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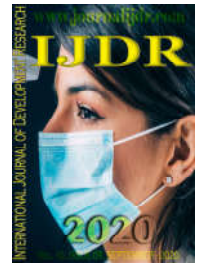
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## INFLUENCING FACTORS FOR THAI CONSUMERS LOYALTY TOWARDS LAZADA IN BANGKOK

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### ABSTRACT

From customer perspective, this research study aims to investigate how Thai customer loyalty towards Lazada is affected by pre-purchase experience of web design and payment methods and post-purchase experience of returns. In addition, this research also aims to identify a relationship between Lazada corporate-image and customer loyalty. Quantitative design by developing questionnaires was applied to collect data through the convenience sampling approach from 428 respondents who live in Bangkok, age 21 years old and above and usually use internet to do some errands such as shopping or pay bills and had shopping experience at least once at Lazada. Multiple regression is employed to identify the variables affecting the customer's loyalty to Lazada in Thailand. The results indicate that only Lazada corporate-image and payment methods have a positive influence on customer loyalty. Meanwhile, corporate image has more effects on customer loyalty than payment methods. However, web design and return policy have no significant influence on customer loyalty.

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### INTRODUCTION

E-commerce has known in Thailand since 2005 from the meeting of E-Marketplace in Thailand ICT Alliance. This meeting was the starting point of the concept of integration of E-commerce entrepreneurs in Thailand (Background of Association, 2016). There was a proven track record and forecast that e-commerce market size in Thailand growth has been moving up 19% from 2014 to 2017. Thailand retail market is expanding at 8.9% annually between 2015 and 2018, and expected to reach US\$155 billion (Frost & Sullivan, 2016). Rocket Internet SE, located in Berlin founded Lazada Group in 2012 (About, 2016). In the same year, Lazada had launched the operation in five countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Lazada is an online shopping site that offers various types of products, ranging from electronics, books, children's toys and baby equipment, medical devices and beauty products, household appliances, and travel and sports equipment. In 2013, Lazada introduced Lazada Express as third-party logistics to provide a last-mile delivery service to support the expansion of Lazada. Singapore operation had launched in 2014 and head quarter is also located here (Our story, 2015). In 2016, there was the biggest overseas deal from Alibaba, the Chinese e-commerce company, who bought stock from other shareholders: Rocket

Internet SE, Tesco PLC and AB Kinnevik (Wang, 2016). Lazada Thailand, a part of Lazada Group, is the biggest online shopping of Thailand. Lazada offers an effortless shopping experience for customers and platform for sellers to enter the biggest marketplace easily (About Lazada Thailand, 2016). Currently, Lazada Thailand operates in 3 main locations in Bangkok for head office, warehouse and logistics. Customer can get an online experience from website, mobile site and mobile application, which provide services ranging from purchasing to refunding. Lazada also provides 24 hours service every day to ensure that customer will get an effortless experience from end to end with assistance from Customer Service team.

Customer loyalty is one of the important parts for Lazada and most businesses. McIlroy & Barnett (2000) stated that, "in a business context loyalty has come to describe a customer's commitment to do business with a particular organization, purchasing their goods and services repeatedly, and recommending the services and products to friends and associates" (Haaften, 2017). Loyalty is built between customer, company, products or brands that are a key element and factor of the company's success (Kandanarachchi, 2014). Also, loyalty is intangible that cannot be seen or measured easily but have a significant impact when evaluating success

(Gamble, 2013). It will make an impact on financial and non-financial benefits to the company towards loyalty program. The benefits of customer loyalty can be explained into five main topics: price competing with competitors, retain existing customers, increase customer lifetime value, build personal relationships and create brand advocates (Five benefits of a Loyalty Program, 2014). It is therefore essential for the company to have a long-term plan to develop and execute in order to increase customer loyalty. Nearly eight years that Lazada has been operating in Thailand, Lazada always welcome new customers and at the same time they may lose customers for some reasons. Until now, however, Lazada still does not have a membership program to encourage promotion activities and privilege to loyal customers. As a consequence, Lazada has no history to diagnose for why some customers stop visiting Lazada website or stop shopping. The potential problem is Lazada still has no insight about customer purchasing behaviors. In long term, if other competitors understand what the reason that customers leave Lazada is, it might be too late for Lazada to maintain a leader position of online marketplace in Thailand.

