

E-SERVICE QUALITY ATTRIBUTES THAT INFLUENCES ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION OF HARD LUXURIES AMONG GENERATION Y CONSUMERS IN MALAYSIA: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF E-SATISFACTION

Shiranthi Adris¹, Dennis Choo Ying Hoe²

^{1,2}Inti International College Subang, Selangor, Malaysia

*Email: shir_1011@hotmail.com, dennisyh.choo@newinti.edu.my

Abstract

Many department stores, jewellery and watch specialist stores closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. To sustain the revenue of these businesses many of these stores turn to e-commerce. **Research Problem:** As Generation Y consumers' in Malaysia represent a greater potential for these businesses, there was a lack of understanding of their online buying behaviour for Hard Jewellery especially during the early days of COVID19 pandemic. **Research Objectives:** (1) To study the relationship between the attributes for e-service quality and customer satisfaction of hard luxury online stores among Generation Y consumers; (2) To identify the relationship between customer e-satisfaction and online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y consumers and (3) To examine the mediating effect of customer e-satisfaction between attributes of e-service quality and the online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y consumers. The study was conducted on Generation Y customers consist of male and female Malaysians between 25 and 40 years old who had visited, purchased or used the services provided by hard luxury goods retailers online at least once; a pilot study was conducted prior the actual survey to test the validity and reliability of the research instrument; a convenient sample of 200 respondents was collected via a Google Form online questionnaire, where the link was shared on Facebook, WhatsApp and email, and MS Excel was used to sort the primary data. The data analysis was conducted with the help of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with partial least squares (PLS) analysis using the SmartPLS 3.0 software and SmartPLS was used to generate T-statistics for significance testing of both the inner and outer model. **Result Outcomes:** The study established that Website design, Customer Service and Fulfillment had an effect on customer e-satisfaction which had an effect on online purchase intention during the pandemic but security/privacy does not have a significant and positive effect on customer e-satisfaction and does not affect online purchase intention. Henceforth, customer e-satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between security/privacy and online purchase intention in the study.

Keywords

E-Service Quality, Purchase Intention, E-commerce, Hard Luxury, Generation Y

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Introduction

COVID-19 had devastating worldwide impact on sales of hard luxury goods in 2020. The luxury sector adapted to the digital revolution with the rise in number of online consumers. In order to survive and thrive in an intensely challenging industry and reap long-term advantages in e-commerce, hard luxury companies such as Tiffany & Co, Omega, Rolex and Cartier; Habib Jewels, Poh Kong, Swarovski, Seiko, Pandora, Selberan, Wanderlust & Co and, Pandora had to focus on customer satisfaction and service quality assessment. In the research, the study examined the relationship between the independent variables such as key attributes of E-Service Quality: Website Design, Customer Service, Security/Privacy and Fulfillment with the dependent variable Online Purchase Intention and the mediating variable was Customer E-satisfaction.

Research Objectives

RO1. To study the relationship between the attributes for e-service quality and e-customer satisfaction of hard luxury online stores among Generation Y consumers.

RO2. To identify the relationship between customer e-satisfaction and online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y consumers.

RO3. To examine the mediating effect of customer e-satisfaction between attributes of e-service quality and the online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y consumers

Research Questions

- Does website design, customer service, security/privacy and fulfilment have a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction of hard luxury online stores among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?
- Does customer e-satisfaction have a significant and positive influence on online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?
- Does customer e-satisfaction have a mediating effect between website design, customer service, security/privacy and fulfilment and the online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?

Hard Luxury

Based on the previous studies, Luxury is characterized as the most elevated level of recognised brands, alongside the physical and psychological attributes associated with them (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). Luxury goods are not limited to trophies and status symbols, but also include things that provide aesthetic experience and delight (Teimourpour & Hanzae, 2011; Kim, 2019). These can be further divided into soft and hard luxury goods.

According to Bain and Company, 2012; Ing *et al.*, 2021 fashion and clothing are examples of soft luxuries, while watches and jewellery are examples of hard luxuries. The focus of the study is on hard luxury as they have a high level of consumer involvement in the information gathering and decision-making processes owed to its expensive nature (Hollensen, 2011). Hard luxuries are also not gender specific and fulfil the criteria of the study (Ing *et al.*, 2021). Some of the major players in the hard luxury industry are Tiffany & Co, Omega, Rolex and Cartier which are iconic brands

