

The Effect of E-Service Quality on Brand Love: E-Satisfaction as a Mediator

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ABSTRACT: Love for higher education institutions is a crucial aspect in strengthening the sustainability and existence of higher education institutions in the future. This research aims to examine the influence of e-service quality on e-satisfaction and brand love in the context of higher education. The novelty of this study lies in the development of a conceptual model that links e-service quality, e-satisfaction, and brand love, specifically adapted for the context of higher education services. The study population consists of students in Yogyakarta, with a sample of 500 respondents selected using the purposive sampling method. Data collection was conducted through a closed-ended questionnaire distributed online. The data obtained were analyzed using the WarpPLS approach. The research findings indicate that e-service quality significantly influences e-satisfaction. However, the direct effect of e-service quality on brand love is not significant. On the other hand, e-satisfaction has a significant influence on brand love. Additionally, the study finds that e-service quality indirectly affects brand love through the mediation of e-satisfaction. These findings provide theoretical and practical implications for higher education managers, particularly in improving the quality of electronic services to foster a stronger emotional connection between students and institutions. This contributes to the development of more effective service strategies to cultivate students' loyalty and affection toward higher education institutions.

KEYWORDS: e-service quality, satisfaction, brand love, student

JEL Classification: M30, M31

I. INTRODUCTION

The improvement of service quality has become increasingly important for fostering the relationship between higher education institutions and their students. This focus reflects the critical need to fulfil the needs and expectations of students as the primary stakeholders in educational institutions. One of the service forms that is gaining relevance in today's digital era is e-service. This type of service encompasses various aspects, such as the provision of information, interaction between students and institutions, and access to educational resources through digital platforms.

However, research that specifically explores the influence of perceptions of electronic service quality on students' attitudes and behavioral intentions remains relatively limited. While many studies have examined traditional service quality, literature addressing the connection between electronic services and elements such as satisfaction and brand love within the higher education sector is still scarce. In the context of higher education, a deeper understanding of how electronic services impact students' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors is crucial, especially as an increasing number of institutions adopt digital technologies as an integral part of their service strategies.

Therefore, this study aims to provide relevant empirical evidence on the influence of electronic service quality on satisfaction and brand love. This research not only contributes theoretically to the existing literature but also offers practical insights for higher education institutions in designing more effective electronic services to meet students' needs. By examining these connections, this study is expected to provide a solid foundation for developing service strategies that enhance the student experience and build stronger emotional relationships between students and educational institutions.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

E-service quality

During the COVID-19 pandemic, internet-based educational services drastically transformed the way lecturers and students interact. Shifting from conventional methods, online learning emerged as the primary tool for delivering and assessing education efficiently. This shift highlighted the need to evaluate a new type of service quality, known as e-service quality, which refers to the quality of services provided through internet networks. Rowley (2006) defines e-service quality as interactive informational services that not only support communication between service providers and users but also provide mechanisms for organizations or institutions to differentiate their offerings and enhance services to achieve competitive advantages.

In the business context, Chase et al. (2006) describe e-service quality as a website's ability to facilitate purchasing, distribution, and shopping processes efficiently. This definition is further expanded by Zeithaml et al. (2002), who assert that electronic service quality encompasses the level of effectiveness and efficiency of a website in supporting purchasing, payment, and delivery activities. Although Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) claim that the quality of e-commerce services has been comprehensively addressed in the literature, differing perspectives exist regarding the dimensions or aspects that constitute service quality, leading to the emergence of various theoretical models.

Toots (2006), drawing on research by Neuner and De Landtsheer (2005), identified four primary pillars of e-service quality: content, interactivity, ease of use, and aesthetics. Similarly, Ho and Lee (2007) proposed five dimensions, including information quality, security, website performance, customer relationships, and responsiveness in service implementation. Ladhari (2010) introduced additional dimensions such as responsiveness, reliability, privacy/security, informational benefits/quality, and ease/usefulness, reflecting the complexity of evaluating e-service quality.

