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MODELLING PREDICTORS AND OUTCOMES OF TOTAL ISLAMIC EXPERIENCE QUALITY IN AN INDIAN MUSLIM RESTAURANT AMONG MUSLIM URBAN MILLENNIALS

SYAHARIZAH BINTI ABDUL AZIZ

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ABSTRACT

The concept of customer experience is a crucial differentiator in today's marketplace. The food service business, therefore, needs to embrace this concept to sustain itself longer in the industry. In a restaurant setting, customer experience is depicted as a customer's holistic perceptions and emotions when interacting with the restaurant environment. Despite the significance of theory and practices, customer experience from Islamic perspectives remains unexplored. With the amplification of the Muslim population, higher disposable income and the proliferation of Islamic lifestyles based on faith, this new concept is seen as a guiding impetus for restaurateurs to access the Malaysian Muslim market. Moreover, as of now, it is inconclusive as to which factors influence Muslim customer experience and the impact on behaviour response in the restaurant. Drawing from this, the study devised a system approach coined as Total Islamic Experience Quality and modelled the predictors and outcomes in the context of Indian Muslim restaurants. The framework adopts the Stimuli-Organism-Response paradigm as the backbone of the study. The Total Islamic Experience Quality measurement metric was built based on the emotional state model of Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance and modified accordingly by integrating a new spiritual dimension. The study hypothesised four predictors: Spiritual Intelligence, Halal Literacy, Islamic Restaurant Image, and Islamic Retail Experiential Value. The conceptual model was tested and validated from the perception of Muslim Urban Millennials in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Primary data were collected from the sample of 401 respondents using the quota sampling and restaurant intercept technique. The data were analysed using Structural Equation Modelling. The findings revealed that four of the eight paths postulated were in the right direction, lending support to the research hypotheses. The result implies that Islamic Retail Experiential Value was the sole predictor of Total Islamic Experience Quality leading to Emotional Attachment and Customer Loyalty. Additionally, the study developed a new hypothesised model of Islamic Retail Experiential Value. Two new dimensions, namely Islamic values and social values, were incorporated into the conventional typology. The empirical evidence confirmed the model had achieved a psychometrically sound instrument. In sum, the study has contributed to the body of Islamic marketing literature and provided specific mindsets for restauranteurs targeting the Muslim millennial group. Implications and suggestions are discussed, and future research directions are recommended.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

The introductory chapter commences with a research background that discusses the conceptual foci of customer experience and the need to conceptualise it through an Islamic perspective. It further discusses the research problems from contextual and theoretical perspectives leading to formulating the research questions and objectives. This chapter also presents the scope of the study, its significance, and a synopsis of the Malaysian halal food industry. Subsequently, this chapter concludes with the conceptual definitions and a summary of the thesis as a pathway to guide the reader.

1.2   Background of The Study

In the twenty-first century, stiff competition in the food and service industry imposes great burdens on restaurants attempting to distinguish their service offerings. In such a situation, where the role of the traditional marketing mix might be eroded, customer experience has become a powerful tool in driven business innovation (Chi, Paramita, & Quan, 2021; Keiningham, Aksoy, & Bruce, 2020; Fokina & Barinov, 2019). Customer experience has been acknowledged as one of the unique assets for brand and business differentiators (Kim & So, 2022; Roggeveen & Rosengren, 2022; Mcallister, Pagel, & Powell, 2020; Gupta, 2016). Moreover, as customers are geared toward value-driven, relationships with businesses and brands become their primary concern (Gronroos, 2017). This implies that businesses must acquire, preserve, and use customer experience data to get closer to forming a long-term relationship (Kennedy, Zaki, Lemon, Urmetzet, & Neely, 2018; Bagdare, Aagja, & Jain, 2017). Instead, this causes a conflict if businesses fail to connect with customers in a manner that resonates with customer needs and expectations.

Contemporary research has regarded customer experience to be an empowering instrument and the driving force for business development and prosperity (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Since the emergence of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), many practitioners have focussed on delivering an experience-based product,