

Measuring the effect of internet banking service quality on customer retention: the mediating role of customer satisfaction

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Abstract

The study's purpose is to evaluate the impact of internet banking service quality on retaining customers. Furthermore, the study investigates the role of customer satisfaction in defining the connection between five service quality attributes (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy) and retention. The study employs self-administered questionnaires with a convenience sampling technique. The 360 usable data has been collected from voluntary participants who have experience with internet banking services. Subsequently, the study analyzed data using Smart PLS 3.3.3 in measurement and structural model. The study results revealed that four service quality dimensions such as reliability, assurance, tangibles, and Empathy have a substantial impact on customer retention while the effect of Responsiveness remains insignificant. The results for deciding the customer satisfaction suggest that responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy generate significant influence even though satisfaction partly mediates the link between four service quality aspects (Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles, and Empathy) and customer retention despite not influencing the association between reliability and retention. The study has improved the internet banking service literature towards retaining customers.

Keywords: Service quality dimensions, internet banking services, customer satisfaction, customer Retention

1. Introduction

Internet banking services emerged in the mid's 90 gained worldwide prominence due to offering online services consistently (Boateng et al., 2016). Internet banking services quality has attracted customers to internet banking service adoption intentions. Despite the importance of internet banking, maintaining internet banking

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service quality is a crucial and challenging task. Santouridis & Kyritsi (2014) identified that customer satisfaction and retention are not possible until providing smooth internet banking services to customers.

The literature discussed internet banking services, where Boateng et al. (2016) demonstrated that internet banking services significantly influence internet banking services adoption intentions. Also, Sharma et al. (2020) explained that internet banking service quality influenced customers' intentions towards internet banking services. Ramseook-Munhurrun & Naidoo (2011), in their study, argued that Responsiveness had a substantial impact on internet banking services adoption intentions. Moreover, Raza et al. (2015) claimed that Responsiveness, Assurance, tangibility, and Empathy significantly affect customers' internet banking services adoption intentions.

However, very few studies (Rod et al., 2009; Raza et al., 2020) addressed the consequence of internet banking service quality in achieving customer satisfaction and retention. Therefore, it can be inferred that the quality of internet banking service in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, and empathy might affect customers' satisfaction and retention.

The present study explores the direct impact of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, and empathy on customer satisfaction and retention. Moreover, the study investigates the mediating effect of customer satisfaction on the connection between these service quality attributes and customer retention through the proposed research model presented in Figure 1. Therefore, the study will help the policymakers of the banking industry and other industries reveal some insightful knowledge about the impact of services quality on satisfying and retaining bank customers.

2. Review of literature

2.1 Internet banking

The global growth of information technology has penetrated internet banking services to be most popular to customers. Internet banking is an online banking service, a new information system that emerged in such techniques as the internet and World Wide Web. Boateng et al. (2016) define internet banking as an alternative distribution channel based on a technology-based self-service option. Internet banking was first introduced in 1990 by Californian bank wells Fargo (Santouridis & Kyritsi, 2014). After that, security first network bank provided a comprehensive banking atmosphere that advanced the potential of internet banking.

Consequently, today most banks used internet banking services to provide services to their customers. It is now widely accepted and well regarded that internet banking performs as an essential alternative to conventional services. Also, Sharma et al. (2020) explained that internet banking combines banking activities over the internet. It provides services to customers, which commonly include account balance checking, transactions checking, making mobile top-up, transferring money among accounts, paying bills,

accounts opening, and ordering checkbooks (Ramseook-Munhurrin & Naidoo, 2011). Amin (2016) demonstrated that some bank accounts are not physically present but operated through the internet. Thus, this new way of banking transactions services benefits both services providers and customers. In their study, Rod et al. (2009) explained that quality attributes like reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, and empathy influence internet banking services adoption intentions.

2.2 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the matching point of customers' perceptions and performance of services/goods (Amin, 2016). Biswas et al. (2020) and Hasan (2021) define satisfaction as the consequence of evaluating customers' perceived value and consumption value of particular products/services. Hasan et al. (2021) argued that customers determine their satisfaction based on cost and customer reward points. In their study, Shahid Iqbal et al. (2018) and Hasan & Hasan (2019) explained that customer satisfaction is measured based on customers' expectations and gains from the products/ services.