with a long history of a strong brand identity. However, for the purpose of the study, hard luxury brands were not limited to elite-level luxury brands but also includes local and international entry-level luxury brands such as Habib Jewels, Poh Kong, Swarovski, Seiko, Pandora, Selberan, Wanderlust & Co, Pandora and etcetera, which created a perception of high quality, carefully crafted, unique, high price and exclusivity than other brands in the minds of Malaysian consumers. In the study, Service quality refers to all stages of a customer's contact with a website, including how well it efficiently and effectively supports shopping, purchase, and delivery (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malhotra, 2005). Service quality was also described as the anticipated gap between what consumers seek and how they analyzed what they are getting (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malhotra, 2005; Sundaram, Ramkumar & Poorna, 2017). Other studies, in a related development, classified e-service quality as a user's experience with the retailer via an online platform without human involvement, where the internet was regarded as a key medium for e-service delivery (Lu et al., 2010; Sousa & Voss, 2006). The significant factors and performance of customer relationships was strongly dependent on the dimensions of the e-service (Liao & Yen, 2011). Customer views of e-service quality impact e-retailers' sales and success, thus assessing and monitoring consumer perceptions of e-service quality is essential (Rolland & Freeman, 2010; Kim, Hsu & Yuen, 2020). For e-commerce businesses, the major drivers of success or failure were not just having a website or having a low price, but also providing high-quality e-services that induce savvy online customers to pay a premium price (Ranjibarian, Fathi & Rezaei, 2012). Several empirical research in a variety of businesses have revealed the interrelationships between the variables of service quality, customer satisfaction, and purchase intentions (Paulo, Tiago & Almira, 2019; Shrawan & Mohit, 2018; Udo, Bagchi & Kirs, 2010). Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1988) created the SERVQUAL scale for assessing consumer perceptions of service quality which comprises of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The SERVQUAL paradigm was less relevant to e-commerce because of the distinction between digital and conventional customer care (Paulo, Tiago & Almira, 2019). E-SERVQUAL was a model constructed by Zeithaml et al. (2000) which consist of eleven dimensions and was used in many studies. Well-known modified models include eTailQ which was designed by Wolfinbarger and Gily (2003), E-S-qual was devised by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra (2005) and WebQual was developed by Barnes and Vidgen (2002). Following a comprehensive literature review and opinions from experts Jyoti and Kesharwani (2020) identified eight dimensions of e-service quality (efficiency, reliability, responsiveness, ease of use, security, websites aesthetic, personalization, and ease of use) in the online banking industry. Kim, Kim and Kandampully (2011) identified (convenience, personalization, security/privacy, website design, and entertainment value) as major aspects of service quality in the online clothing retail context. In the research the study examines Wolfinbarger & Gilly (2003) eTailQ model, which includes website design, reliability/fulfilment, security/privacy and customer service. The model could adequately assess the e-service quality of hard luxury companies based on the earlier literature reviewed (Markus, 2016). Furthermore, the study looked at the impact of e-service quality on customer satisfaction and online purchase intention.

E-Service Quality Attributes in the Study

Website Design

Website design draw in consumers attention and also had an impact on satisfaction online (Roy, Dewit & Aubert, 2001). "Website aesthetics, personalization, product presentation and price display", were some of the items of the consumer experience linked to the website design (Blut,

2016). Website quality relates to how internet consumers evaluate websites in terms of whether they met their demands and include all required product information (Chang & Chen, 2008). A good website design should prioritize usability while also offering aesthetics, presenting a compelling and affiliated picture to the brand and to would draw in customers to come and browse (Diaz & Koutra, 2013). This factor makes up for the lack of tangible evidence or atmosphere that was absent in an e-commerce setting (Firdous & Farooqi, 2019). A successful website should also have relevant content that allows visitors to trust and engage with the merchants efficiently (Gefen, 2000). Besides an engaging website, a good website design was critical in supporting customers in finding information, as it shortens the time it takes to find information and eliminate the possibility of mismatches (Luo, Ba & Zhang, 2012). Previous studies looked at how the design of a website influences users' perceptions of its quality (Kim, 2019). This perception was critical, particularly for first-time visitors, in order to instill confidence in consumers towards the website's dependability (Guo, Ling & Liu, 2012). Cho and Park (2001), for example, examined the e-commerce user-consumer satisfaction index (ECUSI) for online buying using an empirical study of 435 online shoppers. It was discovered that the quality of website design was used to measure user satisfaction. The empirical study by Wolfinbarger & Gilly (2003) discovered that website design elements are important indicators of consumer quality judgements, content and loyalty for online businesses.

Customer Service

The degree of an intrinsically reactive approach to which a retailer ideally executes was referred to as service excellence, and it act as an extrinsic standard value for quality evaluation (Mathwick, Malhotra & Rigdon, 2001). Product classification and support, replies to commonly asked inquiries via e-mail or other channels, credit and instalment exchange completion, and shipping related assistance were all examples of client care (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malhotra, 2002; Park & Kim, 2003). In an online context, buyers have high expectations for a rapid response, and addressing their inquiries lowers risk perception and enhances perceived convenience (Kouser, Ghulam & Bakari, 2018; Liao & Cheung, 2002; Gummerus et al., 2004). Furthermore, online shopping entails delivery and authentication of the acquired items, necessitating the use of customer service to address complaints or feedback from online customers (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003; Tan et al., 2016). Offering customer support in an online buying environment was critical since most customers value ease and efficiency while purchasing online (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003; Tan et al., 2016). Consumers' perceptions of the online store's ability to deliver on its promises and effectively conduct service requirements impacts customer satisfaction (Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A & Malhotra, A. (2005). The customer service dimension includes attributes such as responsiveness, reliability and service level (Kim, 2019). Customers' motives, such as purchase intentions, word of mouth, and customer loyalty, reveal the implication of perceived service excellence and satisfaction (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malhotra, 2002; Norizan & Abdullah, 2010).

