Exploring the Impact of Service Quality Dimensions on Customer Loyalty with a Moderating Role of Customer trust: An Applied Study on the Saudi Commercial Banks in Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia.

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Customer satisfaction with banking services is well-known, and it is crucial to financial institutions' overall success. Prior research has proven that service quality and customer satisfaction play a significant role in boosting client loyalty. However, this line of research falls short of addressing the role of other customers' psychological variables that might either improve or undermine the relationship. Thus, to address this gap in the research, the current study will examine the moderating effect of customer trust on the direct relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. To accomplish the study's aims, data were gathered from 340 banking customers in Saudi Arabia who were randomly selected using a systemic sampling technique. The data were analysed using the PLS-SEM approach and the SmartPLS 3.0 software. Service quality is viewed in this study as a multidimensional construct comprised of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The study's findings indicated that each factor directly affects consumer loyalty. The study's findings revealed the moderating effect of customer trust on the established association between service quality aspects and customer loyalty. Additionally, the paper discusses the theoretical and practical ramifications and future research objectives.

Keywords: Service Quality, Customer Loyalty, 'Customers' Trust, Customer Retention, Banking Sector, Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

The banking sector is considered one of the most critical sectors that enhances the state's economy and supplies it with the funds necessary to strengthen it. Banking customers have a vital role in the success of financial institutions. Therefore, banking services providers must enhance their banking products with new technology and innovation. These banking

services should be according to their customers' need and want or exceed their expectations to ensure their loyalty (Al-Slehat, 2021). Former studies have proven that 'consumers' behavior regarding service quality has been progressively acknowledged as an essential element in the achievement of any business, and the banking services in this scenario are not an exception. Service quality has significantly employed to measure banking services' productivity. It has been noted that ' 'consumer's satisfaction regarding service quality will increase a ' 'customer's desire to use banking services (Khatoon et al., 2020).

Developing and maintaining excellent client relationships is critical to corporate success (Prima & Hayati, 2019). Banks must place a strong emphasis on service quality to maintain client happiness, trust, and loyalty. Comprehensive banking service-quality models, such as hierarchical and multidimensional models of service quality and other factors impacting customer loyalty, are increasingly being developed and applied to identify the critical antecedents of customer loyalty. Understanding these antecedents can assist managers in improving the financial performance of their firms. Banks must maintain existing clients while also acquiring new ones in the face of fierce competition from non-bank and fintech companies. Better service quality increases customer satisfaction, which eventually improves customer loyalty, as evidenced by repurchase intention, word of mouth, and referrals to new customers (Tuan et al., 2019). Most service-quality–loyalty research focuses on the links between service quality, satisfaction, trust, and loyalty rather than on the factors themselves. As a result of the increased emphasis on acquiring more main-bank customers (customers who use the bank as their primary operating bank for the transactional account(s), depositing the majority of their wealth, and purchasing all other financial products), it is necessary to examine the moderating role played by the main-bank status on the service-quality–loyalty model (Prabjit et al., 2021). Numerous financial organisations are likewise focusing their efforts on attracting high-value customers (customers who contribute higher income to the bank per unit of servicing time, e.g. private-bank or high-wealth customers). Banks will be able to make more money if they secure themselves a better grip than their rivals in the market (Fang et al., 2021; Fida et al., 2020; Kasasbeh et al., 2021) and Fida et al. (2020) note that this must cause banks to prioritize service quality as a fundamental competitive strategy. Moreover, banks worldwide offer related services and constantly strive to keep up with their 'rivals' advances. It should be emphasized that customers might detect discrepancies in service quality. Furthermore, customers who evaluate banks' performance mostly primarily based on personal contact and connection (Khatoon et al., 2020). Numerous research studies have linked poor service to client switching banks (Agarwal, 2019). According to Hovhannisyan et al. (2020), 40% of clients in the United States transferred to banking institutions due to low-quality services. In this respect, Pakurár et al. (2019) discovered that 50 percent of total respondents said they switched banks due to service issues in their studydue to their study.

