

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE MIX MARKETING AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY TOWARDS UMRAH TRAVEL AGENCIES AMONG NERIDA RESIDENTS IN DENAI ALAM

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ABSTRACT

The factors influencing customer loyalty among residents in Denai Alam who had gone with Umrah travel agencies and experienced the services are the subject of the present study, about the relationships between three factors of service marketing mix: people, process, and physical evidence, and customer loyalty. This research adopted a quantitative approach, and the required data were collected by distributing questionnaires among the sample respondents who are residents of Nerida, Denai Alam. Findings prove that all three factors have significant and positive relationships with customer loyalty, and the process has the highest result among the three. The results further affirm the crucial role of efficient service delivery, professional interactions of the staff, and a well-maintained physical environment in fostering customer loyalty. Such revelations are useful to Umrah service providers intending to enhance customer satisfaction and induce repurchase intentions. Based on these findings, the research concludes with recommendations for serving the customers through operational excellence, continuous training of the staff, and the maintenance of high standards in the physical evidence that the service creates, to build and sustain customer loyalty.

Keywords: process, physical evidence, customer loyalty, umrah travel agencies

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As new organizations enter the industry and offer similar products and services, the business market is snowballing and becoming more competitive (Othman et al., 2019). Companies have difficulty maintaining and retaining their existing customers as customers switch from one brand to another. Malaysian Umrah travel agencies are rapidly growing in demand as more and more Muslims seek to fulfill their spiritual desires and complement their tours through Umrah travel agencies (Othman et al., 2019). By offering diverse products and services and increasing customer satisfaction, this paper aims to assist Umrah travel agencies specifically among Nerida residents in Denai Alam in improving their revenues. A travel agency can be classified into two categories: 1) general travel agency and 2) travel agency for Hajj and Umrah (Othman et al., 2019). An Umrah travel agency provides spiritual travel services such as the Umrah package, while the general travel agency arranges trips for regular events like holidays. Umrah is a pilgrimage that resembles the Hajj (Othman et al., 2019).

Marketing is a targeted series of actions that consumers remember, that fosters customer relationships, and is advantageous to businesses (Othman et al., 2019). Organizations can accomplish their goals by increasing sales and profits by implementing marketing mix practices. The “price, product, promotion, place, processes, people, and physical evidence” components of the service marketing mix are how this is achieved (Dinamika & Author, 2024). Businesses and organizations can persuade their current clients to continue doing business with them and become devoted patrons by knowing the components of the marketing mix (Moshin et al., 2020). In light of this, the travel tour sector for Umrah can also leverage the components of the marketing mix to force and persuade clients to purchase Umrah services or a package from them rather than from their rivals (Othman et al., 2019). An organization can shape the nature of its offer to customers by utilizing a set of tools called the marketing mix (Adrian Palmer et al., 2014). Nonetheless, knowledgeable marketers are aware of the four Ps: place, promotion, pricing, and product. The initial examination of marketing mix components by Borden (1965) was predicated on an examination of the manufacturing sector during a period when the significance of services to the economy was deemed to be comparatively insignificant (Adrian Palmer, et al., 2014).

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Service providers in the Umrah sector struggle to keep clients and foster enduring loyalty despite the rising number of Umrah pilgrims. A high percentage of client attribution can be attributed to various factors, including inconsistent service quality, insufficient customer care, and tailored experiences. This calls for a thorough comprehension and calculated approach to increasing client loyalty. For example, Syarikat Straits Central Agencies (B) Sdn Bhd (SCA), which was founded in 1967 and was a well-known brand in the local travel industry with a solid track record and enduring business relationships with all the airlines, was purchased by the Adinin Group of Companies and has since been offering top-notch travel services to the Bruneian market.

SCA's solid knowledge base and adept management have allowed the travel agency to establish a stellar reputation for providing clients with top-notch services. The company's philosophy is to provide the best possible services to all of its clients through competitive pricing and product offerings, while also adhering to industry standards for dependability and integrity. With 57 years of experience in the outward and inbound travel industry globally, SCA has established itself as a top tour operator. From this story, Umrah travel agencies in Malaysia could learn from SCA to develop a travel company that serves top-notch services to clients by examining the marketing mix and which element of the marketing mix is important to increase customer loyalty.

