

Customers' Use Intentions of Using Online Laundry Service

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Abstract: This preliminary study emphasizes on Micro Small Medium Enterprise which had shown the highest survival rate in the midst of economic crisis in Indonesia. Many previous studies about MSME were conducted in the area of customer, service, service quality, or correlation between them and those has gained quite much interest for decades. However, research in laundry service is considered new especially from customer perspective. Therefore, this preliminary study is performed by considering the new concept and innovation in laundry service area. The present research aims to gain deeper information and understanding of customer's use intention of using online laundry service, by using one-to-one interview as the qualitative research method approach. The findings showed that customer's intention of using online laundry service was mainly derived from the effectiveness and efficiency of such service. It is easy to use and save time. By using online laundry service, they would not have to worry about their dirty laundry when they were occupied by other works and activities. Customers who used the online laundry service showed very positive feedbacks towards this business which among others the application of e-commerce in online laundry service. They did not mind about the service venue as long as the online laundry service provider maintains their high quality of service. This online laundry service by using online chat as a platform for ordering and communicating, make it easy to use for customers. This method can be applied to any offline laundries so they can increase their customers by such innovation. For further research can be conducted in term of customers satisfaction towards online laundry service they are using to improve the service quality of online laundry service provider.

Key words: *laundry service, service quality, e-commerce, use intention, purchase intention*

INTRODUCTION

MSME is a business sector which should not have been neglected in the present or future economics, because this sector can be counted on to spur high economic growth and enhance community participation in the national development activities and region, up to the village level. Back in 1998 where major economic crisis hit the South-East Asian region, several big companies went out of business and downsized, but MSME stood out and survived [1]. Since then, this business sector grew rapidly and shared major contribution to the Indonesia GDP [2]. In general, services dominate the economy in most nations. The world's most service-dominate economy is Cayman Island, a small British-administered island in the western

Caribbean, known for tourism and offshore financial and insurance service which contributed 95 % to their country's GDP [3]. Since the contributions of MSME to GDP are irrefutably significant, the revolution of MSME is considered crucial in order to enhance competitiveness and to be able to enter the global market.

In conjunction with the revolution, there is a term of "information superhighway" in today's digital economy era which is known as the internet. Internet becomes a big revolution in the business aspect which brought changes in the pattern and business performance. Communication between companies or towards customer becomes easier and the flow of information is swift, real-time, complete, update, and accessible 24 hours 7 days [4]. Along with the

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integration of internet in all aspects of human lives, new business model called online business replaced the traditional business where people have to present physically at a business location in order to satisfy their needs and wants. Accordingly, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand were found to be the world's top market with the highest online shopping penetration rate [5].

The online business model does not only transform how customers purchase products and services, but also how business operates. In banking industry for instance, people no longer have to queue at the banks to do banking activities. Instead, most of services offered by the banks can now be reached through online banking system. In smaller industry such as laundry service business, companies such as IBM have launched smart laundry machines at colleges to fit the needs of hectic students' lifestyle. Students only need to visit a website to find out when a washing machine will be available and they can select soap and fabric softener dispensing function too. A notification e-mail will be sent to the students when the load is done and laundry charges will be deducted from the students' ID cards [6].

In Indonesia, however, an online laundry service takes a different form. Normally, customers have to visit a laundry service provider, weigh their dirty laundry, pay the respective charges and collect cleaned laundry in the following few days. Now, laundry service providers came up with a new solution where customers only have to contact them through laundry apps or any communication apps so that the laundry service provider can fetch the dirty laundry and return it whenever and wherever the customer request after being washed.

Although there were many studies conducted in the area of customer, service, service quality, or correlation between them [7-10] and the research on service quality spread from offline to online service [11-17], the research in particular service like laundry service area seems to be growing. Earlier in 2017 there was a research conducted about laundry service in hospital regarding the patients and staffs satisfaction on linen being supplied by the laundry service center. It was certain that the staffs and patients were satisfied by the linen provided by the center but the cost of the laundry center facility set up in the hospital were very expensive [18]. Meanwhile in 2016, there was a research regarding laundry service in the hotel industry, which aimed to identify the critical risk during the laundry process among hotel laundry workers in Terengganu, Malaysia. Surely the possibility of finger caught into the flatwork iron was the most critical risk among other risks during laundry process such as the hazardous material and chemical [19].