Meanwhile, Customer loyalty had gotten much press since the 1990s, when relationship marketing became a prominent marketing strategy for keeping customers happy. Furthermore, it has become a requirement because customer loyalty has been identified as a crucial source of competitive advantage for businesses, as it significantly affects productivity (Shaban & Salih, 2020). This research looks into the elements that affect the willingness of Saudi bank clients to use the banking system's services and the function of trust in moderating the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer loyalty.

2. Literature Review

Service quality model (SERVQUAL)

SERVQUAL was founded in 1985, 1988, and 1994 by American authors including 'Parsu' Parasuraman, Valarie Zeithaml, and Leonard Berry. It addresses the most critical factors of providing superior service. According to Parasuraman, service quality has 10 fundamental dimensions. It was later modified and condensed to just service dimensions by A Parasuraman et al. (1988). These aspects include dependability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy as components of service quality evaluation. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, customer happiness may be increased by meeting or exceeding customer expectations in four critical categories (1988). To acquire an accurate result in gauging service quality in the banking sector, most past research depended on quantitative measurements. A Parasuraman et al. (1988) assessed service quality in what is regarded to be one of the most significant studies evaluating service quality. They evolved 22 items evaluated by Likert scale and laid out over five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. As a result, this study aimis study aims to look into the service quality characteristics of Saudi bank clients to understand how they affect their loyalty.

Tangibility

Representatives from the companies, physical facilities, products, equipment, and communication materials, are all tangibles. Moreover, physical environmental factors looked to strongly indicate the service provider's care and precision (Al-Azzam, 2015; Muala, 2016). Physical facilities, equipment, employees, and registered materials appear to be tangibility, according to Anantharanthan Parasuraman et al. (1985). Finally, a recent survey found that banks' services for customers' tangibles were regarded as excellent in four of the 22 service quality dimensions.

Reliability

The capability of a service provider to deliver the expected service precisely and regularly is referred to as reliability (Shankar & Jebarajakirthy, 2019). And A Parasuraman et al. (1988), comprises the enterprise's or business's potential to execute what was claimed. They said that reliability hadtaken an essential role in the conventional service operators' operations because it encompassed things like invoicing accuracy, quotes, documentation, and a commitment to complete orders (Fida et al., 2020). In the Commercial Banks of Sri Lanka, Leninkumar (2016) discovered that reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles are three essential aspects of customer loyalty. Furthermore, Shankar and Jebarajakirthy (2019) conducted research in India, distributing a questionnaire to 1,028 e-banking consumers. According to the findings, customer loyalty to e-banking was boosted by service quality dimensions, reliability, privacy, and security. This article aims to discuss the reliability as a prospect and competence of offering financial services at specific Saudi banks in the expected manner. Five items from the reliability dimension are employed to screen the reliability dimension out of 22 service quality items.

Responsiveness

Organizations are concerned with customer happiness, which can be achieved through effective customer relationship management. One of the SERVQUAL model elements

for analyzing service and product quality is responsiveness. According to Dincer and Dincer (2015), responsiveness measures a business's standard and effectiveness toward its clients and its ability to interact with them meaningfully. The most powerful component for attracting a customer's attention is offering him or her withoffering factual data about a service or a product (Fleischman et al., 2017). As a result, service providers are placing a great emphasis on controlling the customer response network to be more remarkable and engaging.

Furthermore, the company's prompt response to customer issues will aid in the company's continuous progress by addressing the customers' most pressing concerns (Izogo & Ogba, 2015). The appropriate service quality is intended to serve clients substantially, capturing their attention and establishing a long-term relationship with them. Additionally, a great reliance on quick responsiveness via social media technologies is an excellent strategy for maintaining productive communication with clients. As a result, it cultivates loyal customers to achieve long-term growth while providing the highest level of customer service (Ishfaq et al., 2016). Four items from the responsiveness dimension are employed to screen the reliability dimension out of 22 service quality items.