Customer loyalty is essential for any business to succeed over the long run, including Malaysian travel agencies that arrange trips for Hajj and Umrah (Haq & Wong, 2010). These organizations work in a very competitive market where different service providers compete to draw in and keep clients (Harun, 2018). Even though the Umrah services have a religious significance, which ensures a steady demand for these services, the caliber variety of services provided can greatly impact customer loyalty (Haq & Wong, 2010).

However, in the context of Umrah travel agencies, there is a lack of knowledge regarding how various components of the service marketing mix – such as product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence – affect customer loyalty (Philip Kotler, Kevin Lane Keller, Swee Hoon Ang,

Siew Meng Leon, & Chin Tiong Tan, 2009). While marketing mix models are widely studied across industries, few studies delve into how these components directly impact the loyalty of customers who seek spiritual travel services like Umrah.

For instance, customers engaging with Umrah agencies may prioritize different factors, such as the authenticity of the experience, the agency's understanding of religious requirements, or the quality of personalized service, which differ significantly from factors that drive loyalty in general tourism or travel agencies. However, existing research does not fully address these unique expectations and how each element of the marketing mix can be effectively tailored to meet them.

Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence examining the cultural and religious aspects that may shape customer perceptions and loyalty. This is particularly important for Umrah travel agencies in competitive markets, where customers may switch providers based on nuanced differences in service offerings. Understanding how the marketing mix can be optimized to meet the specific expectations of Umrah customers can provide valuable insights for these agencies to foster lasting customer loyalty.

By investigating the effects of these components of the service marketing mix on client loyalty to Umrah travel agencies, this study seeks to close this gap. These agencies must comprehend these dynamics to create marketing plans that draw in clients and encourage steadfast loyalty (Othman et al., 2019). Through this study, travel agencies will be able to allocate their resources better and enhance their overall service offerings by learning which elements of the service marketing mix have the greatest impact on retaining customers.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Regardless of discipline, the foundation of all academic research activities is based on and connects your research to existing knowledge. Therefore, it should be the top goal for all academics to do so accurately (Snyder, 2019). But this has become a more difficult task. In the field of business research, knowledge production is continuing to be interdisciplinary and fragmented, but it is also accelerating at an incredible rate (Snyder, 2019). This makes it challenging to stay on the cutting edge of research, to stay current, and to evaluate the body of evidence in a given field of study (Snyder, 2019). For this reason, the literature review is more important than ever as a research methodology. In general, a literature review is a more or less systematic method of gathering and synthesizing prior research (Snyder, 2019).

This chapter provides a literature review through a critical look at the existing research relevant to the study. The literature review is done by consulting other researchers to understand and investigate the problem of the study. This overview is important to illustrate what insights and ideas were gained in this study

3.1 Theory

Loyalty – derived from the English word loyal, which means faithful and loyal – is above all, an optimistic outlook towards the company's buyer (Kiseleva et al., 2016). Customer loyalty is the feeling they have for you even when there are other, more financially advantageous offers available (Kiseleva et al., 2016). The primary distinction between loyalty and satisfaction is that the former is the outcome of certain, frequently subconsciously felt elements, while the latter is a rational assessment (Kiseleva et al., 2016).

In the hospitality sector, customer loyalty is a crucial factor in determining long-term success (Dinamika & Author, 2024). Customers loyal to you offer a consistent source of income and are less susceptible to price adjustments (Dinamika & Author, 2024). Customer loyalty was defined by (Garland & Gendall, 2004) as the strength of the correlation between a person's relative attitude and business (Dinamika & Author, 2024).

Since acquiring new customers is far more expensive for electronic vendors (e-vendors) than it is for comparable, traditional brick-and-mortar stores, keeping current customers is crucial to their bottom line (Lin & Luarn, 2003). One of the most important management challenges of our time is still figuring out how or why a customer develops a sense of loyalty in the process of building brand equity (Lin & Luarn, 2003). According to (Aaker, 1991), he made a particular mention of the benefits that come with brand loyalty in terms of lower marketing expenses, an increase in the number of new

clients, and increased trade power. Building consumer loyalty is viewed as the key to gaining market share and creating a sustainable competitive advantage in increasingly competitive markets (Lin & Luarn, 2003). Though the marketing literature has acknowledged the value of brand loyalty for at least thirty years (Lin & Luarn, 2003).