Security/Privacy

The security of credit card payments and the privacy of shared information were referred to as security/privacy (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malhotra, 2000). Consumer notion associated with the possibility of a vendor to secure a customer's pre-purchase decision was also referred to as privacy (Kim, Donald & Raghav, 2009). Customers' perceptions of internet suppliers' ability to satisfy security criteria such as authentication, integrity, encryption, and non-repudiation were alluded to

as security (Kim, Donald & Raghav, 2009). A website with privacy and security features of service quality has substantial effect on customer e-satisfaction (Wang & Kim, 2019). Several studies have look into the core aspects of security and privacy in the to measure the service quality of online stores (Taherdoost, 2017; Swaid & Wigand, 2009). This is due to customers' apprehensions about using this medium when making transactions (Al-dweeri et al., 2019). Consumers' willingness to visit e-stores with the aim of making purchases was substantially linked to their trust in providing personal information as well as credit card payment information (McCole, Ramsey & Williams, 2010; Whysall, 2000). According to Bruskin/Goldberg Research, credit-card security was a key concern for 75% of Internet buyers when deciding to purchase goods online (Szymanski & Hise, 2000; Fathi & Razaeei, 2012). Confidentiality of personal information, appropriate security measures and a good online shopping experience were all indicators of website security and privacy (Shergil & Chen, 2005; Mohammed et al., 2014). According to prior research, these variables affected how online buyers rated websites and as a result, how likely they were to make an online purchase (Mohammed et al., 2014; Niranjanamurthy & Dharmendra, 2013).

Fulfilment

The fulfilment dimension include aspects that customers to put in place to make a purchase and receive their items such as shipping choices, payment methods, shipping and handling information and the return procedure (Kim, 2019). When it comes to fulfilment, rationality refers to customer views about timely and appropriate product delivery (Semeijn et al., 2005). This component was critical for establishing a trusting connection between the merchant and the customer who buys from the website (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malhotra, 2005; Firdous & Farooqi, 2019). Fulfilment was cited as a significant antecedent of customer perception, such as satisfaction and buying intention, in an e-commerce context (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2003). Customers will feel a sense of trust and dependability when they were informed and understand that the online merchants were likely to convey precisely what they promise on their websites (Tan et al., 2016; Gefen, 2002). Information provided on the merchant's webpage should be accurate and credible, since this would increase the likelihood of buyers returning to the site more frequently (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2003; Tan et al., 2016). Prior findings suggest that website have a favourable and substantial impact on online consumers' satisfaction and propensity to buy online in the future (Mohammed et al., 2014; Gounaris, Dimitriadis, & Stathakopoulos, 2010).

Customer E-Satisfaction

As e-satisfaction is classified as a behavioural attitude and for the study, satisfaction will be measured in terms of result by comparing prior expectations and perceived performance for each antecedent element in order to determine the respondents' attitude (satisfied/pleasing) toward each of those dimensions (Cenfetelli, Benbasat and Al-Natour, 2015). Several researchers noted that customer e-service quality is likely to impact e-satisfaction (Jyoti & Kesharwani, 2020; Nisar & Prabhakar, 2017; Kim, 2019). The quality of information and system quality were discovered to have an impact on customer satisfaction range on an e-commerce platform, thus affect purchase intent (Lin, Chen & Filieri, 2017). Szymanski and Hise (2000) looked at the impact of consumer perceptions on online purchasing behaviour and their findings presented that customers' purchasing experiences were suggested to be dominated by e-satisfaction. Results from studies also suggested a link between consumer satisfaction and e-commerce purchase intentions (Alnawas & Aburub, 2016; Hsu et al., 2017; Liao et al., 2017; Pham & Ahammad, 2017). Customers must be pleased with the products or services offered by a certain website, as satisfied

customers were more likely to be loyal and make repeat purchases (Nisar & Prabhakar, 2017). If consumers were dissatisfied, they were more inclined to seek information about other options and to respond to competitor efforts than satisfied customers, who were bound to return to a website, build a deeper relationship with the brand and even suggest the online store to friends and family (Collier & Bienstock, 2006; Carlson & O’Cass, 2010; Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003).