The longer experience that customers have with Lazada, the more insightful feedback Lazada could get for an improvement. In order to meet customer expectation and maintain relationship, Lazada still has so many things to do in terms of improvement on customer experience and to earn more engagement with customers. As the No. 1 online marketplace in Thailand from 20 million views in 2015 to 78 million views in 2017 (Monthly B2C Web Traffic in Thailand, 2018), Lazada needs to maintain this position among aggressive and new competitors by developing a roadmap based on customers' feedback to retain the current number of customers and gain more new customers. As customer loyalty is crucial for business in highly competitive environment, it is important to investigate factors that related to the brand loyalty and preference. For Lazada, with no owned-product, the corporate-image may represent customers' trustworthy toward Lazada that could impact on customer loyalty. Another two factors that also need to be investigated are pre-purchase and post-purchase experience. These two factors need to be separated because customers will get different experiences and services that are provided by different operation teams in Lazada and business partners.

### Research Objectives

1. To investigate how customer loyalty is affected by Lazada corporate-image.
2. To investigate how customer loyalty is affected by the shopping experience on pre-purchase toward web design and payment method.
3. To investigate how customer loyalty is affected by the shopping experience from post-purchase toward return.

### Hypothesis

- H<sub>1</sub>: Lazada corporate image has a significant influence on customer loyalty.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Web design has a significant influence on customer loyalty.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Payment method has a significant influence on customer loyalty.
- H<sub>4</sub>: Post-experience from return has a significant influence on customer loyalty.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

**Customer Loyalty:** Turban, King, & Lang (2011) stated that customer loyalty refers to a consistency of repurchasing behavior when customers prefer to repeat purchasing from the same brand and willing to be a promoter. Benefits of customer loyalty can be elaborated many ways such as costs saving for marketing and advertising. Transaction, customer turnover expenses, failure costs such as warranty claims can be lower when company could earn more loyalty from customers. The company can also be a leader or survive among aggressive competitors with a support from customer loyalty because price is not a factor for them to change their mind to buy same stuffs from competitors or encourage them to buy at a cheap price only. Word of mouth is also powerful that the company would be advertised at lower costs. In some reasons, customer loyalty in E-commerce may decrease due to customers have more abilities to find product/service, compare price/quality and easily to change mind. By the way, E-commerce may support company in some ways such as customers may buy more when compare with an offline store. According to build customer loyalty, forming a strong customer bonds is really important. Knowing what the company target market is will help company to create better products, services and experiences. Many departments in organization need to plan and manage customer satisfaction and retention process together. Database is also important to keep customers' information in order to support marketing program and develop loyalty program. Furthermore, make it as simple as it could for customers to reach customer service team to listen their needs and provide assistance including complaints handling promptly (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Kotler & Keller (2016) described about marketing activities that improve loyalty and retention in 3 ways; direct connection, loyalty program and fulfill customer's business.

Firstly, connect customers directly with company employees. Customers will feel closely and comfortable to give feedback. By this way, company will get a positive impact of the company's products or services and it can be concrete proved. Secondly, loyalty program or frequency program is developed to give privilege to customers who buy often at a certain or higher amount. The loyalty program will benefit the company to build a long-term relationship with customers and also create sell opportunities. On the other hand, loyalty program will also make the customers feel special and have a good perception with the brand. Club membership is a good example for loyalty program to collect personal information, demographic, purchasing behavior, and basket size. Lastly, company may supply customer's business by providing equipment or networking system for order management. Thus, by this way, customer may not switch easily to competitors due to a major change of processes and may increase capital costs or loss privilege or discount.

