

Faculty Research in Practice

Measuring Perceived Value of Shopping Malls: The Muslim shoppers' perspective

by

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Introduction to the Research in Practitioner Terms

Customer perceived value has received much attention from marketing scholars and practitioners over the last three decades, however, still a hot topic in the marketing literature. Holbrook (2006) views that customer value is subjective and contextual in nature and based on the consumption experience that varies from one person to another when he/she interacts with a specific object in a specific situation. Therefore; there is a need to move from thinking of customers as isolated entities to understanding them in the context of their own networks, backgrounds and religions.

Meanwhile, there are new trends and developments such as the investment and adoption of business practices based on the Islamic principles of Shari'ah "Islamic law". For example, Essoo and Dibb (2004) found that religion influences customer behavior among Hindus, Muslims and Catholics. Weidenfeld and Ron (2008) also found that religion influences the destination choice, tourist product favourites, and selection of religious opportunities and facilities offered. Laderlah et al. (2011) reported the various features and popular destinations of Islamic tourism as practiced in Malaysia. Meng et al. (2008) found that customers select destinations that are supposed to best fulfill their internal desires or preferred destination attributes. Finally, Zamani-Farahani and Musa (2012) explored the influence of Islamic religiosity on the perceived socio-cultural impacts of tourism among residents in two tourist areas in Iran.

Undoubtedly, although academics have built considerable theoretical knowledge on the conceptualization of perceived value, research about its true meaning that applies to different customer groups is still few. Very little is known about what makes up value for different customer groups that come from various cultural backgrounds (e.g., Muslims). Understanding values must be seen in local contexts as type of "Glocalization" (Robertson, 1994; Salazar, 2005) and call for a dramatic change that moves the concept of value-in-use to a more descriptive "value-in-context" concept (Vargo, 2009).

However, although Muslims make up one of the largest markets in the world as Muslim population constitutes an international market of 2.1 billion possible customers (Muslim population worldwide, 2013), the world's Muslim population is projected to grow by about 35% between 2010 and 2030 (Jafari and Scott, 2013), and marketing scholars have long studied “perceived value” and proposed various conceptualizations of the term (Holbrook 1994; Peterson, 1995; Gronroos, 1996; Dumond, 2000; Petrick, 2002; Benkenstein et al., 2003; Oh, 2003; Kwun, 2004; Dumand and Mattila, 2005; Gallarza and Saura, 2006; Sanchez et al., 2006; Nasution and Mavondo, 2008; Roig et al., 2009), perceived value of shopping malls targeting this market segment has not been clearly defined. Furthermore, earlier literature focused only on studying customer perceived value at the product/brand level or at the store level. Very few studies consider customer perceived value at the mall level.

Therefore, further explorations are needed to broaden the concept as they should fit to the needs and expectations of Muslim customers. Islamic marketing also is still in its infancy stage and yet not well established for many researchers as there is a great need for having more well-established studies that can be considered as a step toward a theory building in the field of Islamic marketing (Al-Hamarneh and Steiner, 2004; Scott and Jafari, 2010; Kalesar, 2010; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson 2010; Henderson, 2008; 2011).

To bridge this gap various conceptual and empirical studies investigating the concepts of perceived value were studied. Their findings highlight the fact that on top of the traditional dimensions that help in creating value for shoppers, there are more factors that have a direct impact on successful creation of value for Muslim mall shoppers (i.e., Muslim MALLVAL). Model, definitions, techniques and discussion of these factors and how could they affect Muslim MALLVAL are described in the following sections.

Relevant and Short Literature Review on Importance of Research

Based on review of literature and a focus group of nine Muslim mall shoppers from different ages, genders, nationalities, and income in the UAE, we conceptualize Muslim MALLVAL as multidimensional construct comprising 9 shopping values namely hedonic value, utilitarian value, self-gratification value, epistemic value, transaction value, social interaction value, spatial convenience value, time convenience value and the Islamic value.