According to an analysis of the literature that is currently available, customer loyalty is currently available, customer loyalty is a multifaceted, intricate concept with a variety of definitions (and no unambiguous agreement on anyone) (Hawkins & Vel, 2013). A few academics have defined loyalty as the ability to make repeat purchases over time, with additional indicators included in definitions, and probability of purchase (Hawkins & Vel, 2013). These definitions highlight the behavioural aspects of customer loyalty. Numerous other authors have concentrated on the attitudinal dimensions of loyalty, including favorable disposition, relative attitude, top-of-mind recall, repurchase intentions, psychological attachment, strong advocacy, and availability of choices (Garland & Gendall, 2004). Scholars have also attempted to define loyalty by fusing two or more of its characteristics.

Customer loyalty is defined as the practice of making repeat purchases and the affirmative comments that customers leave for a business that offers top-notch goods and services (Sudari et al., 2019). According to (Konečnik Ruzzier et al., 2014), acquiring new customers comes with far higher costs than keeping current ones. While devoted customers will be reluctant to purchase a product from a different business, they will encourage others to buy the goods. Additionally, loyal customers are more likely to respond favorably to goods and services (Sudari et al., 2019). For service businesses looking to survive and grow their competitiveness, customer loyalty is critical (Skačkauskienė et al., 2015). Because it costs a company ten times less to retain current customers than to find new ones, customer loyalty is essential to a service provider's ability to maintain a competitive edge (Skačkauskienė et al., 2015). Furthermore, a rise in market share, revenue, and profit is made possible by customer loyalty, which also supports business expansion and the service provider's reputation (Skačkauskienė et al., 2015).

3.2 Significance Between People and Customer Loyalty

There are a lot of new competitors in the same industry offering the same goods and services in today's business market. Because there are so many competitors in the market, business providers must fight with one another to stay in the business. To preserve and retain the long-term relationship, business providers must pay attention to the needs and preferences of their customers. Business providers need to understand the components of the marketing mix that they should employ to draw clients, particularly through their purchasing habits if they want to satisfy their customers (Wahab et al., 2016). The most fundamental components of the production and delivery of services that make up difference management are people (Xie, 2020). According to Vaughan C. Judd (1987), a customer-oriented approach cannot succeed without the personal support of the individual. As noted by Davidson, "The secret of success lies in recognizing the services and customer contact staff is the company's key role" (Xie, 2020). Customers view this as a component of the enterprise product and service (Xie, 2020). Thus, people are the key component of the product and service (Xie, 2020). As people represent an organization to its customers, Vaughan C. Judd (1987), introduced a new "P", people power, and suggested that it be institutionalized, formalized, and managed similarly to the other 4Ps as a unique element of the market mix. If staff members are not trained in face-to-face customer interaction, then all marketing efforts may prove to be ineffective (Rathod, 2016). Since service is a performance that cannot be divorced from people, a service company can only be as good as its people (Rathod, 2016). People's methods of providing services are significant components of both competitive advantage and differentiation (Rathod, 2016).

The extended marketing mix of service management, of the 7Ps, includes people as a key component (Rathod, 2016). Employees are frequently the first point of contact for clients in the majority of services, including banking, healthcare, and hospitality (Rathod, 2016). When a customer evaluates the quality of the services, their perception of the service employee's performance is crucial (Rathod, 2016). As a result, the service provider needs to concentrate on improving the quality of the work that the service employee produces through training and development, direction, and motivation (Rathod, 2016). Proficiency in competencies such as empathy, confidence, and responsiveness will be essential for success (Rathod, 2016). The SERVQUAL framework, created by Parasuraman et al. (2013),

demonstrates how crucial employee performance is to the caliber of services. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are directly correlated with high service quality, which is frequently provided by knowledgeable and skilled staff members (Parasuraman et al., 2013). All human actors who participate in the provision of services and thereby shape the perceptions of consumers are included in the people component of the marketing mix. This applies to all staff members of the business, particularly those who have direct contact with clients.