**Corporate Image:** Kalb (1992) has explained the definition of corporate image is the same as company's image, firm's image and organization's image. Corporate image is an impression that people have about something at the first or last thought that pops in people's minds when they think of particular firm. When people become firm's customers someday, they may help to refer other potential customers or even help the firm to achieve objectives for more effective and efficiency. One thing that is important, "company's image is easy to lose a good one and hard to shake a bad one" (Kalb, 1992, p.16). Kalb (1992)

also explained that firm's image can be affected with everything such as transgression from personnel, involvement of politics or religion, bad service, etc. In contrast, the situation will turn to a positive side by a donations or CSR that causes worthwhile, good service, good-looking building, etc. Quality of service is one of the key factors that will bring a good image to the firm. The way to offer a greater service to customer is one of the best ways to enhance the firm's image. The two majors' categories of services are provided below: 1) Core service is based on legal services that customer expects to receive from the firm. 2) Peripheral service is referred to other services that customer should receive such as courtesy, promptness, good communication, etc. The firm that could provide an outstanding peripheral service tends to win and keep more customers to spread positive word of mouth referrals (Kalb, 1992).

**Customer Experience:** Watkinson (2013) described that customer experience is a perception that each people will sense it in a different way. It is about feeling. It can be by interaction that customer has with a product or service. The experience that customer received cannot limit within a certain period time. Customer experience is very crucial for business because when customer has a good experience, the business will be able to run with profitability and sustainability. At the end, the company will get customer loyalty in return and willing to support the company by spreading word of mouth in a positive way. On the other hand, what if the company only cares about profit and keep delivering bad experience to the customer and never meet any expectations, the company will soon lose its business. In other point of views, Pennington (2016) described about customer experience in digital era that customer experience is not happen through face to face anymore. When technology put many things into digital, the customer perception has turned to another thing. It is like when compare physical experience and online experience are totally different. As Watkinson (2013) described earlier, customer experience is not what you can set scope or limit a certain period of time and Pennington (2016) also advised that the company should take a longitudinal view of total experience to spot in congruity. Customer can switch channels easily when research more information via online about products and services in order to make a purchase decision.

Unlikely, the physical experience for example, when customer would like to buy a house, customer needs to go and see one place at a time and could not switch to go to another sales gallery easily like online channel. For Lazada, customer experience starts when perceive any information via online such as promotion, advertisement or complaint through community website like Facebook page or once customer starts visiting Lazada website. Customer will get a chance to look around, to find product, to read product description, to add product in the basket and then check out. Furthermore, Lazada has many options of payment methods for customer to select the most convenient way to make a payment. Lazada also has buyer protection policy and satisfaction guarantees which are very important when customer is able to return item within 7 or 14 days after receiving the package with any reasons such as change mind. This is one of the keys that Lazada can provide such good experience to customers while other competitors can only offer buyer protection to customers only when sellers accept and allow customers to return. Moreover, in order to cover an end to end experience, Lazada also provide an easy step to return until get a refund. For

example, customer can drop the return package at the convenient store (7-11) or at Thai Post office with the free of charge of shipping fee and the refund process will proceed right away when Lazada warehouse receives the package ("Help Center," 2017). In this research, customer experience is divided into pre-purchase and post-purchase these two aspects.

**Web Design:** In e-commerce, the website is the channel between consumers and e-retailers, and transactions are usually conducted through the website (DeLone & McLean, 2004). Web design generally consists of layout, color, clear and truly product information, navigation, etc. Some online sellers attract more traffic than others simply because of their effective website design characteristics (Hsu, Chang, Chu, & Lee, 2014). In many studies, web design has been recognized as an important dimension of service quality and is directly or indirectly related to loyalty through satisfaction or trust (Goode & Harris 2007; Caruana & Ewing 2010). Cho and Park (2001) found that the quality of website design strongly influenced the satisfaction of online shoppers, and Wolfenbarger and Gilly (2003) found that website design factors could predict consumers' evaluation of quality, satisfaction and loyalty of online retailers. Kim, Jin and Swinney (2009) found in their research on integrating the development process of loyalty that website design significantly affected customer satisfaction, and customer satisfaction significantly affected the development of customer loyalty. In general, webpage loading speed, aesthetics of the website, website navigation that affects users' convenience should be considered in website design (Verhagen & van Dolen 2009; Ha & Im 2012; Lu et al. 2012).