Online Purchase Intention

The subjective assessment of a customer following a broad examination of the purchasing of items or services was referred to as purchase intention (Balakrishnan, Dahnil & Yi, 2014). Past findings have discovered that customer satisfaction views of website service quality were a consequence of perceived service quality of the technological aspects of online retailing (Zhu, Wymer & Chen, 2002). The theory of planned behaviour examined an individual's attitude toward a behaviour and discovered it to be a driving element in that individual's actual conduct (Ajzen, 1991). It was also a perception of views about the services and resources available to carry out the behaviour as such as time, information, understanding, assurance, etcetera before making a purchase (Ajzen, 2011; Hasbullah, Mahajar & Salleh, 2014). Furthermore, the intention to buy goods online accounts for a significant part of a user's actual transaction (Hsu et al., 2017). Purchase intentions could be used to evaluate the feasibility of a new distribution channel, allowing managers to assess if the concept justifies further development and which geographic areas and customer groups to target through the channel (Morwitz et al., 2007; Jyoti & Kesharwani, 2020). There was a reason to believe that customer purchase intentions were a good predictor for actual online purchase behaviour (Udo, Bagchi & Kirs, 2010). Preceding studies indicated that consumer perception of service quality and satisfaction have a favourable impact on consumer purchase intentions (Zhu, Wymer & Chen, 2002; Han, Kim & Lee, 2018). As a result, the online purchase intention of hard luxury customers was added as a dependent variable in this study.

Methodology

The study involved a Quantitative Approach using a Cross-sectional study and data collection was conducted with the help of Google Forms through Whatsapp, Facebook and E-mail with convenient sample of 200 respondents of both male and female Malaysians between 25 and 40 years old.. In order to develop the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted prior the actual data collection. The survey questionnaire consisted of demographic information, e-service qualities, level of e-satisfaction and online purchase intention from the website. The study adopted four dimensions from the works of Wolfinbarger & Gilly (2003) and Blut (2016) to assess e-service quality: website design (4 items), customer service (4 items), security/privacy (4 items), and fulfilment (4 items) and three items adopted from Hsu *et al.* (2017) and Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malhotra (2005) to measure the e-satisfaction and online purchase intention to measured two items adopted by Zhang & Kim (2013) and Pavlou, (2003). All of these items were based on a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

The data analysis was conducted using structural equation modelling (SEM) with partial least squares (PLS) analysis (Ramayah et al., 2018) with SmartPLS 3.0 software to measure the validity and reliability of the data. The study used structural model to examine if the hypotheses presented were valid and with bootstrapping, SmartPLS was used to generate T-statistics for significance testing of both the inner and outer model. (Hair et al., 2017).

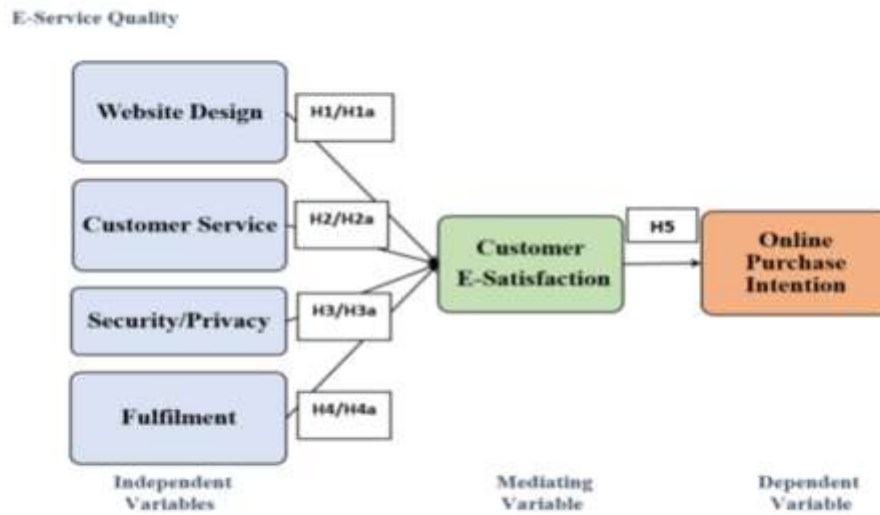


FIGURE 1 : Theoretical Framework

Table 1 : Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity

	Item	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Customer E-satisfaction	CES1	0.93	0.913	0.946	0.853
	CES2	0.882			
	CES3	0.957			
Customer Service	CS1	0.904	0.858	0.905	0.705
	CS2	0.749			
	CS3	0.897			
	CS4	0.799			
Fulfilment	F1	0.843	0.826	0.885	0.659
	F2	0.737			
	F3	0.855			
	F4	0.807			
Online Purchase Intention	OPI1	0.966	0.927	0.965	0.932
	OPI2	0.965			
Security/Privacy	SP1	0.765	0.788	0.863	0.612
	SP2	0.816			
	SP3	0.803			
	SP4	0.742			
Website Design	WD1	0.876	0.843	0.896	0.685
	WD2	0.681			