Moreover, Chen et al. (2012) explained why service quality becomes an essential determinant of customer satisfaction. He claimed different customers seek different services to be satisfied from the same service encounter. Janahi & Al Mubarak (2017) indicated that customers are satisfied with electronic banking only when it provides flexible and convenient advantages such as speedy transactions, less costly, time-saving, easy transfer. Electronic banking includes security and privacy that influence 50% of customers to be shifted from traditional banking to online banking systems (Chen et al., 2012). Kundu & Datta (2015) and Hasan (2018) found that customer satisfaction depends on quick services, affordable service charges, ease of money deposits and withdrawal, use of ATM booths, account statements over email/ SMS, etc. That is to say, the level of satisfaction of bank customers is the result of service quality dimensions.

2.3 Customer retention

Customer retention refers to customer loyalty, which is interchangeable in literature. Customer retention and customer loyalty are not identical because customer retention considers the repeat patronage/ repeat purchase (Hasan et al., 2020; Venetis & Ghauri, 2004). On the other hand, customer loyalty refers to the attitudinal aspects, which contain attitudinal and behavioral characteristics (Ranaweera & Neely, 2003; Hasan & Sabbir, 2020). Customer retention only focuses on repeat purchasing behavior regardless of factors influencing that behavior. Customer retention makes long-term relationships/ associations with customers by fulfilling the customer's requirements. Venetis & Ghauri (2004) found that service quality, perceived value, trust, customer satisfaction, and commitment influence retention. Past satisfaction plays a crucial role in current customer profitability and loyalty. Alshamsi et al. (2020) argued that customer retention results in expected service quality and customer satisfaction. As a result, customer retention is determined by customer satisfaction by offering high-quality products/services.

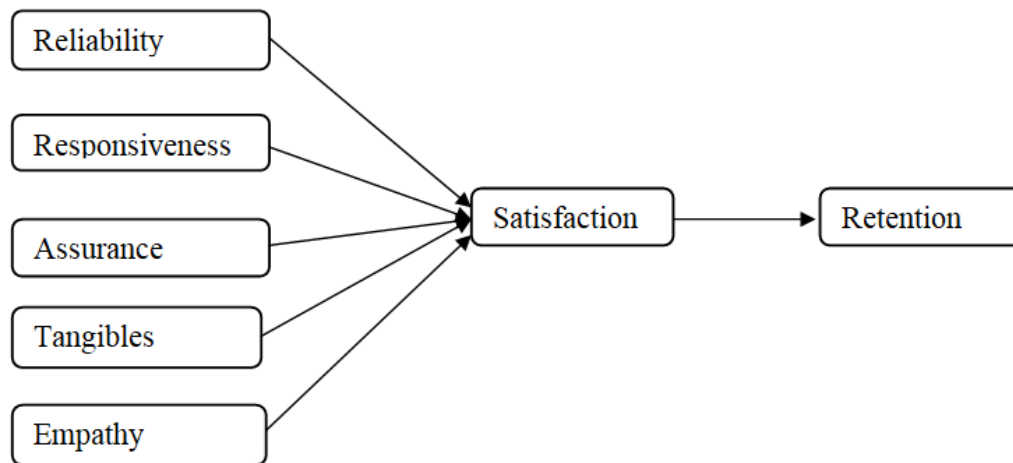


Figure 1. Research framework

2.4 Service quality and customer satisfaction and customer retention

Quality of a service refers to customers' service expectations from past experiences, marketing communications, and word of mouth. Edward & Sahadev (2011) described elements such as customer's expectations, personal needs, past experiences, word of mouth, and service provider's communications as service quality. Due to different customers and different service providers, service quality measurement is very difficult for an organization. Prasad & Shekhar (2010) described three qualities of services-procedural, functional, and image quality of any assistance. Thus, service quality is the general perception and expectation towards the service of any specific product and company.

The most prominent service quality measurement model is SERVQUAL, an appropriate tool for measuring an organization's service quality. Parasuraman et al. (1985) brought the SERVQUAL model, which consists of service quality measurement and defines service quality by the discrepancy between expectations of the customers and perceptions of the service providers. Parasuraman et al. (1985) explained that service quality is the blank space between expected service and perceived service. Regarding the service quality model, the researchers demonstrated the following five determinants of service quality in order of importance.

Reliability: Capability to carry out as promised accurately.

Responsiveness: Prompt service providing willingness.

Assurance: Trust and confidence are increased by employees' knowledge and courtesy.

Empathy: Customer's care and attention.

Tangibles: Visibility of equipment, physical facility, and written materials.