**Payment:** One thing that very sensitive and important in Electronic Commerce is online payment. At pre-purchase, Turban, King, & Lang (2011) described about payment that there are many types of payment cards such as credit card and debit card. For merchants, there also have many kinds of system to use in order to help them manage and collect money such as own payment software or use point of sale system. Fraudulent and dispute is a significant issue that most merchants have to bear with the costs. The costs include liability for fraudulent transactions, lost merchandise, shipping charges and so on. In order to avoid those costs, many of merchants are willing to spend money on verification processes. For example, address verification, merchants will compare customer's information from the website with the address from the card's holder issuing bank. Manual review can be applied when merchants prefer to rely staff but this method can only be used for small merchants with a small volume of orders.

**Post-purchase Experience:** Pride and Ferrell (2008) explained that buyer would evaluate the product after the purchase. As a result, it will be satisfied or dissatisfied. The comment will be spread out among buyer's network. Cognitive dissonance may occur after buyer purchases an expensive product. It is possible that buyers may feel like they made a wrong decision or they may doubt that it may not worth to purchase the product. Cognitive dissonance will arise a return rate or find more information to compare. Berkowitz (2006) described that the decision-making process does not end when buyer make a purchase. Normally, buyer will receive satisfaction survey from the owner of product or service. The satisfaction score will help marketers to understand more on how to improve, what to improve and increase the repurchase

rate. The post-purchase evaluation will guide management team for a future action or strategy to meet as many as expectations. In this research, post-purchase mainly focuses on return policy. Studies have shown that generous return policies increase sales without increasing the volume of returns. Furthermore, Web Retailer reports that, if your e-commerce business has at least 40% repeat customers, you are likely to have 50% higher sales than online retailers who have 10% repeat purchasers. Sahney, Ghosh and Shrivastava (2013) pointed out that not only commodity information, currency transaction and guarantee of trusted merchants, but also the return policy and warranty sheet displayed on the webpage could stimulate consumers to accept the reliability of e-commerce websites. The return policy for products can be defined as the return of products within a certain period of time, under certain circumstances, by returning cash or store credits from the company (Wood, 2001). Wood (2001) also mentioned that return policy is a way to reduce possible risks and dissatisfaction of consumers. However, it is necessary for retailers to avoid making too loose policies due to high expectations on return rate and cost. Sahney et al. (2013) mentioned that the expectations of customers who want online booking services or purchase products depend on return policies, which develop trust and loyalty to online transactions. Return policies make consumers feel more trustworthy and promote more purchases, leading to an increase in sales and return rates (Wood, 2001). Displaying the company's policies on product return, guarantee and warranties on the e-commerce platform, and ensuring reliable suppliers can build consumer loyalty (Sahney, Ghosh and Shrivastava, 2013). From the previous study literature and present customer's affecting factors, we design a research model as follows. This research model (Figure 1) is designed to verify the factor influencing on customer loyalty towards Lazada in Thailand.

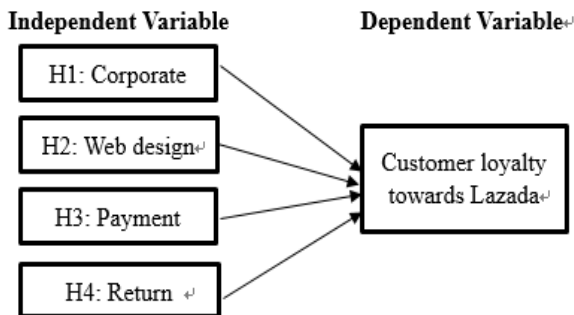


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey questionnaire was developed based upon a comprehensive review of related literature. In order to get the as much as precise answer from respondents, the target population are people who live in Bangkok, age 21 years old and above and usually use internet to do some errands such as shopping or pay bills. Respondents are required to have an experience to do some errands on the internet because researcher wants to distribute questionnaire to whomever familiar with online payment, returning things or refunds. Furthermore, data are collected from respondents who had shopping experience at least once at Lazada in order to analyze the influence factors toward Lazada customer loyalty. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula at a confidence level and error term of 95% and 5%, respectively

(Cochran, 1977). The sample size was 385 after calculating. After the pilot test, a self-administered survey was conducted via online with convenience sampling technique to target populations. After removing all the responses with invalid answers and data cleaning, 428 questionnaires are considered acceptable.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