Parasuraman et al. (2005) and Luo and Lee (2011) suggest five key dimensions that form the foundation of e-service quality: efficiency, system availability, fulfillment of promises, and privacy. Furthermore, Vlachos et al. (2011) proposed seven antecedents of e-service quality, including ease of use, usability, aesthetics, content, privacy, customization, and customer service. These various dimensions reflect a multidimensional approach to measuring e-service quality, which has become increasingly relevant in the context of education during the pandemic, where online services are essential for sustaining interaction and learning processes between lecturers and students.

e-Satisfaction

According to disconfirmation theory, electronic satisfaction (e-satisfaction) occurs when a customer's perception of a product or service's performance does not align with their initial expectations. If expectations are exceeded, customers tend to feel highly satisfied, whereas if expectations are unmet, satisfaction levels decline. Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) emphasized that customer satisfaction in the electronic context originates from the direct experiences they gain while interacting with specific e-commerce companies. This satisfaction is a crucial element in maintaining business profitability and fostering long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with customers.

To measure customer satisfaction with goods or services, Schaupp and Bélanger (2005) developed an e-satisfaction scale that serves as an important tool for comprehensively evaluating customer experiences. Park and Kim (2003) also underscored the importance of user interface quality in shaping customer satisfaction levels. The quality of an interface not only demonstrates the technical capabilities of online service providers but also facilitates ease of use for customers. Consequently, an intuitive and visually appealing website interface significantly impacts customer experience and satisfaction.

Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) identified three primary indicators of e-satisfaction: a pleasant experience, satisfaction during the shopping process, and customer loyalty. Further research by Ting et al. (2016) expanded these indicators to include aspects such as the ability to make informed purchasing decisions online, enjoyment during the purchasing process, satisfaction with received products, responsiveness of customer service during transactions, product performance meeting expectations, and overall satisfaction with online transactions. The combination of these indicators provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of e-satisfaction and its implications for the success of online businesses in building sustainable relationships with their customers.

Brand love

In the era of modern marketing, attention to brand love has emerged as a critical focus, reflecting the growing development of connections between consumers and brands (Batra et al., 2012). Brand love is essential for companies in fostering strong relationships with specific brands, as it enables consumers to overlook occasional shortcomings in service. Brand love represents an emotional attachment derived from customer satisfaction with a particular brand. Brand love is achieved when consistent purchases are accompanied by the delivery of desired or even superior quality, which subsequently cultivates affection for the brand (Giovanis & Athanasopoulou, 2018). The development of brand love is an ongoing process encompassing several

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dimensions: interest in the brand, bonding with the brand, positive evaluations of the brand, positive emotions in response to the brand, and expressions of love toward the brand.

e-Service Quality and e-Satisfaction

Mustafa (2011) stated that online customer satisfaction is determined by both the quality of the website and the products it offers. Zhu and Lin (2010) found that electronic service quality enhances electronic satisfaction by employing a grounded methodology. The qualification of e-mail services is a critical component of online customer evaluation, which significantly influences e-mail satisfaction. Research conducted by Firmansyah and Mahfudz (2023) and Alnaim et al. (2022) demonstrated that e-service quality significantly affects satisfaction. Similarly, Soeharso (2024) identified e-service quality as one of the key drivers of customer satisfaction. Additionally, Sefnedi and Alfarizi (2022) established e-service quality as an antecedent to satisfaction, while Halim and Berlianto (2024) emphasized the importance of e-service quality in shaping satisfaction among online media customers in Indonesia. E-satisfaction also plays a mediating role between e-service quality and outcomes such as willingness to pay and loyalty (Rachmawati & Syafarudin, 2022; Purba et al., 2024; Rifki et al., 2024; Ashiq & Hussain, 2024; Parahita et al., 2024). Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: E-service quality has a significant positive influence on e-satisfaction.

e-Service Quality and Brand Love

According to Kotler and Keller (2016), positive stimuli have significant implications for both purchase behavior and post-purchase behavior. These stimuli encompass various aspects, such as customer experiences, interactions with the brand, and the quality of services received, all of which collectively shape customer perceptions and attitudes toward a brand. In the context of services, superior quality plays a crucial role in creating positive experiences, ultimately fostering emotional attachment to the brand, a phenomenon known as brand love. In this study, e-service quality, which includes aspects such as reliability, speed, ease of use, and service security, significantly contributes to the development of brand love among students in higher education institutions. Electronic service quality not only meets the functional needs of students but also creates a satisfying and meaningful experience, which encourages the emergence of a sense of affection for the institution where they study. Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