Along with the service quality determinants, the service quality gap has emerged the SERVQUAL model. This model explains the difference between customers' expected services and their expectations. The SERVQUAL scale identifies six gaps in delivering services to customers. These gaps are-

- Gap 1: management perceptions and customer's expectations gap.
- Gap 2: Service specifications and management perceptions gap.
- Gap 3: Service delivery and quality specifications gap.
- Gap 4: External communication and service delivery gap.
- Gap 5: Perceptions of service delivered and customer's expectations gap.
- Gap 6: Employees' perceptions and customer expectations gap.

Previous studies explored the service gaps in various industries of several factors affecting customer satisfaction and retention. Raza et al. (2020) explained that service quality, security, flexibility, priorities, determination, expectations, and user-friendliness influence customer satisfaction. In their study, Hussien & Abd El Aziz (2013) identified that the service provider's service delivery aspects (i. e. reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy) influence customer satisfaction and enhance customer satisfaction retention/loyalty. Also, Ellahi & Bokhari (2013) identified that the quality of services significantly influenced customer satisfaction in the banking industry. Ennew & Binks (1999) confirmed that the quality of services in the banking industry significantly influenced customer satisfaction and customer loyalty/retention. Considering these studies, it can be concluded that service quality becomes an essential component of the banking industry because there is a connection between service quality and customer satisfaction and customer retention. Therefore, it is pertinent to investigate the impact of service quality dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, and empathy) on customer satisfaction and customer retention in the banking industry. As a result, the following hypotheses are proposed.

- H1*: Reliability significantly affects customer satisfaction towards internet banking.
- H2*: Reliability significantly affects customer retention towards internet banking.
- H3*: Responsiveness significantly affects customer satisfaction towards internet banking
- H4*: Responsiveness significantly affects customer retention towards internet banking.
- H5*: Assurance significantly affects customer satisfaction towards internet banking.
- H6*: Assurance significantly affects customer retention towards internet banking.
- H7*: Tangibles significantly affect customer satisfaction towards internet banking.
- H8*: Tangibles significantly affect customer retention towards internet banking.
- H9*: Empathy significantly affects customer satisfaction towards internet banking.
- H10*: Empathy significantly affects customer retention towards internet banking.

H11: Satisfaction partially mediates the association between reliability and customer retention.

H12: Satisfaction partially mediates the association between responsiveness and customer retention.

H13: Satisfaction partially mediates the association between assurance and customer retention.

H14: Satisfaction partially mediates the association between tangibles and customer retention.

H15: Satisfaction partially mediates the association between empathy and customer retention.

3. Methodology of the study

3.1 Sampling and data collection

With the limited previous research on the impact of service quality in internet banking on the level of customer satisfaction and customer retention, it was apposite to embark on a descriptive research study by proposing a hypothesis and testing the hypothesis (Watson et al., 2013). Since customer retention was the pattern of customer behavior, a quantitative survey approach was adopted. Data were collected from respondents using the convenience sampling technique. Initially, a pilot study on 30 respondents had conducted. The questionnaire had been checked by expert opinion before the survey was administered. After that, the data was collected through generating and purposively sending Google drive to respondents who use internet banking services at least once in a life. 360 usable data were collected within two months (January 1, 2018, to March 1, 2018). Subsequently, 360 data were analyzed to investigate the hypothesized relationship.

3.2 Measures

A self-administered structured questionnaire had been developed with closed-ended questions considering the accessibility to participants having mixed exposures to internet banking services (Watson et al., 2013). Survey questions were developed using a five-point Likert scale. The scale (1) refers to 'strongly disagree' and (5) refers to the 'strongly agree' to measure all independent and dependent variables. Gender, age, marital status, education, and income were considered demographic profiles.

3.3 Data analysis

The study used both the measurement model and structural model developed by Henseler et. (2015) in analysis. The whole analysis was conducted by Smart PLS 3.3.3.

4. Results and analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to estimate the proposed model's hypothesis and casual assumptions. Most researchers distinguished between the measurement models and the structural models unambiguously. The SEM follows two approaches- covariance-based approach and variance-based approach. The study analyzed hypothesized relationship of the model using Smart PLS 3.3.3. The study examined the measurement model to evaluate consistency, reliability, and validity. Subsequently, the study examined the structural model for hypothesis testing. The results of the demographic profile are presented in Table 1.