	WD3	0.813			
	WD4	0.921			

Table 2 : Summary of Hypothesis Testing

No	Hypothesis
H1	There is a significant and positive effect between website design and customer e-satisfaction in hard luxury e-commerce among Generation Y consumers.
H1a	Customer e-satisfaction mediates the relationship between website design and consumer's intention to purchase hard luxury goods online.
H2	There is a significant and positive effect between customer service and customer e-satisfaction in hard luxury e-commerce among Generation Y consumers.
H2a	Customer e-satisfaction mediates the relationship between customer service and consumer's intention to purchase hard luxury goods online.
H3	There is a significant and positive effect between security/privacy and customer e-satisfaction in hard luxury e-commerce among Generation Y consumers.
H3a	Customer e-satisfaction mediates the relationship between security/privacy and consumer's intention to purchase hard luxury goods online.
H4	There is a significant and positive effect between fulfilment and customer e-satisfaction in hard luxury e-commerce among Generation Y consumers.
H4b	Customer e-satisfaction mediates the relationship between fulfilment and consumer's intention to purchase hard luxury goods online.
H5	There is a significant and positive effect between customer e-satisfaction in hard luxury e-commerce and purchase intention among Generation Y consumers.

Table 3: Test Results for Research Objective 1

Research Objective (RO), Research Question (RQ), Hypothesis (H)
<p>RO1. To study the relationship between the attributes for e-service quality and customer satisfaction of hard luxury online stores among Generation Y consumers.</p> <p>RQ1. Does website design have a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction of hard luxury online stores among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?</p> <p>RQ2. Does customer service have a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction of hard luxury online stores among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?</p>

RQ3. Does security/privacy have a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction of hard luxury online stores among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?

RQ4. Does fulfilment have a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction of hard luxury online stores among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?

H1: There is a significant and positive effect between website design and customer e-satisfaction in hard luxury e-commerce among Generation Y consumers.

H2: There is a significant and positive effect between customer service and customer e-satisfaction in hard luxury e-commerce among Generation Y consumers.

H3: There is a significant and positive effect between security/privacy and customer e-satisfaction in hard luxury e-commerce among Generation Y consumers.

H4: There is a significant and positive effect between fulfilment and customer e-satisfaction in hard luxury e-commerce among Generation Y consumers.

Hypothesis No.	Path Relationship	β Value	T-Statistics (> 1.96)	P-Values (<0.050)	Decision
H1	Website Design -> Customer E-satisfaction	0.335	6.384	0.000	Supported
H2	Customer Service -> Customer E-satisfaction	0.311	4.905	0.000	Supported
H3	Security/Privacy -> Customer E-satisfaction	0.052	1.410	0.159	Not Supported
H4	Fulfilment -> Customer E-satisfaction	0.329	7.470	0.000	Supported

Table 3 illustrates research objective 1 and addressed hypothesis 1 to hypothesis 4 for the study. The study revealed that website design (H1), customer service (H2) and fulfilment (H4) have a positive significant effect on customer e-satisfaction. In deduction, these latent variables are significantly associated, resulting in a positive significant influence on the corresponding latent variables. However, the literature suggests that security/privacy (H3) does not have a significant and positive effect on customer e-satisfaction as the T-statistics is 1.410 and the P-value is 0.159, hence the hypothesised relationship is not supported.

Table 4: Test Results for Research Objective 2

Research Objective (RO), Research Question (RQ), Hypothesis (H)					
RO2. To examine the mediating effect of customer e-satisfaction between attributes of e-service quality and the online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y consumers.					
RQ5. Does customer e-satisfaction have a positive influence on online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?					
RQ6. Does customer e-satisfaction have a positive influence on website design and on online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?					
RQ7. Does customer e-satisfaction have a positive influence on customer service and on online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?					
RQ8. Does customer e-satisfaction have a positive influence on security/privacy and on online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?					
RQ9. Does customer e-satisfaction have a positive influence on fulfilment and on online purchase intention of hard luxuries among Generation Y Malaysian consumers?					
Hypothesis No.	Path Relationship	β Value	T-Statistics (> 1.96)	P-Values (<0.050)	Decision
H5	Customer E-satisfaction -> Online Purchase Intention	0.932	9.320	0.000	Supported
H1b	Website Design -> Customer E-satisfaction -> Online Purchase Intention	0.312	6.39	0.000	Supported
H2b	Customer Service -> Customer E-satisfaction -> Online Purchase Intention	0.290	4.871	0.000	Supported
H3b	Security/Privacy -> Customer E-satisfaction -> Online Purchase Intention	0.049	1.412	0.158	Not Supported