Assurance

The comparable dimension is also prevalent in the modern era, as people desire honesty when acquiring things, and ensuring service quality is an excellent way to do this. Apart from that, they can increase the product's quality assurance by increasing customer interaction, but they should continue developing it to provide guaranteed services to consumers (Hasan et al., 2016).

According to Alawni et al. (2015), assurance is a critical aspect for earning the client's trust since they engage trained individuals to interact with the client to ensure because they must have a strong understanding of the linked services they are delivering to clients. In the event of many different service providers, the assurance that the services are relevant to the service given is critical for retaining clients. The admired service quality is essential in appreciating the company's guarantee of giving the most outstanding possible service according to a firm's standards. Four items from the assurance dimension are employed to screen the reliability dimension out of 22 service quality items.

Empathy

Empathy is the emotional connection we have with other people daily. Empathy is critical in producing an appealing influence on consumers in business, as it is inextricably linked to the client's emotions. Although the firm's service is of high quality, if it cannot provide post-purchase services, this will not affect the customer's satisfaction, as consumers value another person's empathic attitude when exchanging information or purchasing a product or service. . This empathetic technique after using a service has a profound influence on a person's psychology and boosts customer responsiveness to the company (McLean & Osei-Frimpong, 2017).

Being emphatic with consumers is a notable feature in enhancing the legitimacy of the proposal and the employee-customer relationship. Meanwhile, the research claims empathy is a possible aspect of the SERVQUAL model that has a developing impact

on customer service quality. In this scenario, the employee's sympathetic behavior with their customers will increase the likelihood of customer happiness, and it will impressively impact the company's standard on consumer perception. As a result, emphasizing the empathy aspect while interacting with employees to increase commitment. This research relates to service quality dimensions that influence customers' loyalty in the Saudi banking system, whereby if people have a prompt financial service that banks offer, the quality in delivering these services, they are more likely to have loyalty. Five items from the empathy dimension are employed to screen the reliability dimension out of 22 service quality items.

Hence, the proposed hypotheses regarding service quality construct are:

H1: There is a positive relationship between Tangibility and Customer Loyalty.
H2: There is a positive relationship between Reliability and Customer Loyalty.
H3: There is a positive relationship between Responsiveness and Customer Loyalty.
H4: There is a positive relationship between Assurance and Customer Loyalty.
H5: There is a positive relationship between Empathy and customer Loyalty.

3. Customer Loyalty

There are several interpretations of customer loyalty, and one of them relates to the habit created by the customer, known as repurchase behavior, which factors in all of the encounters that customers have had when using products and services from providers. A loyalty strategy has been shown to boost customer loyalty while minimizing marketing expenses (Fida et al., 2020).

Customer loyalty is critical for both the business and its customers. It has been defined as a solid commitment to repurchasing or re-patronize a preferred product/service in the future, resulting in repeated purchases of the same brand or same brand set, despite the likelihood of situational factors and marketing efforts promoting switching behavior (Bhat et al., 2018).

According to Pasha and Waleed (2016), customer loyalty is "the marketplace currency of the twenty-first century," with the servicing cost of a loyal customer being five or six times cheaper than that of a new customer in banking firms.

As a result, according to Pasha and Waleed (2016), perceived value, service quality, and brand all have a significant influence on consumer quality in the Pakistan banking sector. Many other research have been conducted to investigate the attributes of customer loyalty, as a variety of factors can influence customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is positively influenced by service quality, customer satisfaction, and employee loyalty, according to Son et al. (2021), particularly in the high-contract service business. Furthermore, Fida et al. (2020) tried to investigate observed service quality and customer satisfaction, which influence Saudi customer loyalty, and evaluated earlier research that looked into the connections between the three factors (Fida et al., 2020).