**Reliability Testing:** Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) suggest that reliability coefficients of 0.70 or higher were acceptable. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  for all scales utilized in the present study are much more than 0.7, which is considered as reliable (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability of construct

Variable	Number of question	Cronbach's Alpha
Corporate Image	6	.933
Web design	6	.904
Payment Methods	6	.931
Return	6	.923
Customer loyalty	6	.925

**Descriptive Analysis:** The majority of respondents are a group of women at age between 21 – 30 years old, graduated in Bachelor's Degree, employed with monthly earnings above 50,000 baht. Normally spending at Lazada around 501-1,500 baht once a month and usually pay by credit card. Most of the respondents know easy return policy and the favorite one is 14 days' easy return policy. The majority of respondents never had a return experience but for those who had, 7 eleven is a favorite choice. More than half of respondents never had refund experience but for those who had, they prefer balance reversal method. The majority of respondents will make a re-purchase at Lazada because of corporate image and payment methods.

## Hypotheses Testing

Table 2. Multiple Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficients		t	Sig.	VIF
	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Beta			
(Constant)	0.333		1.048	0.025	
Corporate Image	0.71	.64	0.54	<b>0.000***</b>	1.00
Web Design	0.40	.27	30.76	0.165	1.12
Payment Methods	0.58	.33	0.63	<b>0.002***</b>	1.14
Return Policy	0.20	.15	0.04	0.103	1.40
F	100.707				
Sig. of F	0.000				
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.836				

Note: Dependent Variable: Perceived Quality, \*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01; \*\*\*P<0.001.

In this study, multiple regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. The VIF value was smaller than cutoff value of 10, indicating no multicollinearity between the variables (Field, 2005). Thus, the model was deemed reliable. As Table 2 shows, corporate image had a significant positive effect on customer loyalty for Lazada ( $\beta = .64$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which means that H1 is fully supported. In terms of H2, the web design had no

effect on customer loyalty for Lazada ( $\beta = .27, p > .05$ ), which means that H2 was rejected. Concerning H3, the impact of payment method had a positive effect on consumers' perceived quality ( $\beta = .33, p < .001$ ), which means that H3 was fully supported. Regards of H5, we find that return policy has no influence on customer loyalty for Lazada ( $\beta = .15, p < .001$ ). Thus, H5 were not supported.

The results of hypotheses		
H <sub>1</sub>	Lazada corporate image has significant influence on customer loyalty	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	Pre-experience from web design has significant influence on customer loyalty.	Rejected
H <sub>3</sub>	Pre-experience from payment methods has significant influence on customer loyalty.	Supported
H <sub>4</sub>	Post-Experience from return has significant influence on customer loyalty.	Rejected

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study is an attempt to investigate the influencing factors for Thai consumers' loyalty towards Lazada from customers' perspective. We tested customers' attitude of four variables, corporate image, web design, payment methods and return. Previous research (Chitramai, 2016; Timcharoen, 2016; Kaenhom, 2014; Jintanasathit, 2014) have studied factors influencing Thai consumer towards shopping online, most of them were focused on product but not service. This research is targeted to only one marketplace, which is Lazada. The study is to explore the experience of pre and post purchase via some services that provided by Lazada that would make an influence toward Lazada loyalty customer. The study showed that Lazada corporate image was the most influence factor on customer loyalty. This finding is consistent with prior research on customer loyalty which shows that corporate image has a positive effect on customer loyalty (Xhema, Metin, & Groumos, 2018). That study suggests that companies should focus on corporate image if they want to create competitive advantage and have higher profit. Besides, Paul, Mensah and Kilika (2014) assessed the relationship between corporate image and customer loyalty and they also found that corporation image significantly predicts customer loyalty in the Mobile Telecommunication Market. Therefore, corporation image is an essential factor for Lazada platform to keep their customers. Additionally, pre-experience from payment method also has a positive influence on Thai consumers' loyalty towards Lazada in this study. This finding is in line with prior study which suggests that payment convenience could positively influence consumption experience, leading to improved customer satisfaction and strengthen customer loyalty (Mahapatra, 2017). Bernardo et al. also investigated the impact of improving payment method on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the context of online shopping. Payment method convenience was found positively related to customer satisfaction. However, web design and return these two factors have no significant influence on customer loyalty in this study.