H4b	Fulfilment -> Customer E-satisfaction - > Online Purchase Intention	0.306	7.421	0.000	Supported
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Table 4 illustrates research objective 2 and addressed hypothesis H5, H1b, H2b, H3b and H4b for the study. The study revealed that customer e-satisfaction in a hard luxury online store has a positive significant effect on purchase intention among generation Y consumers (H5). This finding is consistent with research done by previous scholars based on electronic service quality models and its relationship with customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Alnawas & Aburub, 2016; Hsu et al., 2017; Liao et al., 2017; Pham & Ahammad, 2017). Website design had an effect on customer e-satisfaction which has an effect on online purchase intention (H1b). Customer service had an effect on customer e-satisfaction which had an effect on online purchase intention (H2b). Fulfilment had an effect on customer e-satisfaction which had an effect on online purchase intention (H4b). The results suggests that there was a causal chain where the independent variable, affects the mediating variable and in turn, affects the dependent variable. However, the literature suggest that security/privacy does not have a significant and positive effect on customer e-satisfaction which does not affect online purchase intention (H3b) as the T-statistics was 1.412 and the P-value was 0.158, hence the hypothesised relationship was not supported.

Results and Discussion

In the study, the findings show that the constructs are interconnected in a substantial way. In addition, the customer e-satisfaction mediating test was effective and substantial. The results also revealed that satisfied customers would not only purchase from the online retailer but recommend the brand to others. These findings were in line with Paulo, Tiago and Almira (2019) and Shrawan and Mohit's (2018) previous study. The analytical outcome verify that website design had a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction which influences online purchase intention of hard luxury among generation Y consumers in Malaysia. Previous research had demonstrated that website design was a significant determinant of customer satisfaction (Firdous & Farooqi, 2019). Customers evaluate the service quality of the retail website based on their website experience (Paulo, Tiago & Almira, 2019). Moreover, there was a positive indirect influence between website design and online purchase intention of hard luxury as customer e-satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between website quality and online purchase intention. Therefore, practitioners should match the standards of their online stores to the expectations of their customers.

Based on the results obtained from the study, customer service has a significant and positive effect on customer satisfaction which influences online purchase intention of hard luxury among Generation Y consumers in Malaysia. It can be safely inferred that customer e-satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between website quality and online purchase intention. These finding supports previous research which had proven the effect of customer service on customer satisfaction (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2003; Al-Dweeri *et al.*, 2019; Kim, 2019; Ahmad & Khan, 2017). Customer perceptions of satisfaction rise when they believe that a company's employees were eager to provide timely service and assist them which was particularly crucial in high

involvement products such as hard luxury. Customers develop a sense of gratitude for and comfort with online retailers as a result of effective and prompt handling of their issues and fixing their problems through the website (Firdous & Farooqi, 2019).

Furthermore, the results obtained from the study indicated that fulfilment was a critical factor in achieving customer satisfaction which in turn influences online purchase intention of hard luxury among generation Y consumers in Malaysia. Customer e-satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between fulfilment and online purchase intention. The research suggest that fulfilment provide customers with a sense of security by confirming their expectations about the purchase procedure, resulting in favourable sentiments and positive perceptions regarding the online retailers' websites. These finding support previous research which had proven the effect of fulfilment on customer satisfaction and online purchase intention (Kim, Jin & Swinney, 2009; Ting et al., 2016; Kim, 2019).

Lastly, the analytical outcome in the study indicates that Generation Y consumers in Malaysia attach little importance to security/privacy in the context of hard luxury e-commerce, thereby inferring that the role of this factor does not have a significant effect on customer e-satisfaction. Henceforth, customer e-satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between security/privacy and online purchase intention in this study. There is a reason to believe that Generation Y consumers were experienced with shopping online and visit websites of brand familiarity, hence tend to be less concerned about security/privacy which was consistent to findings from a study conducted by Jiradilok *et al.* (2014) in Thailand. Conversely, Bhatnagar *et al.* (2000) reported that consumers who had made an online purchase were less affected by consumer risk issues like payment method, credit card security, and confidentiality. Furthermore, according to Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003), when online customers were new to the website, their judgements of security/privacy were at first derived from other quality aspects, notably website design. It additionally indicates that customers first rate security/privacy based on the website's professional appearance and feel along with the usability of the website and the brand reputation (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003; Blut *et al.*, 2015). Consumers were more likely to trust efficient, functional and presentable websites since they have more resources and investment (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003; Jiradilok *et al.*, 2014; However, this does not imply that the online retailer should ignore the non-significant variable because, as previously discussed, prior research had proven the importance of security/privacy features to evaluate the service quality of online stores (Wang *et al.*, 2015; Mohammed et al., 2014; Niranjanamurthy & Dharmendra, 2013).