From the literature above it can be seen that studying customer services growing much more interesting as years goes. Nevertheless, none of these researches study about online laundry service that focus on Business to Customer (B2C) instead of (B2B), thus the current research conducted a preliminary study with the purpose of understanding the customers' use intentions of using online laundry service. The method that was used to gain the data was through interviews as the qualitative research method approach.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Internet and Online Service

Internet began in the 1960s as an experimental connection between computers at Stanford University, the University of California at Santa Barbara, the University of California at Los Angeles, and the University of Utah, together with the Department of Defense [20]. Internet became a major revolution in business that has changed the pattern and business performance. The flow of information and communication between two companies or more become easier, fast, actual, complete, up to date, and accessible 24 hours a week [4]. Both big companies and MSMEs took advantages of the internet to enhance their company performances, either internal or external, or even between companies, and for customer services as well. Previous research further claimed that internet has increased the competitiveness of MSMEs to compete with larger companies equivalently [21]. It also allows MSMEs to carry out marketing strategies in effective, comprehensive and cheaper which open up better chances for the MSMEs to compete with larger companies. Those are examples of positive impacts of Internet on business [22].

Meanwhile, in Abidjan city of Cote d'Ivoire, Africa a research was conducted about the factors that influence small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to adopt ICT [23]. ICT was found to be a valid, effective, and innovative tool for sustainability of SMEs development [23-24]. These researches proven that there was positive impact of using ICT and internet in increasing the sustainability of MSME. The digital age, particularly the utilization of Internet has transformed how businesses reach customers whereby now, even MSME are highly visible, and more efficient in terms of marketing and operation. It also allows consumers to have effective and efficient time management. Finally, the internet hinges business and market which previously unreachable due to national borders and geographic locations.

Customer Retention and Loyalty

Customer retention can be described as repetition in purchasing on service or goods [25]; or the

continuity of the business relations between the customer and company [26]. Lin and Wu [27] argue the vital of marketing research is that the effects of relationships and quality on customer retention [28].

Meanwhile, customer loyalty can be described as the willingness of customer to maintain or commit their relationship with the company and further referring it to colleagues [25]. There are two kinds of customer loyalty: one is based on behavior means that the willingness of customer to repurchase and continue relationships with the company; and other based on attitude means that emotional attachment and advocacy of customers toward the company [28-29].

Service Quality and Purchase Intention

Service quality has been found to be an important component for establishing and maintaining the customers. The most common service quality definition is “the consumer’s judgment about the overall excellence or superiority of service” [30]. Meanwhile, purchase intention is the intention or desire to buy some kind of product in certain shop, either offline or online shopping [31]. For this study researcher use “use intention” instead of “purchase intention” because it will make the reader easier to understand that this study conducted in service area.

There were many studies conducted in the area of customer (customers purchase intention, customers satisfaction, etc.), service quality (offline service or online service), and the correlation between them. For example, the research conducted in 2015 [32] about the impact of word of mouth and online purchase intention. By using theoretical method they constructed a model to help identify the relationship between the several variables surrounding the costumers’ behavior and the use of internet, for the future impact of word of mouth to the online purchase intention. Other research conducted in the same year [33] more focused on customer satisfaction based on online service quality on Web service. By conducting a survey provided by Nepal Telecom in Nepal, they found that Web service will change the way businesses design their service application, entities with other business entities, manage the workflow of business, and conduct an e-business transaction. Recent research in 2016 [34] there was researcher from Spain conducted a study about the impact of online service level in contexts where the transactions have not been made yet. Their empirical finding came from 370 survey was that both transaction related service and pre-purchase service were comes from navigation experience. More recent research in 2017 comes from Indonesia [35] about factors that influence consumer’s purchase intention at three consumer-to-consumer (C2C) e-commerce companies in Indonesia. Quantitative method was used and found

that trust and risk are found to be significantly affecting purchase intention in Company A. Meanwhile, perceived usefulness proved to be significant in Company B and benefit significantly affect consumer purchase intention in Company C.

