adiwijaya, (2024) shows no significant relationship between the two. These differing findings suggest that the mechanisms underlying the formation of customer loyalty in app based services still require further empirical study.

The urgency of this research stems from observable occurrences, specifically that the McDonald's app consistently garners ratings and reviews reflecting customer unhappiness, indicating that the user experience and e-service quality have not adequately met expectations. Moreover, there is a lack of consistency in the findings of prior empirical research on the relationships among user experience, electronic service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty, suggesting that the mechanisms driving app-based customer loyalty remain inadequately understood. This study seeks to provide additional empirical contextual information on the influence of these two variables on customer satisfaction and loyalty, especially within Generation Z, while also offering theoretical insights and practical recommendations for food and beverage firms to enhance digital offerings.

## **METHOD**

The study employs a quantitative, explanatory research methodology to examine the correlations among variables and the mediating role within the research framework. The research participants are Gen-Z users (born from 1997 to 2012) of the McDonald's app in Indonesia, with a sample size of 120 respondents calculated using the Lemeshow algorithm. The sampling strategy used non-

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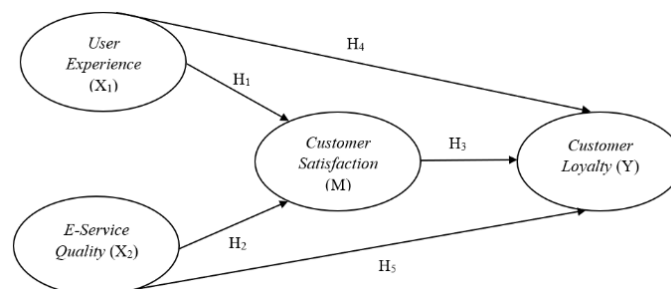
probability sampling via the Accidental Sampling method, in which respondents were randomly selected who met the requirements for active users (Sugiyono, 2021).

The data utilized comprised primary data collected through an online questionnaire (Google Form) and secondary data sourced from literature and a prior study. The research instrument employed a 5-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Data analysis was performed using the SEM-

PLS approach in SmartPLS 3.0 to examine direct and indirect correlations among variables, specifically the mediating effect of customer satisfaction in the relationship between user experience and e-service quality.

### Hypothesis Model

According to Sugiyono, (2021), a hypothesis is a provisional answer to the research question, where the research question has been stated in the form of a question. Thus, the hypothesis model in this study is as follows.



**Figure 1. Hypothesis Model**

Source: Results of Data Processing (2026)

H1: User experience has a positive effect on Customer satisfaction.

H2: E-service quality has a positive effect on Customer satisfaction.

H3: Customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on Customer loyalty.

H4: User experience has a positive effect on Customer loyalty.

H5: E-service quality has a positive effect on Customer loyalty.

H6: Customer satisfaction mediates the effect of user experience on Customer loyalty.

H7: Customer satisfaction mediates the effect of E-service quality on Customer loyalty.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire was disseminated through Google Forms, resulting in 120 respondents who are Gen-Z users of the McDonald's app in Indonesia. This study outlines the characteristics of the respondents.

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**Table 1. Respondent Profile**

Category	Description	N	%
Gender	Female	73	60,8
	Male	47	39,2
Age	16	1	0,8
	17	3	2,5
	18	7	5,8
	19	8	6,7
	20	9	7,5
	21	8	6,7
	22	13	10,8
	23	16	13,3
	24	19	15,8
	25	13	10,8
	26	10	8,3
Education Level	27	11	9,2
	28	2	1,7
	Lower Secondary School	1	0,8
	Upper Secondary School	55	45,8
	Diploma (D1-D3)	19	15,8
Employment	Bachelor,s Degree	41	34,2
	Master's Degree	4	3,3
	Student	43	35,8
	Privat Sector Employees	52	43,3
	Civil Servants	12	10
	Entrepreneurs	10	8,3
	Other	3	2,5
	2-3 times a week	5	4,2
	1-2 times a week	3	2,5
	Once a week	21	17,5
Once every two week	49	40,8	
Once a month	42	35	

Source: Results of Data Processing (2026)