Hypothesis 2: E-service quality has a significant positive effect on brand love.

e-Satisfaction and Brand Love

According to Roy and Sarkar (2013), brand love represents the enhancement of emotional attachment and affective feelings that customers develop toward a brand after having positive brand experiences. An attractive and meaningful brand not only creates a lasting impression but also encourages the emergence of brand love as a result of pleasant and satisfying interactions. In this context, brand love is considered the outcome of an emotional process that occurs when customers feel valued and develop a close relationship with the brand. Furthermore, research conducted by Putra et al. (2020) demonstrates that positive experiences significantly contribute to the development of brand love. These findings emphasize that the quality of customer experiences plays a crucial role in forming stronger emotional connections with the brand. In the context of higher education, positive experiences that students encounter—such as satisfying academic interactions, adequate facilities, and relevant extracurricular activities—can intensify their feelings of affection toward their institution. These experiences foster deep and lasting emotional connections between students and educational institutions, which, in turn, strengthen their loyalty and affection for the institution. Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

Hypothesis 3: E-satisfaction has a significant positive effect on brand love.

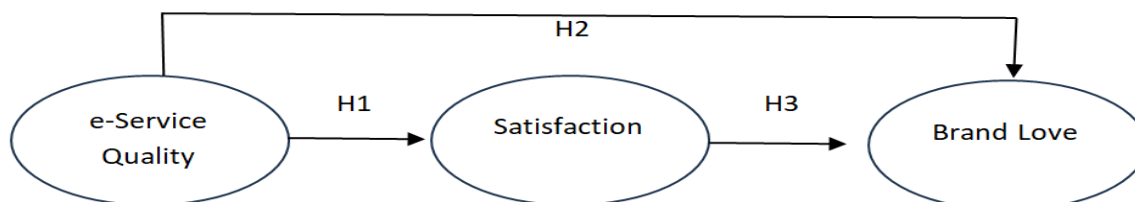


Figure 1. Hypothesis Model

III. METHOD

The approach used in this study is a quantitative approach (Kerlinger, 2003). The respondents of this study are students currently studying in Yogyakarta, with a total of 500 students. Data collection was conducted online using a Google Form, which was distributed to all research participants. The sampling technique employed is purposive sampling. E-service quality is measured using indicators such as interactivity, efficiency, system availability, promise fulfillment, ease of use, usability, aesthetics, content,

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privacy, customization, and customer service. E-satisfaction is measured using indicators of pleasant experiences, enjoyment of online services, and the performance of e-service quality in meeting expectations. Brand love is measured using indicators such as willingness to repurchase the brand's products or services, frequency of thinking about the brand, and recommending the company to others. The measurement scale used in this study is an attitude scale. The Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = strongly agree), is employed to assess responses. The primary data used in this study is obtained from respondents' answers. This study utilizes a closed questionnaire as the research instrument, which was created using Google Forms and distributed online to the respondents. Prior to its use, the questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis was conducted using WarpPLS.

IV. RESULT

Table 1 shows the results of the validity and reliability testing of the research instrument. The instrument trial involved 30 respondents. The test results indicate that all items are valid (coefficient > 0.3) and reliable (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.6). Therefore, the questionnaire is deemed suitable for data collection.

Table 1. Results of the Research Instrument Test (N=30)

	Coefficient	Cronbach's Alpha
e-Service Quality		
Interactivity	0.786	0.777
Efficiency	0.766	
System availability	0.756	
Fulfillment of promises	0.863	
Convenience use	0.783	
Utility	0.856	
Aesthetics	0.861	
Content	0.771	
Privacy	0.883	
Adjustment	0.892	
Service customer	0.779	
Customer Satisfaction		
A pleasant experience	0.766	0.891
Enjoy online services	0.747	
E-service quality performance meets expectations	0.702	
Brand Love		
Willingness to repurchase the brand's products/services	0.778	0.881
Always think about brand	0.892	
Follow provide suggestions for progress brand	0.779	

Table 2 shows that the number of male respondents is higher than that of female respondents. Male respondents account for 57.4%, while female respondents represent 42.6%. The majority of respondents are undergraduate students, comprising 84.0% of the sample. In contrast, 13.6% of respondents are diploma students, and 2.4% are post-bachelor students.