Managerial Implications

From a managerial standpoint, the results of the study clearly reveal that website design, customer service and fulfilment was essential factors for customers e-satisfaction in converting them into buyers. In the context of hard luxury, it is particularly important for the vendor to provide in-depth information about product size, care instructions, product dimensions and style details (Kim, 2019). Based on the findings, it is crucial for hard luxury e-retailers to ensure that the website is visually appealing with attractive graphic content and high-resolution images or videos. The attractiveness of the website can draw in customers to the website and the overall e-service quality of the website will ensure convenience and customer satisfaction. E-retailers should consider setting up their website to be hedonically enticing in order to create a pleasurable shopping

experience which enhances e-satisfaction (Ahmad, Rahman & Khan, 2017). Moreover, a wide range of products will be able to conveniently allow customers to find for the items they want instead of browsing from various other websites. Practitioners such as Jewellery e-retailers should recognized that customer e-satisfaction derived from well designed and attractive website would help improve the sales performance of the e-retailers. This was especially true if the e-retailers were targeting respondents from Generation Y who seek convenience when looking for products and information when they navigate through the website; which was consistent with the work of Hansen and Jonsson (2013). A website which provides accurate and detailed product information such as 3-D rotation of a product, magnified view or a 'virtual model' option allows customers to easily make prompt decisions and increase their e-satisfaction on the website (Kim, 2019; Blut, 2016).

Moreover, e-retailers should not overlook the importance of security/privacy as customers begin to trust e-retailers in the process of purchasing through the online store (Ahmad, Rahman & Khan, 2017). Even though the findings of the study indicate that privacy/security had no significant impact on customer e-satisfaction, which was in accordance with the findings of some authors (Cristobal et al., 2007; Kim & Stoel, 2004), however, some research suggest that the lack of trust and the perceived insecurity of making or receiving payments over the internet had discouraged customers from purchasing online (Carlson & O'Cass, 2010; Wang & Kim, 2019). As online customers were unable to communicate with the sales personnel or physical facilities of the company, so it follows that trust which results in greater customer satisfaction, must be fostered in others ways (Al-dweeri *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, managers should include security certification such as displaying trusted third-party logo, providing various ways to contact the company and providing adequate information about the company's security and privacy policy.

Next, the research suggested that to build customer e-satisfaction, online retailers should also place a strong emphasis to ensure that customers trust making a purchase from the website and that they would receive what the online retailer had promised (Jiradilok *et al.*, 2014). Primarily, online vendors should keep channels of communication open with customers, provide help if problems arise and consequently, adding value (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2003; Tan et al., 2016). This include utilizing digital-based interactive media such as live chats, help desks and including social networking websites (Turel & Connelly, 2013). Superior service quality to customers included assured punctual delivery, accurate orders and meeting the standards of shipping and handling of products (Blut, 2016). It was possible to build long term relationships with customers, with additional services and information being offered, and it is possible to establish long-term relationships by offering customized service and offering services that add value (Blut, 2016). As for online retailers to succeed, concentrating on each feature valued by the target clientele, various methods may be used to attract different groups of customers (Jiradilok *et al.*, 2014). For example, to attract and maintain customers who had previously purchased from the website, the vendors may place a strong emphasis on offering discounted items and appropriate information quality (Jiradilok *et al.*, 2014). Lastly, the managerial implication observed was that online retailers could cut costs and improve revenues by providing excellent e-service quality which enhances perceived value, which increases customer e-satisfaction and consequently influences online purchase intention.

Conclusion

For many years, scholars have been interested in the issue of luxury because of the constant rise of the luxury industry and the growing interest in luxury consumption by customers from a variety of demographic groups (Kim, 2019). The luxury business is still in the early stages of adapting to internet channels. In comparison to traditional physical storefronts, the virtual environment may provide luxury companies amazing value and advantages by opening up a whole new channel of possibilities (Kim, 2019). Limited research has been done on luxury brands' digital presence, particularly in terms of how luxury brands perform in a virtual environment and how luxury customers perceive luxury brand's service quality in an e-retail store context (Kim, 2019). The proposed study examined the key factors that influence Generation Y Malaysian shoppers' views of e-service quality, as well as overall e-satisfaction and their online purchase intention.

Significant role of mediator (e-satisfaction)

Based on the findings of the study, fulfilment is of important to Generation Y consumers and online retailers would have to assure their clientele by providing specific information such as shipping and handling methods, payment methods, return instructions and monitoring orders and payments. Practitioners such as Jewellery e-retailers should provide reliable and accurate information on fulfilment to improve customer e-satisfaction (mediator) which impacts online purchase intention and customer retention. Free shipping and returns offers were also an effective way to alleviate any concerns in purchase intention of customers

In addition, most of the respondents who undertook the study are professionals. It could be inferred that these consumers prefer to shop online as it is more convenient because they have more control over the time and venue to make a purchase. Therefore, options such as sort/filter, detailed product information and interactive web aid such as live chat support or prompt replies to customer inquiries would help customers to obtain the information they require rapidly and in an efficient manner. Therefore practitioners such as Jewellery e-retailers should provide good customer services to fix consumers problems by providing immediate access to the company's support team and showing sincere interest in solving any problems encountered by customers (Rolland & Freeman, 2010; Jun, Yang & Kim, 2004). After-sales support was also essential because service failure and product recalls often lead to customers complaining, switching to other brands or even writing negative reviews. Moreover, additional services such as personalized gift cards, gift certificates and gift-wrapping services also created a positive impression among consumers toward the brand which boosts e-customer satisfaction (mediator) (Kim, 2019; Blut, 2016) to increase purchase intention of customers in future.