**Implications:** The findings of this study have highlighted a few insights for Lazada. The first is payment method. For attitude test in this research, the majority of Lazada's customers only rate 3 and 4 in Likert scale for payment methods, which means Lazada needs to pay attention to improve and increase satisfaction and in hypothesis testing shown that experience from payment methods has significant influence on customer loyalty. As a result, it provided an insight that allow Lazada platform manager to understand

the importance of payment method for customer. Normally, Lazada has 2 options to place an order which are guest check out when customers don't log in and normal check when customers logged in. Customers will have different experience when try these two types of check out. Meanwhile, if they are not a big fan of Lazada, they may not even know that Lazada has another option of payment methods which is Lazada Wallet. Customers will only see Lazada Wallet option only when they log in. That will discourage customers and make a bad image for Lazada platform. What Lazada could improve at this part is that it should put Lazada Wallet as an option for both guest checkout and normal checkout, letting customers see more options. Besides, the verification steps are not that convenience and it takes time in Lazada when customer made purchase behavior. First, customer start with log in and go to their account. Then, Lazada will lead customer to verify by both email and mobile number via SMS. Once customers got verified, they still need to top up before making a purchase. This is quite inconvenience that customers need to be verified and put personal information twice. Moreover, customers will only know about how to register and activate wallet account when visit Lazada Pay website and only Thai language is available. Customers will suffer from this kind of inconvenience. Therefore, if Lazada would like to show wallet option to whoever login first then, verification step is unnecessary or verify only via SMS would be found because when customers first register, they also get an email verification. Lazada should try their best to change those inconvenience about payment, encouraging customers to use different payment methods to improve and satisfy customers' shopping experience on Lazada.

In addition, the findings of the current study indicated that there is a significant relationship between corporate image and customer loyalty, which indicating corporate image is one of the most important stimulator on loyalty of customers towards Lazada. These findings mean that Lazada should enhance shopping experience and corporation image to retain customers, meanwhile, to acquire new customers. Thus, Lazada needs to pay attention to improve and increase satisfaction of customers. Quality of service is one of the key factors that will bring a good image to the firm. Besides, marketers should be aware that it is important for customer to increase Lazada image to shopping easily at Lazada. Meanwhile, if customers feel to shopping at Lazada is better than other e-commerce brands, their loyalty for Lazada will strengthen. Actually, when compare Lazada to other competitors such as 11 Street or Shopee, there are no differences in terms of categories for promotions. However, regards to payment methods, Shopee could not offer installment option, 11 Street does not have their own wallet while Lazada has everything. For return policy, only Lazada could offer easy return within 7 or 14 days without asking seller permission. Therefore, each corporation in Lazada needs to maintain its own advantages and create more value and better corporation image for their customers to enhance consumer loyalty.

**Limitations and Recommendations for further study:** Firstly, Lazada provides an online service on 3 different channels: website, mobile site and mobile application. Since this study focused only website. At this point, customers will get different experience from each channel. If future researcher study and collect data from respondents who had a shopping experience from mobile site and mobile application, the result

might be different. Secondly, in this research, the author only focused on corporate image, web design payment methods, and return. There are still more factors to find out such as cancellation, fulfillment, delivery service or customer service for future study. Thirdly, we only focused on respondent who had shopping experience at least once at Lazada. Also, who age 21 years old and above and usually use internet to do some errands such as shopping or pay bills. In order to get more variety and accurate result, the questionnaire could be distributed to another province and remote areas such as island. Behavior is also importance. The researcher only focused on who usually use internet to do some errands such as shopping or pay bills because these people may not have a hard time to shopping on online platform. Lastly, we use only quantitative methods with close-ended questions and scale. Therefore, open opinion and suggestion from respondents are necessary to find more inputs on what would be the influence factors toward Lazada's customer loyalty. For future study, the findings from this study could be a starter point to collect an open-ended response from respondents.

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