Besides, in Umrah service we knew that customers often seek more than just logistical travel support; they look for a spiritually enriching experience. Staff members who demonstrate cultural and religious sensitivity can make a profound impact on customer loyalty. If Umrah travel agency personnel exhibit understanding, empathy, and knowledge of Islamic practices, customers are more likely to feel comfortable and connected with the service, fostering a sense of trust and loyalty. Conversely, staff members lacking this sensitivity may inadvertently create discomfort or misunderstandings, potentially driving customers toward competitors. Therefore, employing personnel who can navigate these cultural and spiritual nuances is crucial.

3.3 Significance Between Process and Customer Loyalty

The service process is a step-by-step approach that delivers the promised value to customers (Rathod, 2016). For services like spas, healthcare, and psychiatric counseling, customers might play a crucial role in the process, turning it into a memorable experience for them (Rathod, 2016). An improperly designed process can lead to customer dissatisfaction due to subpar service quality (Rathod, 2016). In contrast, a well-crafted process ensures services are readily available, delivered consistently, and are easy and convenient for customers (Rathod, 2016). It can also manage service demand and supply effectively during busy periods (Rathod, 2016).

Process refers to the method of delivering services (Xie, 2020). The interaction between individuals and the process is inseparable within the service delivery framework (Xie, 2020). When a service provider concentrates meticulously and patiently on customer service, they can create a positive impression of service quality, leading to high levels of customer satisfaction (Xie, 2020). Therefore, the management of the service process is crucial for enhancing the quality of service (Xie, 2020). The customer easily understands the process and serves as the foundation for their satisfaction with the purchase (Xie, 2020).

The SERVQUAL framework recognizes reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles as aspects of service quality (Parasuraman et al., 2013). Streamlined procedures guarantee reliability and responsiveness, essential for maintaining uniform service quality, which in turn affects customer contentment and allegiance (Parasuraman et al., 2013).

In today's competitive market providing exceptional service is regarded as a critical strategy for success and survival. In the 1980s, defining what service quality meant to clients and creating plans to achieve their expectations were the main areas of concentration for managerial and academic endeavors (Ghofar & Islam, 2015). Since then, a lot of businesses have implemented measurement and management techniques to enhance their services, including companies whose main products are tangible commodities like computers or cars (Ghofar & Islam, 2015). The agenda for service quality has recently changed and has been reorganized to cover more topics. Understanding how service quality affects an organization's profit and other financial results is currently the most important problem (Ghofar & Islam, 2015). To summarise, this particular study shows that improved customer satisfaction and retention are directly correlated with enhanced service quality. Process simplification lowers errors, wait times, and service failures, all of which improve service quality.

3.4 Significance Between Physical Evidence and Customer Loyalty

One crucial component of service marketing is the relationship between physical evidence in the marketing mix and customer loyalty. Physical evidence is the tangible aspect that clients come into contact with during obtaining a service. These factors have the power to profoundly impact customers' perceptions and satisfaction, which in turn affects their loyalty. Due to service quality being an intangible performance, customers are unable to evaluate it (Rathod, 2016). They will, however, employ the service environment, or service scape, as a major substitute for quality (Rathod, 2016). Physical

evidence is related to the design and external environment of the places where services are provided, as well as the experiences that clients have there (Rathod, 2016). Hence, service companies need to handle physical evidence since it presents an external picture of the service package and can reflect on consumers' perceptions (Rathod, 2016). The tangible proof of a company's service quality that influences customers' perceptions of the service provider and their behavioral intentions includes physical evidence such as building appearance, landscaping, interior design, IT-based infrastructure, equipment, staff uniforms, communication materials, and other obvious cues (Rathod, 2016).

