

From Checkout to Satisfaction: A Qualitative Literature Review on the Customer Journey in E-Commerce

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the post-checkout phase of the customer journey in e-commerce and its critical role in shaping customer satisfaction. Through a qualitative literature review of scholarly publications from 2013 to 2023 indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and Sinta, the research identifies key factors influencing customer experiences after completing transactions. Thematic analysis reveals that delivery speed, package condition, product accuracy, customer service responsiveness, return process ease, and feedback mechanisms significantly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study highlights that customer experience does not end at the point of sale but extends through product receipt, evaluation, and after-sales interaction. Moreover, the role of technology—such as real-time tracking, AI-based customer support, and personalized post-purchase experiences—further strengthens the importance of managing the post-checkout phase. The findings contribute theoretically by emphasizing the need to expand classical customer satisfaction models to include post-transaction experiences, particularly the emotional dimensions of customer interactions. Practically, the study provides strategic directions for e-commerce businesses to enhance logistics, customer

service, return policies, and post-purchase personalization to foster long-term loyalty. Additionally, the research identifies a gap where most previous studies predominantly focus on the pre-checkout phase, suggesting the need for future qualitative research to uncover deeper emotional and psychological dimensions of post-checkout customer experiences.

Keywords: customer journey, post-checkout experience, e-commerce, customer satisfaction, digital marketing

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving digital era, e-commerce has become a primary channel for modern commercial activities. According to recent data, the global e-commerce market value is estimated to surpass USD 6 trillion, reflecting a significant shift in consumer behavior from conventional purchases to online transactions (Rahmayanti et al., 2023; Abdella & Indradewa, 2024). The growth of e-commerce transactions in Indonesia has also been remarkable, with the total value of digital transactions reaching IDR 474 trillion in 2023 (Bank Indonesia, 2023). This growth underscores the urgency of gaining deeper insight into the dynamics of the customer journey, particularly during the crucial phase between checkout and the

attainment of customer satisfaction. This phase is not merely a technical transition but rather a series of experiences that directly influence customer perception, loyalty, and repurchase decisions (Rahmawati & Arifin, 2022; Rahmayanti et al., 2023).

Understanding the customer journey in e-commerce carries strategic importance for online business stakeholders. One of the most critical pain points in this journey is the checkout phase, where cart abandonment is often marked by a sudden decision to cancel a purchase. Industry reports indicate that global cart abandonment rates exceed 70% (Rahmayanti et al., 2023; Abdella & Indradewa, 2024), suggesting that despite a clear purchase intent, a significant number of users do not proceed to complete the transaction. This highlights the need to re-examine various aspects of the customer experience, including ease of navigation, cost transparency, transaction security, and the quality of post-purchase service (Rahmawati & Arifin, 2022; Rahmayanti et al., 2023).

In this context, the philosophy of customer satisfaction serves as a fundamental guiding principle that cannot be overlooked. Customer satisfaction is not merely viewed as the final outcome of a purchase but as a key indicator of the overall success of the customer experience (Mamakou et al., 2024; Lin & Wang, 2015; Mukarromah et al., 2021). According to classical marketing theory, satisfaction arises when customer expectations are met or exceeded by actual performance. Within the highly competitive e-commerce landscape, delivering a consistently positive experience throughout the customer journey is essential for fostering long-term customer retention (Gök, 2020; Benvenuto, 2024).

The concept of the customer journey has evolved alongside the shifting digital landscape and the growing adoption of technology across various aspects of consumer life. While the customer journey was once linear and confined to physical interactions, it is now dynamic, multi-

channel, and interconnected through omnichannel integration (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2024). Consumers no longer interact with a single channel, instead, they navigate across apps, websites, social media, and online marketplaces before making a purchase decision. This transformation demands a more comprehensive understanding of each touchpoint throughout the customer journey (Yin, 2024; Sharma et al., 2024; Lai et al., 2023). The role of technology is crucial in supporting this evolution (Xu et al., 2024). Artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and machine learning enable e-commerce platforms to gain deeper insights into consumer behavior and personalize user experiences in real time (Roychowdhury et al., 2021). Product recommendations, relevant offers, and automated interactions through chatbots are tangible examples of how technology is used to enhance customer satisfaction across various stages of the customer journey, including post-transaction (Camilleri, 2021; Xu et al., 2024).