In online shopping perspective, past researchers studied about the relative importance of e-service quality dimensions and found that personalization, ease of use and access were rated as important with reliability emerged as the most important factor in service quality assessment [11]. In a more recent study, past researchers examined the relationship among e- service quality dimensions and overall service quality, customer satisfaction and purchase intentions [12]. In consistence with Yang and Jun [11], the results showed that online stores should improve on the reliability dimension since it was a significant predictor of service quality, customer satisfaction and purchase intention [12]. In parallel, a research identified the key dimensions of service quality and satisfaction in online banking service and revealed that responsiveness, reliability, product portfolio, and ease are the most important key dimensions for both overall service quality and satisfaction [13]. Similarly, in 2013, more study was performed to measure the link between e-service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction in banking area [17]. This study found that e-service quality which could be summarized as providing customer convenience also affected customer satisfaction [17]. On the whole, these findings supported earlier models developed by researchers in [8-10].

Despite such findings, prior researches employed quantitative approach in their studies [8-13, 33-35]. Instead of continuing to use quantitative approach, this preliminary study focuses on gaining the customer assessment and perceptions about the new innovation in online laundry service by employing qualitative methodology. Deeper understanding and thorough descriptions of customers' experience justified the used of qualitative methodology to counterbalance the parsimonious of quantitative studies.

Laundry Service in Other Industry

In 1985 [36], a scholar wondered why nobody was curious about how their laundry was being processed. Therefore, he began to conduct a research and interviewed an expert on the subject of dry-cleaning, Bill Seitz who was the Executive Director of Neighborhood Cleaners Association (NCA) in New York. The scholar explored about how they processed their customer’s dirty garment, removed the stain from garment, carefully taking care of their customer’s garments, and the knowledge of laundry and dry-cleaning processed. His research explained all the process to the history of dry-cleaning.

In 2008 [37], another research about laundry service was conducted with respect to the effectiveness of laundry service operation and maintaining the quality while reducing the cost. This study was conducted in a Public hospital in Colombia. Similarly in 2017, a research on laundry service in health care context was performed to measure the satisfaction of patients and staffs on linen being supplied by the laundry center. The hospital set up a center facility of laundry service inside the hospital which was costly and evaluated it for 2 years (2014 – 2016). The amount of linen received by the laundry was significantly increased over the years. Questionnaires were distributed among the staffs and patients, and it was found that the staffs and patients were satisfied by the linen provided by the center, despite the cost of setting up the laundry center facility in that hospital were considered very expensive [18].

Reviewing past researches about laundry service, to authors' knowledge, none have explored online laundry service despite the fact that understanding customer assessment is critical in order to extend the result to Business to Business (B2B) in other industries such as health care and hospitality industries so that the hospitals and hotels can truly focus on their core business activities. The next chapter explains the methodology used in this study.

METHODOLOGY

The nature of qualitative research design considers philosophies both for ontological and epistemological issues. Essentially, ontology is reality while epistemology is the relationship between the researcher and the reality, and methodology is the technique used by researcher to discover the reality [38]. The present researchers of this study believe that the reality is socially constructed rather than objectively determined. Thus, this study follow the philosophy of interpretivism, because the researchers attempt to focus on specific topic and wish to know the differences in people's minds. The researchers were also involved closely with the study participants, and used small number of participants.

This preliminary study used qualitative method approach because the researchers aimed to study the reality of online laundry service from customers' perception and observation. Moreover, the researchers tried to understand and gain deeper information about online laundry service in term of understanding the service quality and customers perceptions. Interpretivism allows researcher to understand, gain deeper information, and knows inside customer's mind by interviewing them, rather than administering questionnaires to the sample to

complete because researchers themselves are the key instruments [39]. However, this method requires more time to gather the data and perform the analysis.