Physical evidence includes any actual elements that support service performance or communication, as well as the setting in which the service is provided and the client and company interact (Xie, 2020). Managers understand the impact of atmospherics, or physical design and décor components on employees and customers, and this is acknowledged in almost all texts on marketing, retailing, and organizational behavior (Bitner, 1992). However, surprisingly few empirical studies or theoretically grounded frameworks, especially in marketing, address the significance of physical surroundings in the environments of consuming (Bitner, 1992). The physical surroundings of an organization are constantly planned, constructed, altered, and controlled by managers (Bitner, 1992). Nevertheless, oftentimes, the effects of a particular design, or a change in a particular design, on the facility's final users are not fully understood (Bitner, 1992).

Physical evidence provides a tangible demonstration of an agency's professionalism and reliability. For Umrah travel agencies, aspects like a well-organized, aesthetically pleasing office, clearly branded materials, and neat employee attire can convey an image of trustworthiness and competence. Given the importance of reliability in such a spiritually significant journey, a well-maintained physical space reassures customers that they are dealing with a professional and dependable service provider. Agencies lacking in physical presentation may face challenges in gaining customer trust, which is essential for fostering loyalty in a competitive market. Physical spaces can influence behavior and project a certain image for service-oriented enterprises including hotels, restaurants, professional offices, banks, retail establishments, and hospitals (Bitner, 1992). The notion of service scapes is introduced by Bitner's study, which emphasizes how the physical environment affects customer satisfaction, behaviors, and perceptions. A beautifully planned and decorated space can improve client experiences and increase happiness and loyalty.

3.5 Conceptual Research Framework

The three extended three Ps which are people, process, and physical evidence – are the only components of the service marketing mix that are the subject of this study. The other four Ps (product, price, place and promotion) are the other essential components of the mix. These, according to Figure 2.6.1, are all investigated as independent variables (iv) and customer loyalty is the dependent variable (dv). The components are meant to investigate how the marketing mix and customer loyalty are related.

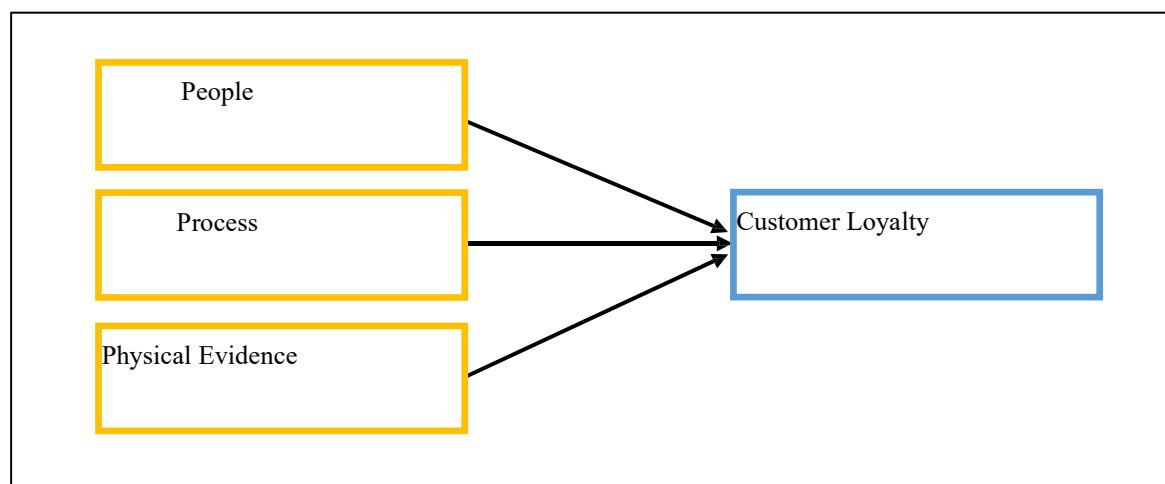


Figure 2.6.1 Conceptual Research Framework (Othman et al., 2019)

To ensure that the goal of achieving an understanding of how the extended three Ps (people, process, and physical evidence) are correlated with customer loyalty, a conceptual framework has to be developed. Through this study, the three Ps (people, process, and physical evidence) will be studied to see if they align with customer loyalty in Umrah travel agencies. Figure 2.6.1 shows the correlation between people, process, and physical evidence and customer loyalty.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is quantitative. This study uses quantitative analysis, and all of the data were gathered using questionnaires. To examine the connection between customer loyalty and the three Ps (people, process, and physical evidence) this study used survey research method. Since this study is quantitative, a collection of questionnaires is used. The survey instrument was adjusted and tailored to fit the needs of this research, using “Google Form”.