Table 2. Respondent Profile (N=500)

		%
Gender	Man	0.574
	Woman	0.426
Educational level	Diploma Students	0.136
	Undergraduate Student	0.840
	Postgraduate Student	0.024

Final Structural Model

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The measurement of model fit and quality indices refers to the WarpPLS analysis tool (Kock, 2015). Based on 10 indicators from WarpPLS, all indicators are deemed acceptable, indicating that the model is supported by good data and meets the quality criteria established in WarpPLS.



Figure 2. Final Structural Model

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 states that e-service quality has a significant effect on e-satisfaction. The results (Table 3) show that the p-value is < 0.05, indicating that Hypothesis 1 is accepted. Positive coefficients suggest that as e-service quality increases, student satisfaction also increases.

Hypothesis 2 states that e-service quality has a significant effect on brand love. The results (Table 3) show that the p-value is > 0.05, indicating that Hypothesis 2 is not accepted. Positive coefficients suggest that while e-service quality may increase, it does not always correlate with an increase in brand love.

Hypothesis 3 states that e-satisfaction has a significant effect on brand love. The results (Table 3) show that the p-value is < 0.05, indicating that Hypothesis 3 is accepted. Positive coefficients suggest that as e-satisfaction increases, the sense of brand love among students at the college also increases.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing Results

Path	Coefficient	p-Value	Description
e-Service Quality → e-Satisfaction	0.856	0.000	Accepted
e-Service Quality → brand love	0.115	0.241	Not Accepted
e-Satisfaction → brand love	0.883	0.000	Accepted
e-Service Quality → e-Satisfaction → brand love	0.596	0.008	Accepted

V. DISCUSSION

The Effect of e-Service Quality on e-Satisfaction

This study identifies that e-service quality has a significant influence on customer satisfaction in the context of electronic services (e-satisfaction). These results support findings from previous studies, including the research by Firmansyah & Mahfudz (2023), which stated that the quality of services provided through digital platforms directly contributes to a positive perception of the service by customers. This finding is also consistent with the results of Alnaim et al. (2022), who found that the quality of online services is considered one of the critical factors in building and maintaining customer satisfaction. According to Soeharso (2024), e-service quality is one of the key drivers of customer satisfaction, such that students feel happy and satisfied when the quality of the e-service meets their expectations. This shows that elements such as reliability, response speed, ease of use, and security in electronic services play a central role in determining the customer experience, which in turn influences their satisfaction with the related platform or service provider.

The Effect of e-Service Quality on Brand Love

The results of this research show that e-service quality has no significant influence on customer brand love (brand love). These findings contradict the view put forward by Kotler and Keller (2016), who argued that positive stimulation through service quality should be capable of creating a significant impact on customer attitudes after purchase, including an increase in brand love. However, in the context of this study, no such relationship was found. In other words, although e-service quality is considered an important factor in creating a positive customer experience, it turns out that it is not sufficient to encourage customers to develop a deep sense of love for the brand represented by the higher education institution. A further explanation of these findings can be reviewed from various perspectives. First, brand love, as a complex emotional construct, is likely influenced by other personal

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factors, such as brand identity perception, deep emotional experiences, or social interactions related to the brand. Second, in the context of higher education, customers (in this case, students or other stakeholders) may prioritize other aspects, such as academic reputation, career prospects, or institutional cultural values, rather than the quality of electronic services offered. Thus, although e-service quality can increase customer satisfaction (e-satisfaction), its contribution to the formation of brand love appears to be limited.

The Effect of e-Satisfaction on Brand Love

The research results show that e-satisfaction has a significant influence on brand love. These findings are consistent with the view of Roy and Sarkar (2013), who stated that brand love is a result of a positive brand experience. In their research, brand experience was described as emotional and cognitive interactions between customers and brands, which play an important role in forming deep affection for the brand. In other words, a high level of satisfaction with electronic services directly contributes to the development of a sense of love for the brand. Furthermore, the results of this study are also consistent with the findings of Putra et al. (2020), which show that positive customer experiences have significant implications for the formation of brand love. In the context of this study, e-satisfaction can be understood as one aspect of the overall customer experience that is capable of creating emotional attachment between the customer and the brand. Customer satisfaction with electronic services not only reflects the success of the service provider in fulfilling customer needs but also serves as a pathway to building a deeper and more sustainable relationship.