Criterion sampling was used in this study. Researchers determined several criteria to identify eligible participants such as minimum age of 18 years old, and had experience on offline and online laundry service. The number of participants was two students who patronize the same laundry provider. Interviews were conducted as one-to-one for this research. This data collection method was chosen because the researchers would be able to observe the participants gestures and body language in person, and open up a chance to really immerse in the participants' experiences. In a smaller context, it helped the researchers to evaluate the trustworthiness of the responses. Researchers interviewed each of participants by using semi-structured interview questions. Prior to data collection, the researchers bracketed their personal perceptions in order to reduce research bias.

Thematic Analysis (TA) was employed for data analysis. TA was first used as a method in 1970 and later in 1998; TA was improved by developing coding and theme [40]. TA includes pinpointing, examining, and recording pattern or themes to extract the concepts and meanings from data. Data can be varied such as interview transcribes, field notes, documents, recordings, or even videos. It is commonly used because of its variability and flexibility in analyzing data in qualitative research. However, there is no specific guidance for TA as it is utterly depending on the type of data, project size, and how themes are analyzed and reported in each and every unique research [41].

The trustworthiness of the research is including credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is that the instrument play the right role to find what it designed to be finded. Credibility will be achieved by member check. Researcher constructed an interview questions which lead to the research question or finding. Those interview questions will be consulted to the supervisor. After it got approved, researcher began to conduct the pilot study. On the other hand, dependability is the consistency of the finding when it used repeatedly. Researcher took two customers for the pilot study, to make sure that researcher get the answer consistently from different participants. Credibility and dependability in this study will be tested by pilot test. Confirmability is the degree of the neutrality that the finding of the research are shaped based on participants not researcher bias, interest, or motivation. To achive the confirmability, researcher send the interview transcribe back to participants

and make sure between transcribe and what participants actual says is in line [42].

RESULT ANALYSES AND DISCUSSIONS

Online service is quite a new thing or innovation in laundry service business. It has been known for so long that people are normally do their laundry at home either by hands or machines. As the life of people get more hectic day after day, business players tried to come up with a win – win solution to help people wash their dirty laundry, known as laundry service, by starting up laundry stores. Nevertheless, continuous transformation in current lifestyles make people hardly find the time to send their own laundry to the laundry stores. Thus, business players started another innovation which was from the conventional laundry service called online laundry service. Nowadays, busy and high mobility people prefer to use their leisure time either for resting, spending time with families, or having fun with their friends rather than spending it for mundane laundry washing. So, getting help from others for laundering their clothes literally becomes a need. Online laundry service is no longer impossible in this century. People can simply use internet connection anywhere and anytime especially when the technology of smart phone is readily available to contact online laundry service providers through online chat apps to order the laundry service. After an order has been placed, the laundry service provider will pick up the dirty laundry and then deliver it back to the customers as per time and address requested by the customers. There is no need to do laundry and the dirty laundries problems are solved effortlessly. It is all about time management.

The interviews were conducted to the participants that patronized the same online laundry service. Based on the interview, the reason people or customers used online laundry service was because of it is very easy to use. According to the first participant, this online laundry service is very easy to use. She said:

“It’s quite interesting and I feel very easy to use it which is at least I can manage my time...”

The first participant mentioned that all she needs to do is only grab her phone and chat the online laundry provider by online chat,

“...if I need to use it all I do is just Whatsapp him. After that he told me he will come at so so time to pick it...”

And so far it was very good for her.

“...So it’s been good.”

The second participant similarly said:

“...All I need to do is just grab my phone and Whatsapp him. I said to him that I have a dirty laundry please pick it up now. Then he will pick it lah if he is available...”

The level of responsiveness is fast and good. As the first participant mentioned,

“...My perception is that it is very good...I thought maybe I need to message and remind and all of that, before. But now like I see just I message him once to come, and then after that the same time he done he will message to me even before I message him.”

The other thing she mentioned,

“...they very time conscious. Even if they need to change the time deliver they always already messaged me “sorry I can’t bring it in this time I will bring in that time.” So I just feel very comfortable.”

As the second participant said,

“...I have a dirty laundry please pick it up now. Then he will pick it lah if he is available...If not that as he and I compromised the time available then he will pick it up.”

Both participants were master students and knew each other. They were around 26-29 years old in 2018. They hardly spent their days at their dorm. The dorm was just a place to sleep, but mostly they spent their whole days in campus. That was why the online laundry service really helped them to manage their dirty laundry without moving out of the house, which is easy to use and fast response.