The Role of Trust as a Moderator

Prior research has demonstrated that trust affects people's attitudes and behaviors when it comes to financial services (Fang et al., 2021). Moreover, according to Ho et al. (2020), trust is a crucial component that aids in boosting consumer behavior toward purchasing items or services, therefore reinforcing the behavioral idea of trust. Because

trust is defined as the willingness to place one's trust in another entity, behavioral intention is emphasized in this context. There are two ways to interpret trust's moderating influence. First, Fishburn (1989) hypothesized that a decision-maker picks an unpredictable and hazardous behavioral choice by evaluating the anticipated significance of the output from conduct, i.e., he analyzes the result of future behavior. Following this, trust determines how somebody perceives the other candidate's past or present behaviors and the motivations that drive such activities (Chassé & Courrent, 2018). Next, according to Blau (1964), individuals will participate in a process that they consider to be conducted fairly (Al-Nasrawi et al., 2018). This interpretation of trust as a belief focuses on self-assurance. As a result, anticipation is formed about the outcome of the action chosen in an unclear scenario (Leonidou & Hultman, 2019).

Because trust maintains a dividing line between anticipations and repurchases from the same supplier or service provider, this study focused on the anticipation concepts of trust. As a result, trust mechanisms can be analyzed as a moderator variable between service quality dimensions as IV and customer loyalty as DV. Because it contains confidential and valuable personal information, banking is a commercial activity requiring a high level of trust (Alnassar & Aloud, 2021). According to a study of the literature, there were no precise investigations in this area on the moderating influence of trust between service quality dimensions on consumer loyalty towards using banking services. There are, however, several researches that look at the role of trust as a moderator in other domains and are relevant to the current study. Qalati et al. (2021), for example, looked at the moderating influence of trust on the connection between the consumer perception of merchant commendation and consumer support behavior via the degree of customer trust in the seller. The findings revealed that trust plays an essential role in the link between IV and DV.

Furthermore, Umans et al. (2021) looked into the moderating role of trust on the connection between conflict and decision-making. The findings showed that trust is a good moderator between disagreement and a conclusion. Additionally, a study explored the importance of trust in regulating the relationship between trust in internet banking services and associated costs, anticipated ease of use, performance expectancy, attitude toward utilizing banking services, and social impact. The study analyzed the replies of 237 individuals. Trust was a moderating factor in the relationship between intention to use banking services and social impact (Fida et al., 2020).

Together with the other elements, trust acts as a moderator. Research, for example, looked into the function of faith and social support in moderating the association between perceived organizational politics and work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and stress. The research highlighted the importance of trust as a moderator between the IV and DVs variables (Park et al., 2020).

In particular, trust is a critical component of many social relationships involving reliance and ambiguity. Banking services are characterized not just by uncertainty but also by vulnerability to disasters, a lack of responsibility, and the danger of financial troubles or debt default. These reasons have increased the importance of risk and trust in banking firms.

The study looked at the variable trust to see how it affects perspective and buyback from the same banking services providers in Saudi Arabia and the expected outcomes. To put it another way, a greater degree of trust among banking consumers indicates a

greater likelihood of using financial services and vice versa. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), A moderator influences the direction or intensity of the link between DV and IV variables. Because of the role of the moderator variable, the connection between the two variables alters in this scenario. Trust is seen as a crucial variable because of its potential to regulate risk in the consumer behavior process. It enables the customers to make risk predictions of what might occur due to a particular decision or the advantage that might be received (Wong & Jensen, 2020). This type of prediction will shape the consumer's behavioral intention toward a service or a product. As a result, the link between service quality and consumer loyalty to utilize financial services in Saudi Arabia is likely to be moderated by the trust variable.