The Effect of e-Service Quality on Brand Love Through e-Satisfaction

Although the results of this study indicate that e-service quality does not have a significant direct influence on brand love, these findings reveal that e-service quality has a significant impact on brand love through e-satisfaction. In other words, the relationship between e-service quality and brand love is not direct but is mediated by the level of customer satisfaction with the provided electronic services. The lack of a direct influence highlights the importance of e-satisfaction as a mediating variable that bridges the connection between the two constructs.

Theoretically, these findings support the mediation model in the relationship between e-service quality and brand affection. In this framework, e-satisfaction functions as the main mechanism that transforms customer perceptions of service quality into a more emotional experience, namely brand love. High-quality services, such as reliability, comfort, and security, enhance customer satisfaction, which in turn fosters emotional attachment to the brand.

Research Implications

This study makes a significant contribution both theoretically and managerially, particularly in the context of the relationship between e-service quality, e-satisfaction, and brand love in educational institutions. The novelty of this study lies in revealing the important role of e-satisfaction as a mediating variable that connects e-service quality with brand love. Theoretically, the results expand the understanding of the dynamics between e-service quality, customer satisfaction, and brand love in the education sector, a relatively underexplored area. Specifically, this research confirms that while e-service quality does not have a significant direct influence on brand love, its impact can be mediated through e-satisfaction. These findings add a new dimension to the theory related to electronic services and consumer behavior, highlighting that customer satisfaction plays a key role as an important bridge in creating emotional attachment to the brand.

Managerial implications emphasize the importance of improving e-service quality and e-satisfaction to increase students' love for the brand. Brand love among students at higher education institutions is shown through their willingness to contribute. Students understand the challenges faced by institutions and are willing to provide constructive suggestions for service improvement. Students with high brand love constantly think about their institution and feel emotionally connected to their university. In fact, this love can persist even after graduation. Therefore, higher education institutions must provide services that exceed student expectations.

This conclusion has important implications for higher education managers. Efforts to increase brand love may require a more holistic approach, which focuses not only on improving e-service quality but also on considering emotional factors and brand values that align with the needs and aspirations of customers. By understanding that brand love does not solely depend on service quality but also on the overall experience perceived by customers, managers can design more effective strategies to build deeper and more sustainable relationships with their customers.

These findings underscore the importance of a strategy focused on enhancing e-satisfaction as part of the effort to create brand love. By ensuring that every electronic service interaction provides a satisfying experience, organizations can foster customer affection toward the brand, ultimately increasing customer loyalty and strengthening the brand's position in the market. Therefore, it is crucial for service providers to continue optimizing aspects related to e-satisfaction to foster strong emotional

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connections between customers and brands. These findings indicate that service providers must not only focus on improving e-service quality but also develop strategies to increase customer e-satisfaction. By ensuring that the customer's experience with electronic services is satisfying, organizations can further strengthen emotional connections between customers and brands. As such, e-satisfaction management should be a primary priority in efforts to build effective and sustainable brand love.

Research Limitations

This study is limited to the Yogyakarta area, which is known as a "Student City" in Indonesia. The selection of Yogyakarta as the study location is based on its unique characteristics as a center of higher education that influences the social, economic, and cultural dynamics. However, this limitation also restricts the generalization of the study's results to the local context. Therefore, it is important to expand the scope of this study by involving other regions outside Yogyakarta to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied and to enhance the external validity of the results.

Additionally, this study employs a cross-sectional research design, which collects data at a specific point in time. This approach has limitations in its ability to describe changes or developments in the phenomenon over time. Therefore, conducting longitudinal research over a longer period is highly recommended to provide deeper insights into the dynamics of change and the relationships between the variables studied. By conducting research at different time points, researchers can identify long-term trends as well as the factors that play a role in their development.

IV. CONCLUSION

An important finding of this study is the role of e-satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between e-service quality and brand love. In the context of educational services, student satisfaction becomes a key factor in fostering their love for a higher education institution. E-satisfaction, which is derived from e-service quality, ultimately has significant implications for the development of brand love. Brand love is advantageous for higher education institutions because students are more likely to understand the challenges faced by these institutions and play an active role in providing constructive suggestions.

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