Further, customer expectations have also risen significantly. Today's consumers demand a seamless experience, ranging from ease of navigation and fast, secure payment processes to responsive customer support available 24/7 (Abdella & Indradewa, 2024; Lin & Wang, 2015). When these expectations are not met, dissatisfaction arises, often expressed through negative reviews that can influence the decisions of other customers (Xia et al., 2021; Sharifi, 2019; Ullrich & Brunner, 2015).

Therefore, a qualitative approach is highly relevant in understanding the motivations, perceptions, and emotional experiences of customers throughout the checkout process and post-transaction (Goel et al., 2024; Rubin et al., 2020; Moore & Mathews, 2008). Unlike quantitative approaches that focus on numbers and patterns, qualitative studies are capable of uncovering deeper meanings behind consumer behavior, including the subjective reasons for cart abandonment and the factors that either

foster or hinder customer satisfaction (Rodrigues et al., 2024; Song, 2019; Gupta et al., 2025).

Thus, awareness of the customer journey as a source of competitive advantage has become increasingly prominent (Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). In today's highly competitive e-commerce landscape, differentiation is no longer based solely on price or product offerings but on the overall quality of the customer experience. From checkout to post-purchase feedback, a thoughtfully designed journey can serve as a strategic asset that sets a platform apart from its competitors (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Urdea & Constantin, 2021; Pei et al., 2020).

Based on the aforementioned background, this article aims to review existing literature through a qualitative lens to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the customer journey in the context of e-commerce, focusing on the phase from checkout to the formation of customer satisfaction. This approach is intended to offer a deeper conceptual understanding and to identify critical areas that should be carefully considered by both practitioners and researchers in the field of digital marketing.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research Focus

The primary focus of this study is to explore the dynamics of the customer journey in the post-checkout phase through to the attainment of customer satisfaction in the context of e-commerce based on a qualitative analysis of various scholarly literature. This study aims to answer the following research questions: How does previous literature describe the stages of the post-checkout customer journey within the e-commerce context? What factors influence customer satisfaction in e-commerce, according to previous studies? The emphasis is placed on providing a conceptual understanding of the customer experience after completing the transaction,

encompassing aspects such as clarity of information, delivery processes, customer service interactions, and post-purchase reviews.

By reviewing scholarly publications from the past decade (2013–2023), this study seeks to identify key themes and critical areas that frequently emerge in e-commerce customer journey research, as well as to illustrate how approaches and understandings of customer experience have evolved alongside digital transformation. The findings of this review are expected to contribute theoretically and practically to developing digital marketing strategies and managing customer experiences in an increasingly competitive e-commerce industry.

Data Sources

The data for this study is derived from scholarly articles published in reputable journals and indexed in prominent academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and Sinta. Article selection was carried out selectively, taking into account the publication's credibility and the relevance of the topic to the research focus, which is customer experience in e-commerce from the post-checkout phase to the formation of customer satisfaction. The article search process involved the use of specific keywords relevant to the research focus. These keywords include customer journey, e-commerce, checkout experience, customer satisfaction, user experience in online shopping, and post-purchase experience.

Data Analysis

The analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis. This approach aims to identify, organize, and interpret the main patterns or themes from the reviewed literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method allows the author to holistically explore various dimensions of customer experience and identify key factors that influence the success of the customer journey in e-commerce.

RESULTS

Stages of the Customer Journey After Checkout

Based on the findings from the literature review of various studies, the customer journey in e-commerce does not end when the customer presses the "pay" button. Instead, the post-checkout phase becomes crucial to determine overall customer satisfaction (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The main stages in this phase include:

1. Shipping Process

Shipping speed and reliability are important post-checkout elements. Customers expect accurate delivery estimates and real-time tracking (Urdea & Constantin, 2021; Pei et al., 2020).

2. Unboxing Experience and Received Product

Unboxing is a part of the experience that influences brand perception. Aesthetic, neat, and expectation-aligned unboxing experiences enhance emotional engagement with the brand (Song, 2019).

3. Customer Service and Complaints

Contact with customer service after encountering an issue is a key touchpoint. Response speed, tone of communication, and issue resolution directly impact the final customer evaluation of the platform (Liu et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2024).

4. Return Process

Ease of return processes is often seen as an indicator of service flexibility. Customers tend to highly rate platforms that provide clear return instructions, no additional fees, and a hassle-free process (Liu et al., 2017; Öztürk & Dündar, 2020; Song, 2019).

5. Reviews and Feedback

Both satisfied and dissatisfied customers tend to express their experiences through reviews. E-commerce platforms that actively respond to customer feedback tend to have a better reputation (Xu et al., 2024).