Another theme emerged was word-of-mouth that lead to trust. The participants used online laundry service because they were hearing good things about the laundry. People around them provided positive reviews about the online laundry service they were using, thus increased their use intention. As the first participant claimed:

“...my friend was the one that told me about that online laundry service provider and it was good... good...and my friend the one that patronize me...”

The second participant also agreed. She said she heard from her friends talking about this new laundry service, Laundry X, and said that it was worthy to try. The word-of-mouth influenced her to

try it and in fact she needed that kind of laundry service, which in line to the research of [32].

After they went on their first trial, they found to be satisfied with the online laundry service and continued to use the service. In response to such high level of satisfaction, they admitted that they were willing to spread good reviews about their experiences to others. As the first participant mentioned:

"...and I know it is good so I also recommended it to others."

So the trust emerge from the customers make the Laundry X reliable as an online laundry service provider.

Although the participants had never visited the online laundry service providers' store themselves, yet the provider had proven their quality of overall services. The participant commented that she never had doubt about leaving her laundry to the online laundry service provider because her friend's experience increases her confidence to use the service. In addition, the quality of the service was more than she expected. The continuous purchasing make the customer becomes loyal. Loyalty can be detected if the customers willing to spread the service they are using to others [25]. As they proofed by themselves that the online laundry service they are using right now is good then consciously they will tell other people or friends about it.

From the interviews, both participants threw different preferences and suggestions regarding Laundry X. The first participant suggested preferred for them to maintain the current online ordering system which was by online chat, while the second participant suggested that the online laundry service provider should develop a specific application just for their customers.

According to the interviews, the first participant argued that it was no need to build an app for online laundry service because people could just use online chat to place an order. In fact, communication apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram were commonly used on daily basis to connect between individuals. People can simple send messages and getting fast response. Even through online chat, customer still gets the main information needed about the laundry such as: when the online laundry service provider will pick up the dirty laundry, and when it will be done. Even the laundry could be weighed on the spot during customer contact, and the price will be fixed right away. Therefore, there are minimal risks to be deceived even though the online laundry did not have a particular online application for their online laundry service. In fact, customer can feel more

personal to the online laundry service provider, considering those chats through the communication apps are private. According to the participant, this was how the ideal online laundry service should be:

"...I think it should be like this.. We text them, and then they reply us immediately, giving us the information when they will come and etc.... I don't think they need to build an online application. Because I use WhatsApp every day and it's okay because even with or without the laundry service I already used the WhatsApp every day for communication."

Meanwhile the second participant said that if the online laundry business grew larger in future, it was better to build an online laundry application. Besides, it would present better and stronger brand image, more proper and organize system, and it also would increase good customer perceptions towards them. One of the suggestions for online marketing strategy was explained by the participant as the following:

"...If that laundry service grew their business in the future, I recommend them to build an apps for their laundry service. It can gather more customer and also good marketing for them. That is my opinion."

From above discussion both participants have a similar reason to use online laundry service provider, Laundry X, they are patronizing right now are easy to use. All they need to do was just chat them using Whatsapp. Then, the responsiveness was fast and good. The fast response which made it convenient and the good response which show good communication service from employee to the customers. For the overall good quality of service offered made the Laundry X reliable and trusted. Last is the good response and positive impacts comes from costumers experience of using Laundry X lead to the loyalty of customers.

CONCLUSIONS

This preliminary study shows that Laundry X as an online laundry service provider emerges among the busy activities and high mobility people nowadays is a good start for laundry service innovation. The participants' use intentions on Laundry X are the ease of use, fast response, trustworthiness, reliable, and experience. These findings are in line with prior studies [11-13,32-35] which motivated them to patronize the same online laundry provider, Laundry X. Due to high satisfaction with the Laundry X service, they likely to repeat their use while spread the good news about Laundry X to others.

RECOMMENDATION

Researcher recommends that the next researcher will increase the variety of participants, not only students, and increase the number of participants. So, the next research will get various and deeper information comes from different background and perspectives.

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