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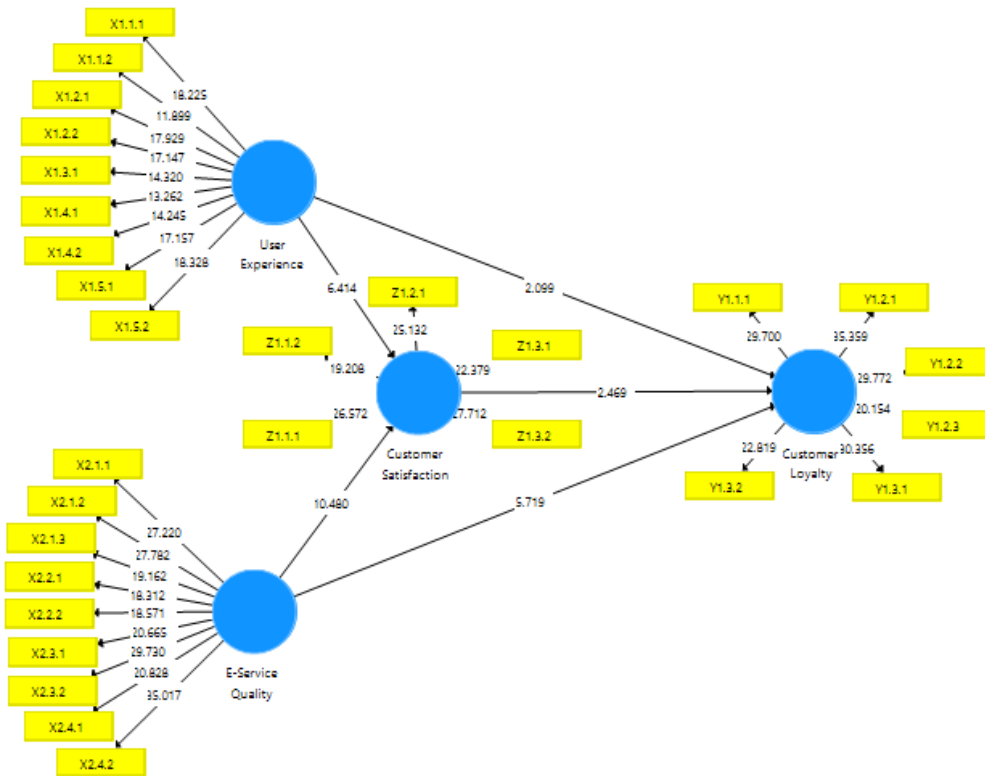


Figure 2. Construct Validity and Reliability

Source: Results of Data Processing (2026)

Table 2. Results of Reliability and Convergent Validity Testing

Items	Variables	Factor Loading	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	CR
<b>X1</b>	<b>User Experience</b>		<b>0,553</b>	<b>0,899</b>	<b>0,917</b>
X1.1	Attractiveness				
X1.1.1		0,750			
X1.1.2		0,722			
X1.2	Perspiciuity				
X1.2.1		0,754			
X1.2.2		0,758			
X1.3	Dependability				
X1.3.1		0,746			
X1.4	Stimulation				
X1.4.1		0,716			
X1.4.2		0,730			
X1.5	Novelty				
X1.5.1		0,749			
X1.5.2		0,765			
<b>X2</b>	<b>E-service quality</b>		<b>0,617</b>	<b>0,922</b>	<b>0,935</b>
X2.1	Efficiency				

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X2.1.1		0,792			
X2.1.2		0,788			
X2.1.3		0,766			
X2.2	Fulfillment				
X2.2.1		0,759			
X2.2.2		0,751			
X2.3	System Availability				
X2.3.1		0,785			
X2.3.2		0,821			
X2.4	Privacy				
X2.4.1		0,772			
X2.4.2		0,831			
<b>Z1</b>	<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>	<b>0,634</b>	<b>0,856</b>	<b>0,896</b>	
Z1.1	Product Performance				
Z1.1.1		0,806			
Z1.1.2		0,774			
Z1.2	Meeting Needs				
Z1.2.1		0,799			
Z1.3	Alignment of Expectations				
Z1.3.1		0,796			
Z1.3.2		0,806			
<b>Y1</b>	<b>Customer Loyalty</b>	<b>0,663</b>	<b>0,898</b>	<b>0,922</b>	
Y1.1	Repeat Purchase				
Y1.1.1		0,825			
Y1.2	Retention				
Y1.2.1		0,844			
Y1.2.2		0,820			
Y1.2.3		0,764			
Y1.3	Referrals				
Y1.3.1		0,828			
Y1.3.2		0,803			

Source: Results of Data Processing (2026)

The data presented in the table above demonstrate that all indicator items are legitimate, with outer loadings exceeding 0.7 and average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50. This aligns with the perspective of Hair et al. (2022), who assert that a concept possesses convergent validity if it satisfies two primary criteria: an outer loading value exceeding 0.70 and an average variance extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.50.