Moreover, as previous research on luxury consumption suggested, consumers acquire jewelry and watches to attain hedonic value to meet their self-fulfilment. Hence the practitioner such as online Jewellery retailer should improve the aesthetic appeal and creativity of their websites to appeal to the customers eyes and enhance customer emotional involvement to improve e-satisfaction (mediator) (Al-dweeri *et al.*, 2019; Blut, 2016, Guo, Ling & Liu, 2012) towards purchase intention. This perception was critical, especially for first-time visitors, to instill in consumers a belief in the website's credibility (Guo, Ling & Liu, 2012). Customizing the website for various seasons, celebrations, new product offerings or sales promotions in terms of colours, graphic, videos,

content and text size should help improve views of e-service quality and increase the intention to purchase from the hard luxury websites (Al-dweeri *et al.*, 2019).

Limitations and direction for future research

The findings of the study suggested limitations that provided guidance for future studies. First, the study is limited to the hard luxury industry, other luxury industries such as the clothing, furniture and design or tourism and leisure could be examined in the future to gain a more coherent understanding of the industry. Second, the study focuses solely on Generation Y consumers hence a cross-generational study could be carried out to analyze and comprehend the key differences between generational cohorts. The investigation would have the potential to assist luxury marketers in developing more focused marketing efforts. Third, while the scales used to evaluate e-service quality aspects were limited to ensure that respondents complete the questionnaire. Future study may investigate constructing more comprehensive measures to allow for profound data. Lastly, due to the time constraint, there was limited sampling size of 182 respondents with a cross-sectional research approach to analyze the topic within the short time frame. The time limit constraint and the social distancing constraint from the COVID-19 pandemic only allowed the researcher to adopt a mono method of quantitative study as the most suitable research method. In contrast a more appropriate approach would be a positivism philosophy which adopt both qualitative and quantitative, which would allow the researcher to work with larger sets of samples (Andrews, Nonnecke & Preece, 2003). A longitudinal study would give the researcher a better understanding of the research topic by correlating answers conducted from interviews or focus groups with data gathered from online questionnaire to give the researcher relevant and useful facts on the topic which aids the in the development of an effective research conclusion.

Recommendation

There had been numerous research done on the study of electronic service quality, however additional investigations could be done on this area of research. To begin with, social media's emergence has altered the face of e-commerce and online marketing. Future scholars could be interested in investigating the impact of social media on customer satisfaction. Moreover, the internet has evolved over the previous decade, where individuals actively participate in activities such as tweeting, commenting, blog writing, photo and video sharing and etcetera, which were not prevalent ten years ago. Subsequently, the aspects of e-service quality could be reassessed to include new variables into the e-service quality conceptual model as customers today rely on social media and websites for reviews and information about the products they want to purchase. This would allow the company to comprehend customer motivations and interact with more consumers over time which enables the company to expand their business opportunities worldwide. Moreover, this is one of the few studies to use e-service quality and the mediating effect of customer e-satisfaction in the Malaysian luxury domain (Ajzen, 1991; Jain, 2019). More research could be done in other countries, to investigate the influence of culture on Generation Y consumers' luxury purchasing behaviour. These studies can aid marketers in comprehending the similarities and contrasts that occur among cultures and, as a result, developing culturally acceptable strategies (Ajzen, 1991; Jain, 2019). Next, the study only investigates the mediating variable of customer e-satisfaction. Other factors such as customer trust, perceived risk, price consciousness, hedonic value or moderating variables such as demographic factors can be studied in the future.

Researchers and practitioners will be able to better interpret the impact of numerous factors on luxury buying behaviour as a result of this (Jain, 2019). It would also assist premium brands in developing more targeted marketing tactics (Jain, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of the study was to get a comprehensive understanding of Generation Y consumers' satisfaction in mediating the connection between e-service quality and hard luxury purchase intention. The findings show that the constructs are correlated in a substantial way and the e-satisfaction mediation test was effective and significant. As a result, it emphasizes the relevance of customer satisfaction among Generation Y consumers in mediating the link between the variables of e-service quality and online purchase intention in the hard luxury commerce. In short, when online shoppers perceive high levels of e-quality from a website, it contributes to their satisfaction and their favourable behavioural intention. The eTailQ model, as established by Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003), was found to be significant for assessing the mediating effect of customer e-satisfaction towards the e-service quality of hard luxury e-commerce websites and online purchase intention. Lastly, in today's challenging business climate, online retailers must consider the service quality determination of hard luxury customers' purchase intent, to gain a competitive advantage predominantly website design, customer service and fulfilment aspects as it emphasizes the significance of e-service quality dimensions to Generation Y customers.

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