Firstly, in conceptualizing the hedonic value, 7 items were captured from Babin et al. (1994); Diep and Sweeney (2008); Seo and Lee (2008). Utilitarian value was captured by 10 items adapted from Babin et al. (1994); Diep and Sweeney (2008). Self-gratification value was captured by 4 items adapted from Babin et al. (1994); Arnold and Reynolds (2003); Seo and Lee (2008); Davis and Hodges (2012). Epistemic value was captured by 5 items adapted mainly from Davis and Hodges (2012). Social interaction value was captured by 3 items adapted mainly from Kim (2002); Davis and Hodges (2012). Spatial convenience value was captured by 6 items adapted mainly from Reimers and Clulow (2004); Ahmed et al. (2007); Khare (2011). Time convenience value was captured by 5 items adapted mainly from Ahmed, et al. (2007); Clulow and Reimers (2009b); Khare (2011). Transaction value was captured by 5 items adapted mainly from Lim (2009); Davis and Hodges (2012).

Secondly, in conceptualizing the Islamic value, three main sources were used for this purpose; Qur'an (Islam's holy book) and the Sunnah, and a thorough review of the literature in which the variable is

used theoretically or empirically (Hashim et al., 2007; Stephenson et al., 2010; Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010; Battour et al., 2011; Eid, 2013; Zamani-Farahani and Musa, 2012).

Based on the above discussions, two conclusions can be introduced to help in building an effective scale to measure Muslim MALLVAL. Firstly, the view of perceived value as a cognitive variable is not enough, since it is necessary to incorporate the affective component. Secondly, Muslim customer evaluates not only the traditional aspects of value (cognitive and affective components) but also the religious identity related aspects that contribute to the value creation. This overall vision underlies the multidimensional approach to Muslim MALLVAL.

Major Findings of Study

This study represents the first attempt in the consumer perceived value literature in the mall context from Muslims' perspective to fill these theoretical and practical gaps by developing and validating a multidimensional scale that consists of different constructs. We named this parsimonious and practical scale Muslims MALLVAL. It makes a number of contributions to the study of consumer perceived value. Previous studies mostly examined consumer perceived value at the product/brand level or at the store level. There has been little empirical research that examines perceived value of mall shopping. Moreover, this study represents the first attempt to explore the consumer perceived value of malls from the Muslim shoppers' perspective. In addition to the common values that could be required by any mall shopper regardless his/her religion, Muslims require additional value that is derived from Islamic doctrine, shari'ah, and rituals.

The reliabilities, factor structure and validity tests indicate that the items of the Muslims MALLVAL scale and its nine dimensions have sound and stable psychometric properties. The scale demonstrates that Muslim shoppers of malls assess the shopping experience, not just in functional terms of expected quality of the shopping experience; but also in terms of providing intangible attributes that are gained from the shopping experience as well as the Islamic attributes of the mall.

Implications of Findings for Practitioners

A Muslim mall shopper's decision should not be seen from a purely rational point of view. The experiential view provides new keys to the valuation made by Muslim mall shopper and therefore to the most important attributes that will later affect their buying behavior. The availability of such values (hedonic, utilitarian, self-gratification, epistemic, social interaction, spatial convenience, transaction, time convenience, and Islamic) is considered very important when a Muslim shopper decides to shop in a specific mall. Therefore, the shopper may not select a particular mall based on the absence of such values.

Summary on Practical Ways Managers Can Use Findings 5

With regard to the business implications, recognition of the importance of the different dimensions of Muslims MALLVAL should enable retail industry to develop more sophisticated positioning strategies. Our results show the importance of different attributes on mall shopper's willingness to shop in a specific mall normally considered as functionally and affectively oriented. This has substantial implications for marketing strategy. For example, malls should develop a shopping environment that provides the different values that make MALLVAL for Muslims. In addition, the Islamic value components are related to the development of Islamic-oriented shopping environment as the absence

of Islamic attributes at the shopping mall may be a source of worry to themselves and those with whom they interact (Eid, 2013).

From a theoretical point of view, therefore, this study supports the experiential view proposed by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). This means that the cognitive (i.e., utilitarian, epistemic, spatial convenience, time convenience values), the affective (i.e., hedonic, self-gratification, transaction, and social interaction) and Islamic values components play a fundamental role in explaining the decision of the Muslim mall shoppers.

References

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