Moreover, all constructs were considered reliable, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values over 0.70, according to Hair et al. (2022). This further substantiates that each variable exhibits a commendable degree of construct reliability. Consequently, it can be inferred that all variables in this study satisfy the criteria for convergent validity and reliability.

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**Table 3. R-Square**

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Customer Loyalty	0,563	0,552
Customer Satisfaction	0,647	0,640

Source: Results of Data Processing (2026)

According to Hair et al., (2022) an R2 value of 0.75 is considered strong, 0.50 moderate, and 0.25 weak. The research results show an R2 of 0.563 for Customer Loyalty and 0.647 for Customer Satisfaction, both of which fall into the moderate category. This means that the

model is able to explain 56.3% and 64.7% of the variation in the variables, respectively, and thus has a reasonably good explanatory power in explaining the variables under study.

**Table 4. Direct and Indirect Effect Test Results**

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	Information
H1: UX → CS	0,405	0,408	0,063	6,414	0,000	H1 Accepted
H2: ESQ → CS	0,569	0,570	0,054	10,480	0,000	H2 Accepted
H3: CS → CL	0,273	0,278	0,111	2,469	0,014	H3 Accepted
H4: UX → CL	0,149	0,151	0,071	2,099	0,036	H4 Accepted
H5: ESQ → CL	0,446	0,445	0,078	5,719	0,000	H5 Accepted
H6: UX → CS → CL	0,111	0,112	0,048	2,328	0,020	H6 Accepted
H7: ESQ → CS → CL	0,155	0,160	0,069	2,261	0,024	H7 Accepted

Source: Results of Data Processing (2026)

This study employed a bootstrapping approach to test hypotheses and assess the importance of correlations among the structural model's variables. According to Hair et al., (2022) a relationship is considered significant if the t-statistic value is  $> 1.96$  and the p-value is  $< 0.05$  at a 5% significance level.

The test results indicate that all hypotheses were accepted as they demonstrated positive and significant effects. User experience influences Customer Satisfaction ( $\beta=0,405$ ;  $t=6,414$ ;  $p=0,000$ ) and Customer Loyalty ( $\beta=0,149$ ;  $t=2,099$ ;  $p=0,036$ ), thus H1 and H4 were accepted. E-Service Quality also influences

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Customer Satisfaction ( $\beta=0,569$ ;  $t=10,480$ ;  $p=0,000$ ) and Customer Loyalty ( $\beta=0,446$ ;  $t=5,719$ ;  $p=0,000$ ), so H2 and H5 are accepted. Furthermore, Customer Satisfaction influences Customer Loyalty ( $\beta=0,273$ ;  $t=2,469$ ;  $p=0,014$ ), so H3 is accepted.

The mediation test results demonstrate that Customer Satisfaction mediates the influence of User Experience ( $\beta=0.111$ ;  $t=2.328$ ;  $p=0.020$ ) and E-Service Quality ( $\beta=0.155$ ;  $t=2.261$ ;  $p=0.024$ ) on Customer Loyalty, hence confirming H6 and H7. Consequently, all hypotheses satisfied the significance criterion ( $t > 1.96$  and  $p < 0.05$ ).

### **Discussion**

This study's findings demonstrate that User Experience and E-Service Quality significantly influence Customer Loyalty, both directly and indirectly through Customer Satisfaction as a mediating variable. All relationships between variables were found to be positive and significant, thereby reinforcing the theoretical frameworks employed, namely the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model and the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT). These findings align with other prior empirical research that has evidenced analogous relational tendencies.

The examination of the initial hypothesis revealed that user experience has a favorable, substantial influence on customer satisfaction. This suggests that an enhanced user experience—characterized by usability, navigational clarity, and interface comfort—correlates with higher consumer satisfaction. These findings align with the research by Mamakou et al. (2025) and Karunia et al.

(2023), which indicates that user experience is a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction. From the perspective of the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) by, Oliver, (1980), satisfaction arises from a comparison between initial expectations and the perceived actual performance. When the user experience exceeds expectations, positive disconfirmation occurs, resulting in satisfaction. Meanwhile, within the Satisfaction-Oriented Response (SOR) framework, user experience acts as a stimulus influencing the user's internal state (organism), namely satisfaction.