Nerida residents in Denai Alam are the subjects of this study. Since the respondents are customers who have taken trips with any Umrah travel agencies, the respondents are chosen using a simple random sampling technique. There are 167 residents in Nerida, Denai Alam. Among them, 132 participants were selected for this research investigation.

This research instrument’s content aided in examining the relationship between customer loyalty and the three Ps which are people, process, and physical evidence. A questionnaire is the research tool employed in this study. All of the questionnaire’s items were thoughtfully created to align with the research’s goals. The questionnaire items were examined to ensure they were appropriate for this descriptive study. According to Joshi (2015), a group of statements (items) for a real or hypothetical circumstance under study comprised the original Likert scale. Using a metric scale, participants are asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the provided statement (items).

The questionnaire for this research has 5 sections to be answered by each respondent regarding demographical information (Section A), customer loyalty (Section B), people (Section C), process (Section D), and physical evidence (Section D). An opinion’s strength is typically gauged using a Likert scale format. A primary approach to evaluating all the data is to score the structural reaction on a scale of 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being neutral, 4 being agree, and 5 being strongly agree.

These are some of the limitations in finding and sampling respondents, especially in niche markets like Umrah travel services, is the difficulty in accessing a representative sample of the target population. Since the study is focused on a particular region, this geographic limitation may restrict the diversity of respondents. It may also be challenging to find a large enough sample size within a smaller community, which could limit the generalizability of the findings. Besides that, potential respondents may have limited availability due to their schedules or may be

difficult to reach. For example, some may prefer traditional face-to-face surveys but have limited access to online surveys or vice versa. Additionally, since Umrah pilgrims are often deeply engaged in their spiritual journey, some not really receptive to participate in any kind of survey and becoming part of the respondents.

4.1 Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which can assist in generating the precise computations required in the study, was the program specifically used to analyze the data that were collected. Analysis both descriptive and inferential were used to process the data. The descriptive data utilised to characterise the samples as a group were the main focus of this study. Aside from that, the purpose of this investigation was to investigate the relationship between customer loyalty and the extended three Ps: people, process, and physical evidence. The frequencies, percentages, and means of the descriptive statistics will be utilized to gauge the significance of the information obtained from the surveys.

The correlation method is used to carry out this study as well. Galton (1888), who originally presented the idea of correlation, and other researchers' work served as the foundation for Pearson's (1896) development of the Pearson (Product–Moment) correlation r (4, 5). Correlation charts, sometimes referred to as scatter diagrams, are one of the seven fundamental statistical tools (Asuero et al., 2006).

5.0 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The study offers invaluable insights into the relationship that exists among extended service marketing mix (people, process, and physical evidence) elements and customer loyalty; particularly in Denai Alam to cater to Nerida residents who leaned on the services of Umrah travel agencies. This research shows a highly significant (positive) relationship between these variables and customer loyalty, demonstrating the importance of service quality elements in managing the level of satisfaction as well as their role in directly designing perceptions and evaluation criteria behind consuming behaviors.

Firstly as for people, the research found a significant relationship between people and customer loyalty, with a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.534. This result highlights the interactions customers have with staff such as how well they are treated. The staff's ability to provide quick and accurate services and their overall demeanor play a substantial role in determining customer loyalty. It was as determined that the confidence, understanding and behaviour of the staff at Umrah travel agencies resulted in customer being satisfied with how these factors were delivered to them had led ultimately on their loyalty. This puts an onus on investing in ongoing staff training and development to ensure agency staff is prepared for peak performance and delivery that meets but more importantly exceeds customer expectations (Tiller, 2010). The findings align with existing literature, which

emphasizes that frontline employees are critical in shaping customer perceptions and experiences. Well-trained, responsive, and courteous staff can enhance the customer experience, leading to higher satisfaction and, consequently, greater loyalty. In the context of Umrah services, where customers seek a spiritual and often emotional experience, the behavior and attitudes of staff are particularly impactful. Customers are likely to remain loyal to agencies where they feel valued and respected (Chidley & Pritchard, 2014). In my opinion, Umrah travel agencies should invest in continuous staff training and development to ensure that their employees are equipped to meet customer expectations effectively. This includes not only technical training but also customer service and empathy training to cater to the specific needs of customers.