Table-1. Demographic profile

		Frequency	Percent
Age	18-30	106	29.44
	31-50	123	34.16
	51-70	84	23.34
	71-above	47	13.06
	Total	360	100.0
Gender	Male	189	52.50
	Female	171	47.50
	Total	360	100.0
Education	Basic Education	69	19.17
	Secondary	98	27.22
	Bachelor or above	193	53.61
	Total	360	100.0
Occupation	Student	51	14.17
	Agriculture	87	24.16
	Businessman	140	38.89
	Others	82	22.78
	Total	360	100.0

4.1 Measurement model

The measurement model first measured the indicator's reliability, calculating factor loadings that are preferably greater than 0.6 (Nunnally, 1994). The study result shows (see Table II) that all factor loadings range between 0.608 and 0.929, suggesting internal consistency. Subsequently, the study measured two other indicators- composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha value to construct reliability. Table II shows that the CR values are between 0.825 and 0.920. The Cronbach's alpha values are in the range between 0.678 and 0.877, which suggests the construct's reliability because these values are more significant than the threshold (Nunnally, 1994).

The average variance extracted (AVE) was used to assess convergent validity in the research (Henseler et al., 2015) that means the amount of indicator variation explained for each item of constructs and should be larger than 0.5, as a result, latent variables may explain more than half of the variance of their indicators. As shown in Table II, each construct's AVE value is over the predicted threshold of 0.5, which indicates convergent validity. Finally, this research assessed discriminant validity using the measurement model, which stipulates that for discriminant validity, AVE's square root must be larger than the correlations between the constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). Table III indicates that the square root of each construct is bigger than the AVE, indicating the discriminant validity of the construct.

Table II.

4.1.1 Measurement model results

Constructs/Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Reliability				
The use of internet banking is reliable.	0.922			
I prefer using internet banking instead of visiting the branch to make my transactions.	0.929	0.877	0.920	0.794
I trust internet banking services.	0.819			
Responsiveness				
I can get my account information up-to-date through internet banking quickly.	0.887			
Internet Banking provides services smoothly.	0.909	0.841	0.903	0.757
Through internet banking, I get solutions to any of the problems promptly.	0.812			
Assurance				

Constructs/Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Internet banking for bank transactions is secured.	0.870	0.835	0.901	0.753
I feel secure while making transactions through the internet.	0.949			
Internet banking service guarantees the security of my personal information.	0.776			
Tangibles				
The physical aspects of internet banking are appealing.	0.837	0.819	0.892	0.734
Internet banking maintains up-to-date technological equipment.	0.896			
Physical facilities of internet banking are modern.	0.836			
Empathy				
When I face a problem, internet banking sincerely solves it.	0.898	0.818	0.891	0.733
Internet banking service providers give me personal attention if any help is required.	0.859			
Internet banking service providers provide what I want.	0.809			
Satisfaction				
I am satisfied with internet banking services.	0.868	0.678	0.825	0.617
My expectations before using Internet banking services have been met with the current experience.	0.852			
Overall, internet banking services satisfy me.	0.608			
Customer Retention				
I will continue using the services of internet banking.	0.869	0.832	0.899	0.748
I will use the services of internet banking in future.	0.899			
I will recommend the internet banking services of my friends and acquaintances.	0.825			

4.2 Structural model

After validation of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed, where the model tested hypotheses estimating the path's coefficients, t- statistics, and p-value. Table IV and Figure 2 show the results of all hypotheses, where the connection between reliability and customer satisfaction was found insignificant (H1) ($\beta = 0.086$, $t = 1.777$, $p = 0.076$), which indicates that H1 was not supported. These findings indicate that the reliability of internet banking is not an influencing factor for customer satisfaction. However, the association between reliability and retention (H2) was valid ($\beta = 0.076$, $t = 3.188$, $p = 0.001$), indicating H2 was supported. This result implies that reliability is a significant factor in customer retention from an internet banking perspective. The strength of the relationship between Responsiveness and satisfaction (H3) was found valid ($\beta = 0.108$, $t = 2.110$, $p = 0.035$), which suggests that H3 was supported. However, the strength of the relationship between Responsiveness and retentions (H4) was found unconvincing ($\beta = 0.037$, $t = 1.289$, $p = 0.198$), indicating that H4 was not supported. The association between assurance and satisfaction (H5) was found significant ($\beta = 0.100$, $t = 2.471$, $p = 0.014$); thus, it indicates that H5 was supported. The strength of relationship between assurance and retention (H6) was found significant ($\beta = 0.044$, $t = 2.027$, $p = 0.043$); thus it supports H6. Tangibles has a significant impact on satisfaction (H7) ($\beta = 0.471$, $t = 8.625$, $p = 0.000$), which supports H7. Similarly, the study revealed that tangibles significantly affect retention (H8) ($\beta = -0.259$, $t = 8.265$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that H8 was supported. The strength of association between Empathy and satisfaction (H9) was found significant ($\beta = -0.270$, $t = 5.331$, $p = 0.000$); thus, it supports H9. Similarly, the relationship between empathy and retention (H10) was found significant ($\beta = 0.076$, $t = 2.379$, $p = 0.018$), which supports H10.