Determinants of Customer Satisfaction

The literature reviewed indicates that customer satisfaction in e-commerce is significantly influenced by the following factors:

1. Speed and Accuracy of Delivery

Fast delivery that aligns with initial estimates directly contributes to customer satisfaction. Conversely, delivery delays or incorrect addresses often lead to dissatisfaction (Akıl & Urgan, 2022; Wisnel et al., 2022; Pei et al., 2020).

2. Consistent Product Quality

Customer expectations of products must match the description and images provided. Quality inconsistency is a primary trigger for returns and negative reviews (Wisnel et al., 2022; Pei et al., 2020).

3. Clarity of Product Information and Checkout Process

Unclear pricing, shipping costs, and return policies can cause distrust. Comprehensive and transparent information enhances user comfort during transactions (Wisnel et al., 2022; Pei et al., 2020).

4. Proactive and Responsive Customer Service

Prompt responses to complaints or inquiries via live chat or social media build customer trust and accelerate problem resolution (Kappi & Marlina, 2023).

5. Security and Convenience of Payment Process

Using secure payment technologies and various payment options increases conversion rates and reduces customer concerns (Wisnel et al., 2022).

6. Role of Technology and User Interface

Technology significantly shapes the customer experience after checkout (Kappi & Marlina, 2023).

7. Intuitive Checkout Page Design

A minimalistic, informative, and user-friendly checkout page increases the

likelihood of transaction completion (Wisnel et al., 2022; Pei et al., 2020).

8. Automated Notifications and Real-Time Tracking

Emails or push notifications about shipping status help reduce customer anxiety (Akil & Ungan, 2022; Wisnel et al., 2022; Pei et al., 2020).

9. Chatbots and AI Service Assistants

Many platforms now use chatbots to handle FAQs or basic complaints (Kappi & Marlina, 2023).

10. Personalization of the Post-Checkout Experience

Product recommendations based on purchase history and relevant follow-up emails boost post-purchase engagement (Kappi & Marlina, 2023).

The Relationship Between Checkout Experience and Customer Loyalty

Many studies in the literature conclude that the checkout and post-transaction experience has a direct correlation with customer loyalty:

1. Positive Experience = Repeat Purchase Intention

When customers go through a smooth, fast, and satisfying process, they are more likely to intend to make repeat purchases on the same platform (Al-Adwan et al., 2020; Malau & Sitanggang, 2024; Miao et al., 2022).

2. Complicated Checkout = High Churn Rate

A lengthy, confusing, or slow checkout process is a common reason customer are reluctant to return. Ease and clarity during a single transaction significantly shape long-term perceptions.

3. Brand Trust Is Built Through Consistency

If customers repeatedly experience consistent positive outcomes from one transaction to another, trust in the platform naturally develops, which in turn increases loyalty (Arjo et al., 2024; Hermawan, 2020).

DISCUSSION

Based on the literature review, several key aspects play a critical role in shaping the overall customer experience. These interconnected aspects form a crucial sequence in ensuring that customers receive the product and feel satisfied, loyal, and motivated to make repeat purchases.

One of the primary aspects highlighted through the analysis is the delivery process. Delivery serves as the initial touchpoint where customers determine whether the promises made by the e-commerce platform are being fulfilled. Timeliness, package condition, and the clarity of tracking systems are key factors influencing early satisfaction post-checkout. When shipping information is communicated transparently and in real time, customers tend to feel more reassured and confident that the transaction is progressing smoothly. Conversely, delays or ambiguity regarding the status of the delivery may lead to frustration and negatively affect customers' perceptions of the service provided.

Customer experience does not end upon receipt of the product. The degree to which the product aligns with its description and visual representation on the e-commerce platform serves as a critical indicator of both the seller's and the platform's credibility. In this context, product packaging and unboxing often carry significant emotional value for customers. Neat, aesthetically pleasing, and secure packaging can enhance perceptions of professionalism, whereas careless or sloppy packaging may convey a lack of regard for the customer. Many research suggests that the first impression created during the unboxing experience can shape the overall perception of service quality, even if the product arrives undamaged.

Moreover, customer service plays a pivotal role in shaping a complete and satisfying customer journey. When problems arise such as receiving damaged goods, incorrect items, or encountering technical difficulties, customers typically turn to support services with the expectation of prompt resolution. A

responsive, courteous, and solution-oriented approach not only resolves the immediate problem but also signals the platform's commitment to customer satisfaction. Conversely, delayed or unprofessional handling of complaints can lead customers to feel neglected, potentially undermining their trust in the platform even when the problem is relatively minor.

