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Title : THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICESCAPE, EXPERIENTIAL VALUES, SELF-IMAGE CONGRUITY AND LOYALTY INTENTION OF CUSTOMERS TOWARDS DEPARTMENT STORES IN MALAYSIA

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The changing lifestyles of consumers are altering the way they shop and the kinds of experiences they seek when shopping. In particular, the increasing significance of e-commerce and the advancement of internet technology have a direct and fast impact in the multiplicity of goods offerings, designs of the websites, services, and various aspects of information. Despite the advancement of technology that has induced a large majority of consumers to shop online, there are still those who prefer the experience of shopping at the store where they can see, feel, and touch the goods they are buying and experience the environment when shopping. It is on this premise that this study is envisaged to determine whether environmental cues brought about by servicescape developments of department stores in Malaysia do induce loyalty intention among the shoppers. Using experiential values and self-image congruity as the mediating variables, this study addresses the extent that loyalty intention of shoppers to department stores in Malaysia are influenced by servicescape dimensions in getting them to re-patronize or to shop again at specific department stores, thus inferring loyalty intention. Although a few previous studies have addressed the linkage between servicescape and loyalty intention, none has actually integrated experiential values and self-image congruity as mediating variables in the relationship. This study has extended current studies by addressing the mediating effects of experiential values and self-image congruity into the model that linked servicescape with loyalty intention. Focusing on prominent department stores in Malaysia that are anchor tenants in well-known shopping malls in urban centers in Malaysia, 560 questionnaires were distributed through the mall intercept method to customers of Aeon and Parkson department stores in four geographical zones representing the northern, central, southern and east malaysia. In total, 558 usable questionnaires were obtained and the analysis proceeded with both descriptive analysis and inferential analysis to test the model that was developed. Smart pls 2.0 m3 was used to assess and test the structural model. The findings indicate that among three constructs (servicescape, experiential values, and self-image congruity) total effect of servicescape has the strongest effect (0.692) on loyalty intention. The inclusion of experiential value in the conceptual model tells us that it is an extremely significant in displaying a mediating influence on the relationship between servicescape and loyalty intention. Furthermore, there is partial mediation effect of self-image congruity between servicescape and loyalty intention. The overall findings of the study display a conclusive model that shows that loyalty intention is directly influenced by servicescape of department stores. Experiential values are influenced directly by servicescape and also acts as a mediator in the relationship between servicescape and self-image congruity. It also mediates the relationship between servicescape and loyalty intention. It was also found that self-image congruity influenced servicescape directly and also acts as a mediator in the relationship between servicescape and loyalty intention. This study has established the importance of not only servicescape for department stores but also stresses the importance of creating experiential values that are in line with the image of the customers. Future studies should also look at servicescape implications in other contextual situations especially in the service industry and to incorporate more technological dimensions in the measurement of servicescape to allow for the inclusion of retail technology in the servicescape implementations.