Secondly, for process, the result shows that it has the strongest positive correlation with customer loyalty, with a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.598. This suggests that the efficiency, reliability, and overall management of service delivery are critical factors influencing customer loyalty. This result may underscore the significant impact that efficient and reliable service delivery has on retaining customers. Delving deeper into this result reveals several critical insights about how process factors can uniquely shape customer loyalty, particularly in the context of Umrah travel, where the experience is highly spiritual, emotionally charged, and logistically complex. From my observation, the high correlation indicates that customers highly value the efficiency and smoothness of the service process. In a competitive industry like Umrah travel, where agencies offer similar packages and services, process efficiency and reliability can serve as a differentiator. Many agencies may offer similar Umrah packages, but not all can deliver a consistently smooth and efficient customer experience. Agencies that excel in this area may gain a competitive edge by fostering high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. An agency that consistently meets customer expectations through effective process management can build a strong reputation, attracting both new and repeat customers and making it difficult for competitors to lure customers away. In the context of Umrah services, this could include the ease of booking, clarity of instructions, promptness in addressing queries, and the overall organization of the trip. A well-structured process minimizes stress and uncertainty, allowing customers to focus on their spiritual journey, which is the core purpose of their travel (Parasuraman et al., 2013).

Lastly, for physical evidence, it had a positive correlation with customer loyalty, with a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.452. Although this was the lowest among the other factors, it still indicates a meaningful relationship between the physical environment and customer loyalty. In my opinion, the physical evidence includes the tangible aspects of the service environment, such as the appearance of facilities, the modernity and cleanliness of equipment, and overall ambiance. While physical evidence is less directly impactful than people or process, it still contributes to the overall customer experience. In the Umrah travel agency context, customers may perceive the quality of physical evidence as a reflection of the agency's professionalism and reliability. To enhance customer loyalty, Umrah travel agencies

should ensure that their physical premises, such as offices and service centers, are well-maintained, comfortable, and equipped with modern amenities (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). This also extends to the presentation of staff, who appear professional and approachable, as this contributes to the customer's overall impression of the service quality (Bitner, 1992).

This finding is insightful for academics by extending the existing literature in outlining how service marketing mix and customer studies may influence customer loyalty. These results indicate that combining the three components of the service marketing mix is vital for Umrah travel agencies to develop and sustain customer loyalty. Although the present research has given some important insights, it opens up avenues for further research in the future. Future studies may focus on exploring other variables, such as digital engagement or social media influence as mediators of the service marketing mix and customer loyalty relationship. Moreover, broadening the scope of research to include many different geographical settings might help in deepening knowledge regarding the relationship between service marketing mix and customer loyalty.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This research explored the relationship between the service marketing mix elements (people, process, and physical evidence) and customer loyalty towards Umrah travel agencies among Nerida residents in Denai Alam. The findings indicate that these elements play a significant role in shaping customer loyalty, emphasizing the importance of Umrah travel agencies focusing on delivering high-quality service across all aspects of their operations. Despite the limitations of time and scope, the research provides valuable insights into how these factors influence customer loyalty, offering a foundation for future studies to build upon.

Hence, for the industry stakeholders the researchers recommend in order to boost customer loyalty, Umrah travel agencies should focus on delivering high-quality service across key areas such as staff interactions, process efficiency, physical evidence, customer feedback, loyalty programs, community partnerships, and digital solutions. A proper well-trained, culturally sensitive staff offering empathetic service create a trusting environment for customers and at the same time will streamline the processes, including user-friendly booking and clear communication, reduce stress and allow customers to focus on their pilgrimage. Gathering and acting on customer feedback demonstrates also will help whereas the agencies value customer input, will lead to continuous improvements. Ultimately, these actions position Umrah travel agencies as reliable, respectful, and customer-centered partners in customers' spiritual journeys, setting them apart in a competitive market.

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