Trust is mainly translated to a ' 'person's willingness to take a chance with an unknown outcome or reveal himself in connection with somebody else (Svensson, 2005). Further, trust is an essential factor in many communal interactivities involving unknown outcomes and reliability (Fida et al., 2020). Trust is perceived as a vital element in financial markets connected to the bank customers to act in a certain way. This behavior reflects bank customers' security in bank service providers (Alnassar & Aloud, 2021; Williams & Spielmann, 2019). Moreover, recent research' discovered that trust is straightforwardly connected with a person'' 's person's adoption of banking services with numerous former researchstudies proving that using banking services is usually affected by 'customers' trust in the banking system (Alalwan et al., 2018). Based on this statement, the researcher hopes to reveal the role of trust as a moderator in the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer loyalty in banking services in Saudi Arabia. In this regard, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H6: The relationship between service quality dimensions tangibility, reliability, responsiveness. assurance and empathy" and ' 'customer's loyalty is moderated by ' 'customer's trust.

Hence, the relationships between the predictor and dependent variables of this study are clarified by the research framework as presented in Figure I.
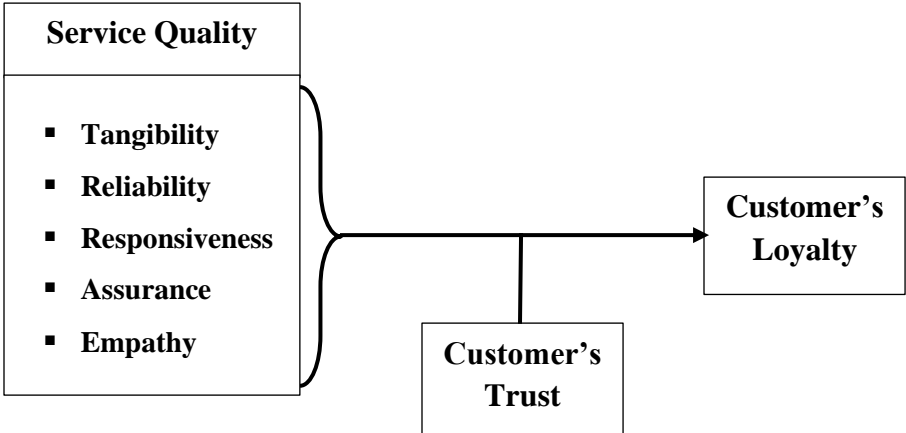

Figure I: *Research Framework*
Source: *prepared by the researchers in light of the study literature.*

4. Methodology

The present study followed a quantitative research design and cross-sectional approach. The data was collected from 340 banking customers in Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia using systemic sampling. The construct of service quality was measured using a multidimensional measure adopted from Purcărea et al. (2013). The dimensions of the service quality scale include tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, and each scale was measured using four, five, four, four and five items, respectively. Similarly, the construct of ' 'customer's trust was measured using five items unidimensional scale (Man, 2006; Svensson, 2005). Finally, the five items scale was used to measure ' 'customer's loyalty (Bobâlcă et al., 2012). All the items were measured using a five-points Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) Strongly agree. For this research, the items were modified to fit the context of this study. The collected data was then analyzed by adopting the partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach using SmartPLS 3.0 software.

Results of Analysis

SmartPLS 3.2.8 was used to do the data analysis on the collected information. It was decided to use PLS to demonstrate the relationship between all latent components while considering measurement errors in the structural model (Russo & Stol, 2021). PLS was chosen for this investigation because of its explanatory nature. According to Ghasemy et al. (2020), the structural model should be studied first before the measurement models are considered. The PLS approach is implemented in an SEM software package known as SmartPLS. SEM is a second-generation multivariate data analysis approach that can assess linear and additive causal models (Russo & Stol, 2021).