Moreover, the examination of the second hypothesis indicated that e-service quality has a favorable and significant impact on customer satisfaction, with a larger coefficient than user experience. This indicates that the quality of electronic services is the primary determinant of consumer satisfaction. This finding is supported by the research of Elsiana & Maradona, (2024), which states that e-service quality such as system speed, security, and service reliability contributes significantly to customer satisfaction. From the EDT perspective, e-service quality reflects actual performance compared to custom expectations; thus, when the service exceeds expectations, satisfaction increases significantly. Within the SOR framework, e-service quality functions as a powerful external stimulus in influencing users psychological states.

Moreover, user experience was found to exert a favorable and significant influence on customer loyalty, albeit with a very modest coefficient. This suggests that the direct impact of user experience on loyalty is generally less pronounced than the indirect influence

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facilitated by satisfaction. This discovery corresponds with the study by Nasution & Adiwijaya (2024), which asserts that user experience is more efficacious in enhancing loyalty when mediated by customer satisfaction. From a SOR perspective, this indicates that a stimulus can directly influence a response, but the effect is stronger when mediated through internal organismic processes.

Moreover, e-service quality exerts a favorable and substantial impact on client loyalty with considerable intensity. This suggests that clients are likely to exhibit loyalty when the services offered are constant, dependable, and able to fulfill their requirements. This conclusion is corroborated by the study conducted by Sari et al. (2025), which asserts that electronic service quality significantly influences consumer loyalty. Within the SOR framework, service quality, as a stimulus, can directly elicit a response in the form of loyalty without necessarily having to go through satisfaction entirely.

The study's results reveal that customer pleasure positively and significantly influences client loyalty. This confirms that customer satisfaction is a key determinant in shaping loyalty, although the strength of its influence falls into the moderate category. The findings align with those of Karunia et al. (2023), Nasution & Adiwijaya (2024), and Elsiana & Maradona (2024), which demonstrate that satisfaction directly affects consumer loyalty. From an EDT perspective, satisfaction is the outcome of an assessment that affects post-consumption behavior, including repurchase intention and recommendations. Meanwhile, within the SOR framework, satisfaction acts as

an organism that bridges the relationship between stimulus and response, where loyalty is the final form of response.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that customer satisfaction acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between user experience and e-service quality on customer loyalty. The research by Nasution & Adiwijaya (2024), Karunia et al. (2023), Siddiqi et al. (2024), and Elsiana & Maradona (2024) substantiates the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between e-service quality and customer loyalty. However, the effect of this mediating relationship, characterized by partial mediation, was found to be significant but not stronger than the direct effects of each variable on loyalty. This suggests that in the context of digital services, the formation of loyalty does not always have to go through full customer satisfaction but can occur directly through user experience and perceived service quality.

Within the SOR framework, satisfaction serves as an organism that explains the internal mechanisms underlying behavioral responses, whereas in EDT, satisfaction is the result of a disconfirmation process that determines customers subsequent behavior. The findings of this study affirm that customer loyalty in app-based services is driven not just by user experience but, more importantly, by e-service quality that regularly fulfills consumer expectations. Moreover, consumer happiness has been demonstrated to serve as a conduit linking stimulus factors and loyalty. These results simultaneously affirm the relevance of the EDT and SOR theories in explaining customer behavior in the digital era, and strengthen the empirical evidence that a

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combination of a good user experience and superior service quality is a key strategy in building customer loyalty among Gen-Z.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that user experience and e-service quality positively and significantly influence customer loyalty, both directly and indirectly via customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. The results demonstrate that e-service quality has a greater impact on improving customer satisfaction and loyalty than user experience. Moreover, customer satisfaction serves as a mechanism connecting user experience and e-service quality to customer loyalty, albeit with a partial mediation effect. These results reinforce the integration of the SOR and EDT theories in explaining app-based customer behavior, particularly among Gen-Z users of the McDonald's app.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of two major theoretical frameworks (SOR and EDT) into a single empirical model, as well as the focus on the Gen-Z user context in fast-food app services, which has been limited in previous research. This study is limited by its very small sample size and its concentration on a single age cohort. The use of accidental sampling, in which respondents were selected by convenience and serendipity, implies that not all members of the population had an equal chance of being selected. This introduces biases, including the predominance of specific traits and self-selection bias, therefore constraining the generalizability of the results. Future research should incorporate additional mediating variables, such as trust, perceived value, or emotional involvement, to more

thoroughly elucidate the relationship among User Experience, Electronic Service Quality, and Customer Loyalty. Moreover, it is recommended to increase the sample size and its representativeness by using more representative sampling methodologies.

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