Table III. Results of discriminant validity

	Rel	Res	Ass	Tan	Emp	Sat	CR
Rel	0.891						
Res	0.232	0.870					
Ass	0.22	0.402	0.868				
Tan	0.160	0.482	0.306	0.785			
Emp	0.398	0.413	0.340	0.327	0.856		
Sat	0.315	0.506	0.398	0.656	0.537	0.785	
CR	0.390	0.471	0.409	0.447	0.574	0.903	0.865

Notes: Rel = reliability, Res = responsiveness, Ass = assurance, Tan = tangibility, Emp = empathy, Sat = satisfaction, CR = customer retention

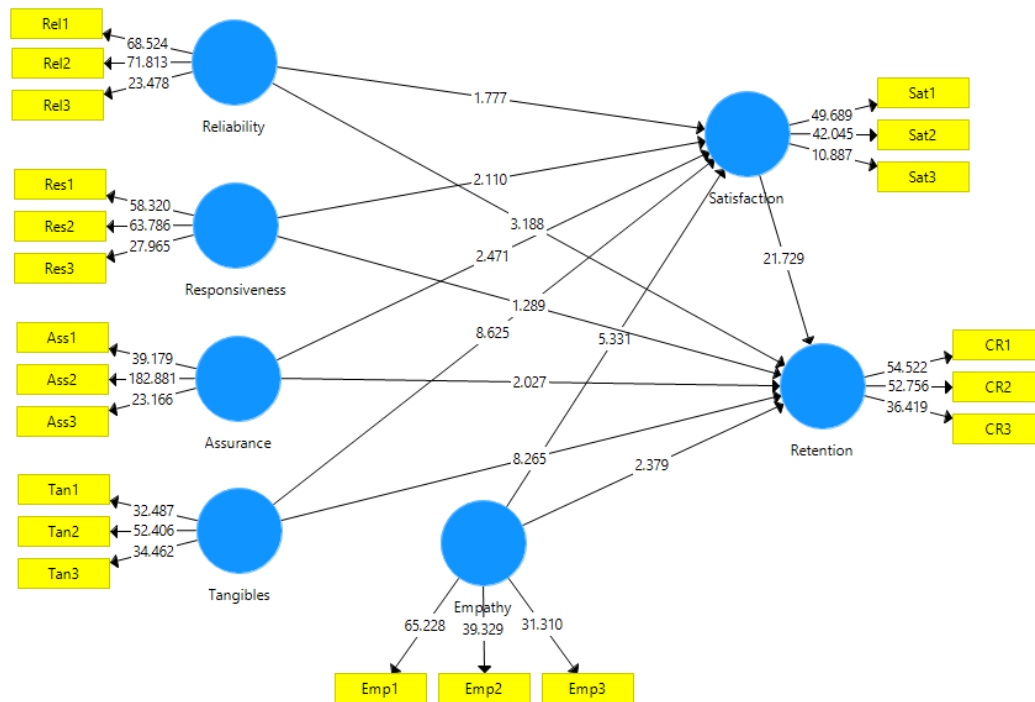


Figure 2. Structural model

In line with these results, the study examined the mediating effect of satisfaction, where satisfaction has no mediating impact in the relationship between reliability and retention (H11) ($\beta = 0.083$, $t = 1.788$, $p = 0.074$); thus, it did not support H11. The strength of the intervening effect of satisfaction in the relationship between Responsiveness and retention (H12) was found statistically significant ($\beta = 0.105$, $t = 2.099$, $p = 0.036$); thus, it indicates that satisfaction partly mediates the association between Responsiveness and retention, supporting H12. The study results show that satisfaction has a considerable intervening effect in the relationship between assurance and retention (H13) ($\beta = 0.097$, $t = 2.480$, $p = 0.013$); thus, it reflects that satisfaction partially mediates the link between Assurance and retention, supporting H13. Similarly, tangibles, including satisfaction, significantly influences retention (H14) ($\beta = 0.458$, $t = 7.361$, $p = 0.000$), which indicates that satisfaction partially mediates the association between tangibles and retention supporting H14. The strength of intervening impact on the association between Empathy and retention (H15) was found significant ($\beta = 0.263$, $t = 5.338$, $p = 0.000$); thus, it indicates that satisfaction partly mediates the connection between Empathy and retention, supporting H15.