PLS is a variant of SEM that strongly emphasizes variance analysis. When using PLS, which is a soft modelling approach to SEM, there are no assumptions about the distribution of data aboutabout the data distribution (Hair Jr et al., 2020). As a result, it is an ideal solution in circumstances where there are multiple problems to solve simultaneously (Manley et al., 2021). PLS, which is concerned with variances, assumes non-parametric predictors. PLS is regarded as reliable regardless of whether the sample size is small or large. To ensure that data presentation is consistent, it is necessary to ensure that parameter estimation is consistent with sample size. Because of its significant level of complexity, it has the highest ability to forecast the future of any system. It is also advantageous to use PLS when a paucity of theory is available. When the model specification is not known, PLS is a better choice than other methods. Formative and reflective constructs can both be incorporated into the same model due to this arrangement.

Measurement Model

A convergent validity test was performed at the outset of the investigation to ensure its validity. All three of these variables were studied in this test: the item loadings, the AVE, and the composite reliability (CR). Data from this investigation are presented in Table I. According to the table above, the item loadings exceeded the Ghasemy et al. (2020) recommended value of 0.7. Regarding the AVE threshold, it is recommended that the AVE be more significant than 0.5 (Ghasemy et al., 2020). An acceptable AVE ranged between 0.552–0.824 in this investigation, which indicates that the data were

accurate. It was also discovered that the reported range of CR values (0.751-0.957) was in agreement with that found by Ghasemy et al. (2020).

Table 1: *Assessment of measurement model*

Construct	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Assurance	Ass1	0.871	**0.923**	**0.945**	**0.811**
	Ass2	0.919			
	Ass3	0.923			
	Ass4	0.888			
Customer's loyalty	CL1	0.904	**0.944**	**0.957**	**0.817**
	CL2	0.924			
	CL3	0.905			
	CL4	0.914			
	CL5	0.871			
Customer's Trust	CT1	0.828	**0.838**	**0.889**	**0.627**
	CT2	0.872			
	CT3	0.849			
	CT4	0.879			
	CT5	0.739			
Empathy	Emp1	0.747	**0.831**	**0.751**	**0.553**
	Emp2	0.701			
	Emp3	0.937			
	Emp4	0.766			
	Emp5	0.852			
Reliability	Rel1	0.767	**0.713**	**0.817**	**0.552**
	Rel2	0.769			
	Rel3	0.826			
	Rel4	0.853			
	Rel5	0.710			
Responsiveness	Res1	0.885	**0.929**	**0.946**	**0.815**
	Res2	0.932			
	Res3	0.948			
	Res4	0.843			
Tangibility	Tan1	0.936	**0.929**	**0.949**	**0.824**
	Tan2	0.914			
	Tan3	0.932			
	Tan4	0.846			

After completing the convergent validity test, the data were subjected to a discriminant validity test to establish its discriminant validity. In 1981, Fornell and Larcker conducted a study on this topic and applied this test, as seen in the literature. When it comes to detecting the lack of discriminant validity in general research scopes, many critics of the Fornell–Larcker criterion believe that it is not defensible because it is not legitimate when it comes to detecting the lack of discriminant validity when the research scope is broad (Ghasemy et al., 2020). According to Alshurideh et al. (2019), an alternate strategy for determining discriminant validity, known as the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, might be used instead of the HTMT ratio. A Monte Carlo simulation study was used to demonstrate the efficiency of HTMT, which the researchers also conducted. This study also tested for discriminant validity using the same method as previously described. According to the rule of thumb employed for the test, HTMT scores should be less than 0.85 (Ghasemy et al., 2020) are deemed to indicate the presence of discriminant validity. Following Table II, the results of the HTMT test complied with and are less than the specified value of 085 (Ghasemy et al., 2020). Consequently, it suggests that both the measurement model's internal consistency and discriminant validity were satisfactory.

