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PERSONAL SHOPPER

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

By:

Faizatul Akmam Amirrudin and Nik Noor Afizah Azlan
FBM UiTM Cawangan Selangor
FBM UiTM Cawangan Terengganu

Corresponding email: akmamamir671@uitm.edu.my

The Internet age has changed the way people buy things. Online shopping has become commonplace for many people all around the world as the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the phenomenon. Some customers prefer to do online shopping, while others prefer to use an online personal shopper to shop instead. In Malaysia, an increasing number of people have become personal shoppers, either full-time or part-time, owing to the availability of social-media platforms and the increased demand from local consumers (mystarjob, 2017). When Malaysians have been under MCO from 2020 to 2021, many stores and malls have been forced to close, requiring customers to shop with online personal shoppers as it is more convenient to buy groceries, household items, clothing, cosmetics, or even furniture.

What Is Personal Shopper?

A personal shopper is someone who assists someone with his or her shopping (Crystal, 2022). Although personal shoppers can shop for anything, including groceries and furnishings, the majority of them purchase apparel and accessories for their customers. While others work for boutiques or department shops that provide personal shopping services, some personal shoppers are employed directly by customers or their personal stylists (Masterclass, 2021). Some are freelancers who have a huge interest in shopping and transform their habits into shopping services for others. Online personal shoppers, on the other hand, are those who look for products from Internet-based businesses, and the majority of online personal shoppers work for companies that provide styling assistance, shopping, and cleaning services (Francois, 2022). Personal shoppers tend to specialise in particular categories of merchandise (e.g., streetweares) and have designated shopping

areas or targeted stores (e.g., Pavilion KL/Genting Highlands Premium Outlets), which help customers to understand what products those personal shoppers can and cannot buy (Phang, 2021).

Who Can Be a Personal Shopper and What Are the Requirements?

Anybody can be a personal shopper, but most importantly, he or she should have a passion for shopping! No formal academic qualifications are needed to become a personal shopper. Great communication skills, good time management, computer literacy, and professionalism are among qualities that will make an excellent personal shopper. According to Nurfarahin Rosli, a full-time personal shopper, physical and emotional strength, as well as patience, are also required to provide excellent service to customers.

When Can We Use Personal-Shopper Services?

Many customers use personal-shopper services when they do not have time, interest, or opportunity to shop for themselves. As Malaysians are living with COVID-19, some people are still afraid to do their own shopping despite the government's many relaxations on COVID-19 restrictions. Hence, a personal shopper is a life saver! Personal shoppers are extremely useful during sales and festive seasons. Some customers want to buy branded or international products that are not available locally, so they hire personal shoppers who travel overseas to do so. Meanwhile, Personal shoppers with a base in other countries are also available for international products, which is great, especially for those who crave for what is beyond the border.

Where Can We Get Personal-Shopper Services?

Personal-shopper services are available in Malaysia at some department stores, such as AEON, Jaya Grocer, and Lotus's. Many personal shoppers work independently as freelancers. These freelancers use platforms, such as Instagram, Telegram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Whatsapp, and some of them may even advertise their own services on websites.

Why Do Customers Use Personal Shoppers?

The most important reason people use personal-shoppers is to save time, as shopping takes time and energy. As a result, this burden is transferred to personal shoppers for these errands. Second, money is spent wisely because personal shoppers can find and tell us the best price available for products and tailor them to customers' budgets. Third, because they have experience in the field, personal shoppers know where to shop and which brands to choose. Fourth, they are also up-to-date on outlets that offer sales and discounts and some of them have membership cards on certain brands, which allow them to obtain even better discounts.

How Is the Personal-Shopper Service Process?

In Malaysia, the basic seven steps are needed to complete the process of getting personal-shopper services. It starts with getting in touch with a personal shopper via his or her social-media platform(s). Communication and understanding between both parties are critical at this point in order to determine the personal shopper's ability to do shopping. Following that, an order is placed with specific specifications, such as colours, size, price range, and brand names required. If buyers are unsure about products they want to purchase, some personal shoppers may request that the buyers send photos. The

next phase is getting a price quote. After the personal shopper confirms that the item requested is available or can be reasonably purchased, a price that includes service fees will be provided. Then, if the customer accepts the quote, payment can be made partially or full via bank transfer. Fifth, the purchase is made at the designated outlets. Some personal shoppers may provide customers with live updates so they themselves can witness the shopping process. If the items are not available, then the personal shopper will notify the customers immediately and offer them two options; cancelling and refunding or looking into other alternative items. Next, every order is checked and accounted for to ensure that no goods are mixed up. Finally, the items are carefully wrapped and posted via courier or hand-delivered.

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Faculty of Business and Management
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Terengganu, Kampus Dungun
Sura Hujung, 23000 Dungun, Terengganu, MALAYSIA
Tel: +609-8400400
Fax: +609-8403777
Email: biznewzuitm@gmail.com