Table IV. Path coefficients and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Relationships	Beta	T-Statistics	P-Values	Decisions
H1					Not Supported
	Reliability -> Satisfaction	0.086	1.777	0.076	Supported
H2	Reliability -> Retention	0.076	3.188	0.001	Supported
H3	Responsiveness -> Satisfaction	0.108	2.110	0.035	Supported
H4	Responsiveness -> Retention	0.037	1.289	0.198	Not Supported
H5	Assurance -> Satisfaction	0.100	2.471	0.014	Supported
H6	Assurance -> Retention	0.044	2.027	0.043	Supported
H7	Tangibles -> Satisfaction	0.471	8.625	0.000	Supported
H8	Tangibles -> Retention	-0.259	8.265	0.000	Supported
H9	Empathy -> Satisfaction	0.270	5.331	0.000	Supported
H10	Empathy -> Retention	0.076	2.379	0.018	Supported
H11	Reliability -> Satisfaction -> Retention	0.083	1.788	0.074	Not Supported
H12	Responsiveness -> Satisfaction -> Retention	0.105	2.099	0.036	Supported
H13	Assurance -> Satisfaction -> Retention	0.097	2.480	0.013	Supported
H14	Tangibles -> Satisfaction -> Retention	0.458	7.361	0.000	Supported
H15	Empathy -> Satisfaction -> Retention	0.263	5.338	0.000	Supported

5. Discussions and conclusions

The present study aimed to test hypotheses on the impact of service quality on customer retention towards internet banking services. The study also addressed the mediating impact of satisfaction in the association between quality of services and retaining customers. Therefore the study has left several theoretical and managerial implications to academicians and banking service providers.

Theoretical implications

The findings indicate that service quality measurement scales (reliability, assurance, tangibles, Empathy) had a significant impact on customer retention consistent with prior studies (Prentice, 2014; Baumann et al., 2007). The findings contribute to marketing literature that customer retention is predicted by services' reliability, Assurance, tangibles, and Empathy. However, Responsiveness had an insignificant influence on customer retention aligned with previous literature (Islam et al., 2020). Thus, this result contributes to the services marketing literature that service delivery responsiveness had a minimum effect on retention towards internet banking services. Also, the study findings revealed that responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy had a direct effect on the level of customer satisfaction aligned with prior studies (Balinado et al., 2021; Zaibaf et al., 2013). This result indicates that customer satisfaction towards internet banking services is predicted by internet banking services' responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy towards the services. However, the study revealed that reliability had an insignificant influence on customer satisfaction aligned with prior studies (Prentice et al., 2020). This result contributes to service marketing literature that the reliability of internet banking services had minimum impact on the level of customer satisfaction.

Concerning these findings, the study revealed that satisfaction is the partial mediator for the relationship between four major service quality dimensions like responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy and retention. These findings contribute to internet banking service literature that satisfaction had an intervening effect on the association between customer's service quality dimensions (responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy) and retention. However, the study revealed that satisfaction had an insignificant intervening effect in the relationship between reliability and retention. This result points out that the strength of the relationship between reliability and retention is not impacted by satisfaction, contributing to internet banking service literature.

Managerial implications

With theoretical implications, the present study suggested some managerial implications that can boost the managerial performance of any industry. First, the present study suggests internet banking service providers deliver services that should be reliable, secured, well physical aspects of service providers, and provide service with care and full of emotions because these aspects might retain customers in the internet banking services industry. Second, to make customers satisfied, internet banking service providers should deliver the services responsively, securely, with good physical aspects of service providers, and emotionally attached to customers. Third, the internet banking service managers should focus on customer satisfaction because customer satisfaction intervened in the connection between service quality dimensions (responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy) and customer retention.

Limitations and future research

With plenty of theoretical and practical implications, the present study had several limitations which create scope for future researchers. First, the current research researches at a specific period, while future researchers might conduct a longitudinal study for an extended period. Second, the study used a convenience sampling technique for the research. In contrast, future researchers might adopt a simple random sampling technique to avoid biasing method or biasing data. Third, the present study measured customer satisfaction and retention using SERVQUAL model scales, while future studies can use the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and theory of planned behavior (TPB).

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