Table II: *Assessment of HTMT Criterion for Discriminant Validity*

	Assurance	Customer's loyalty	Customer's trust	Empathy	Reliability	Responsiveness	Tangibility
Assurance							
' 'Customer's loyalty	0.491						
Customer's trust	0.186	0.432					
Empathy	0.739	0.285	0.285				
Reliability	0.158	0.304	0.153	0.225			
Responsiveness	0.26	0.233	0.1	0.165	0.294		
Tangibility	0.332	0.597	0.553	0.265	0.118	0.186	

Structural Model
Specifically, Ali et al. (2019) state that the R2 value measures how well a structural model predicts outcomes. Additionally, Ghasemy et al. (2020) discovered that the R2 can be used to determine the coefficient of determination as well as the level of significance of the path coefficients (beta values) in a regression model study. Each component of service quality and customer trust can account for 31% of the variance in customer loyalty in this study. Following that, the current study estimated the path coefficients of the structural model and conducted a bootstrap analysis to assess whether the results were statistically significant, as described previously. According to the findings displayed in Table III and Figure II, assurance has a statistically significant link with customer loyalty (b = 0.250, p < 0.05). Likewise, the direct relationship of responsiveness (b = 0.155, p < 0.05) and tangibility (b= 0.394, p<0.005). In this study, the moderating effect of customer's trust on the relationship of assurance (b = 0.102, p 0.05), empathy (b = 0.119, p 0.05), reliability (b = 0.110, p 0.05), responsiveness (b = 0.143, p 0.05) and tangibility (b = 0.173, p 0.05) with customer loyalty. Consequently, hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are found to be valid.

Table III: *Hypotheses Testing*

| Hypothesis	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Supported
Assurance -> Customer's loyalty	0.250	0.064	3.877	0.000	YES
Empathy -> Customer's loyalty	0.143	0.072	2.596	0.005	YES
Reliability -> Customer's loyalty	0.229	0.042	5.516	0.000	YES
Responsiveness -> Customer's loyalty	0.155	0.037	2.493	0.003	YES
Tangibility -> Customer's loyalty	0.394	0.049	8.004	0.000	YES
Ass*CT -> Customer's loyalty	0.102	0.059	2.040	0.006	YES
Emp*CT -> Customer's loyalty	0.119	0.059	2.313	0.007	YES
Rel*CT -> Customer's loyalty	0.110	0.045	2.214	0.006	YES
Res*CT -> Customer's loyalty	0.143	0.038	2.126	0.005	YES
Tan*CT -> Customer's loyalty	0.173	0.031	2.324	0.003	YES
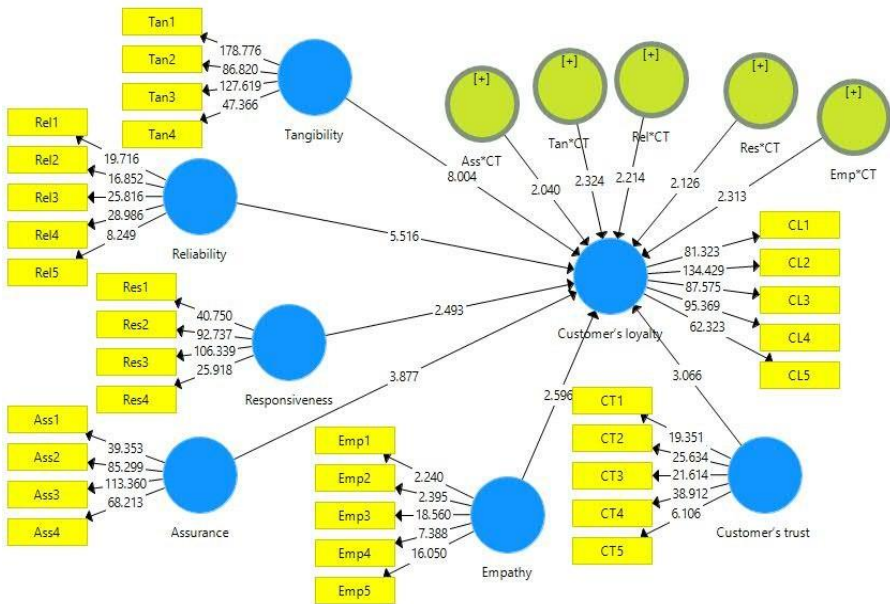
Figure II: *Structural Model Assessment*

5. Discussion

A bootstrap analysis revealed that tangibles had a considerable impact on consumer loyalty. According to Palese and Usai (2018), this outcome is consistent with their findings who stated that the bank should place a higher premium on increasing the efficiency of its self-service terminals than on renovating the building's interior.