The return process is also integral to the post-checkout experience. Customers are more likely to feel confident making purchases when they know that returns can be made easily, without incurring additional costs, and within a reasonable timeframe. A flexible return policy reflects a platform's accountability and customer-centric orientation. In contrast, complex return procedures that lack transparency often led to customer frustration and may prevent future purchase decisions.

At the final stage of the customer journey, reviews and feedback directly reflect the customer's overall experience. Positive reviews indicate that the entire process, from checkout to product delivery, has met or even exceeded customer expectations. Negative reviews, on the other hand, are critical indicators for platforms to evaluate and improve their services. By encouraging customers to leave feedback and responding proactively, platforms can foster two-way interactions that enhance customer engagement and convey a willingness to listen to critique and suggestions.

The entirety of the customer journey forms the foundation of customer satisfaction. Key determinants such as delivery speed, product accuracy, transaction convenience, responsive customer service, and secure payment systems serve as primary indicators of whether customers perceive their experience as satisfactory. These elements must be managed synergistically, as a single negative encounter at any stage can significantly distort the customer's overall perception of the service provided. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the customer journey is essential from an operational standpoint and a strategic

approach to fostering long-term customer loyalty.

Findings from the reviewed literature suggest that customer satisfaction is not solely derived from the successful completion of a transaction but rather from the entire journey accompanying it. The smoother, more pleasant, and less problematic the experience, the greater the platform's potential to earn trust, foster loyalty, and encourage customers to recommend the service to prospective users. The findings of this study offer a significant theoretical contribution to the development of the customer journey concept within digital contexts. This research underscores the critical importance of the post-checkout stage, an often-overlooked dimension in digital marketing literature. The theoretical implication lies in the need to expand classical customer satisfaction models to encompass the entirety of post-transaction experiences, including the emotional dimensions shaped by non-physical interactions. Consequently, future marketing studies should adopt theoretical approaches that account for the evolving dynamics of consumer behavior in digital environments, as well as the interplay between perception, emotion, and technology.

Based on a practical perspective, the findings provide strategic directions for e-commerce actors to focus on strengthening post-checkout services. Business practitioners must recognize that customer satisfaction is not solely about competitive pricing or convenient payment options, but also about how they manage the customer experience after the transaction is completed. Concrete steps that can be taken include strengthening logistics systems and real-time tracking, enhancing customer service team training to be more responsive and empathetic, and formulating customer-friendly return policies. Additionally, e-commerce platforms can utilize technologies such as AI and big data to personalize post-purchase services and create relevant experiences for each user. Awareness of the importance of the post-

checkout phase will enable businesses to acquire customers and retain and foster long-term loyalty.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes the importance of the post-checkout phase in the e-commerce customer journey as a key determinant of customer satisfaction. A qualitative literature review of various studies over the last decade (2013–2023) found that the customer experience does not end when the transaction is made but continues until the product is received, evaluated, and responded to through after-sales services. Aspects such as delivery speed, unboxing quality, customer service responsiveness, return ease, and feedback systems are the main pillars shaping customer perception and loyalty.

The factors determining satisfaction in e-commerce are also inseparable from the role of technology, ranging from intuitive checkout page design, real-time notification systems, to the use of AI in automated services and post-transaction experience personalization. These findings strengthen the understanding that the success of an e-commerce platform is determined not only by product quality or price but also by how they manage the overall customer experience, including the emotional aspects and the perception of trust formed throughout the process.

Although many studies have discussed the customer journey in e-commerce, most research still focuses on the pre-checkout phase and purchase decisions. The post-checkout phase has received relatively less attention as the primary subject of study. Moreover, the approaches used in many previous studies have been predominantly quantitative, thus failing to explore the subjective meaning felt by customers during the stages after the transaction. This creates a conceptual gap in understanding how post-transaction interactions and experiences shape customer satisfaction and loyalty both emotionally and psychologically.

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct empirical explorations using qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews or digital ethnography studies to holistically reveal the emotional dynamics and customer perceptions. Research could also focus on comparisons between product categories (such as electronics vs. fashion) or between platforms (large marketplaces vs. independent online stores) to understand whether post-checkout customer journey patterns differ significantly. Additionally, longitudinal studies that track customer experiences after purchase could offer more comprehensive insights into the development of loyalty and trust toward e-commerce platforms. Integrating consumer behavior studies, digital technology, and customer experience management will form a crucial foundation for developing sustainable, customer-oriented e-commerce strategies.

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