Additionally, tangible has established its utility as a criterion for gauging consumer happiness and loyalty. Internet banking has grown in popularity among Saudi Arabia's banks, and the number of users is continuously increasing. It has been established that reliability correlates positively with consumer loyalty. Previous studies, such as Ageeva et al. (2018), support this.

According to the findings, there is a statistically significant association between responsiveness and customer loyalty. According to the author, tAccording to the authors, these findings are consistent with previous findings in other investigations (George, 2018; Rahi & Abd Ghani, 2018). For a bank to be profitable, customer loyalty will be a critical component to consider in its operations. Customers who rely on a specific bank's services view the prospect of switching banks as a threat. Customers are becoming more educated and knowledgeable, and their demand is increasing due to this. Banks must improve their customer service campaigns to remain in business for the long term. A customer retention program, such as a loyalty program, can help keep customers. The entry of international banks into the market has forced local banks to increase the quality of their customer service by hiring more experienced workers to assist customers in their operations.

The results of the hypothesis testing also revealed that empathy has a statistically significant positive link with customer loyalty. Evidence for this is provided by Lee and Park (2019) and Srivastava and Rai (2018), all of whom found the same. According to Lee and Park (2019), creating a friendship between consumers and specific service staff has a significant impact on the development of customer loyalty. This study demonstrates a statistically significant association between assurance and client loyalty, consistent with other studies such as Khamis and AbRashid (2018) and Alolayyan et al. (2018).

Finally, the findings of the study established the significant positive moderating effect of ' 'customer's trust between the relationship of each dimension of service quality, i.e., tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy with customer loyalty. These findings explain that the ' 'customer's trust is an important factor that may strengthen or weaken the relationship of service quality and customer loyalty. These findings align with several prior studies (Diallo et al., 2018; Nyarku et al., 2018; Shankar & Jebarajakirthy, 2019).

6. Conclusion

The present study aims to establish the direct impact of service quality on customer loyalty and an indirect effect (moderation) of customer trust between the formerly described direct relationship. The study was conducted on the banking sector of Saudi Arabia. The study's findings revealed that each dimension of service quality, i.e., tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, directly impact customers loyalty and customer trust have significant moderation between the said relationships. Hence, all the hypotheses of the study are accepted.

7. Research Implications

The findings of the current study have implications for both theory and practice. When it comes to predicting customer loyalty through service quality, this study looked at the

role of ' 'customer's trust. The study's findings add to the existing literature by establishing the moderating role of ' 'customer's trust between the relationship of service quality and customer loyalty. The study has also implications for practice. As far as Saudi banking industry is concerned, the service quality has a significant role in enhancing customer retention by increasing their loyalty towards the institution. Moreover, the banking practitioners should take measures to develop and enhance the 'trust and service quality to enhance the customers' loyalty.

8. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While the aims were met, the current study has some limitations that require further investigation and must be considered when interpreting and generalizing the findings. a. This study utilized a cross-sectional sampling technique, which precluded the identification of a causal link between the variables. To better understand the dynamic relationship between service quality and client loyalty in the banking sector, it is recommended to gather data longitudinally. To begin, our inquiry focused on the Saudi Arabian financial sector. Future research may include more sectors and/or comparisons of data from various types of banking institutions and analysis of other variables to gain a more complete understanding of the complex dynamics from a variety of perspectives.

Acknowledgment

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