Assessing Customer Emotion Product Relationship and Customer Retention Towards Halal Cosmetic Products

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ABSTRACT

Objective – Retailers today have acknowledged that incorporating great customer emotion product relationship can lead to total customer retention. In this paper an overview of the existing literature on customer emotion is provided before it is examined for the creation of customer emotion product relationship from a holistic perspective.
Methodology/Technique – A conceptual model which discusses the determinants of customer emotion towards *Halal* cosmetic products is provided. This is then followed by taking an explicit dynamic view of the importance of the retail service quality and *Halal* advertising, factors that can influence customer emotion and customer retention. Data collection was based on 414 sets of questionnaires which were distributed to Malaysian consumers. The PLS-SEM analysis was used to identify the relationships between retail service quality and *Halal* advertising, customer emotion and customer retention.
Findings – Relations were found between retail service quality, customer emotion product relationship and customer retention of Malaysian customers for *Halal* cosmetic products.
Novelty – The findings of this study provided some insights to managers in future strategy planning by identifying the important factors affecting customer emotion product relationship and customer retention.
Type of Paper: Empirical

Keywords: *Halal* Cosmetics; Retail Service Quality; *Halal* Advertising; Customer Emotion Product Relationship; Customer Retention
JEL Classification: M11, M31.

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1. Introduction

Muslims are the dominant group within the plural society of Malaysia, accounting for 61.3% of the entire population. The issue of *Halal* is in fact, one of the most vital concerns of Muslims in Malaysia (Yuhanis & Chok, 2012). This has been stated by Rosita et al. (2012) who say that since 2006, Malaysia has taken a holistic approach towards *Halal* goods and services because Malaysia realises that it is a new source for the country's economic growth. *Halal* cosmetics and personal care products encompass the use of various ingredients, safety

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issues, and production processes (Hashim & Mat Hashim, 2013). Stiff competition in the cosmetics industry has motivated many retailers to find ways to attract consumers and to create a sustainable competitive advantage. Creating superior customer emotion on product offerred seems to be one of the central objectives in today's retailing environment.

The concept of customer emotion relationship with products has received much interest from both academia and commercial businesses. Some of the extant literature (de Chernatony et al., 2000; Mudambi, 2002) have suggested that emotional values can have equal or even greater importance than tangible attributes (functional value) when it comes to purchase decisions. According to Johnston and Kong (2011), customer emotion experience is a key strategic objective for many companies. Retailers around the globe have embraced the concept of customer emotion experience management with many incorporating the notion into their mission statements. For example, Sephora Cosmetics launched its first digital customer emotion experience strategy with the intention of ensuring customers with a positive retail experience. It accomplished this by focusing on convenience, value and quality. Another company, DHL, improved customer emotion experience through the invention of the Parcelcopter, an idea which has resulted in customer satisfaction scores rising to over 80% and on-time delivery performance increasing to 97% or higher whilst decreasing customer turnover rate. This link between customer emotion relationship and products has gone well beyond functionality and brand. As these examples show, these companies have embraced customer emotion experience to attain customer satisfaction.

The scarcity of a systematic scholarly research on determining the relationship between customer emotion construct and customer retention towards *Halal* cosmetic products has made an imperative call for a theory-based conceptual framework to serve as stimulus and foundation for such research. This paper discusses the relationship between retail service quality and the effects of *Halal* advertising on customer emotion product relationship construct. From the study, this paper also aims to build a conceptual model of antecedents to customer emotion as a means of examining the relationship between customer emotion and customer retention. Finally, this study also assesses the need for customer emotional product relationship management strategies. It takes into account the following elements illustrated in Figure 1.

There are two parts to this paper. The first part provides the theoretical information about retail service quality, *Halal* advertising, customer emotion, customer retention and *Halal* cosmetic products. The second part discusses the outcome of the survey conducted to measure the relationship between retail service quality, Halal advertising and customer emotion on customer retention.
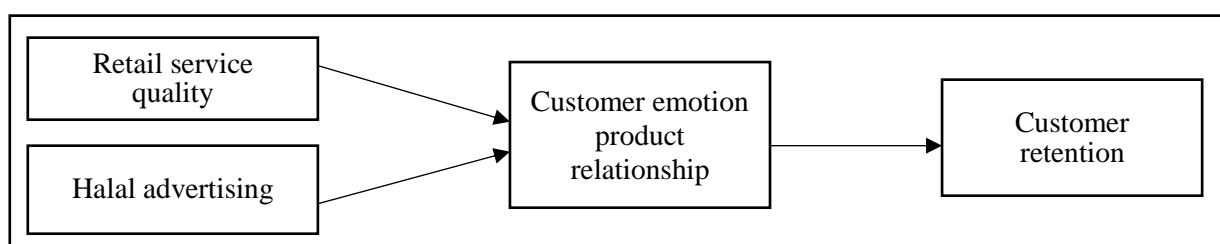

Figure 1. Research model

2. Literature Review

2.1. Retail Service Quality

Quality is a subjective term and the meaning of quality may differ from person to person. Generally, it refers to the thing that meets the customer's expectations that is helpful in gaining and retaining customers' loyalty (Ijaz & Ali, 2013). A common definition of service quality is that the service should correspond to the customers' expectations and satisfy their needs and requirements (Lovelock, 2010). Service quality is a kind

of personal selling involving direct interactions between salespeople and potential buyers. Service quality is one of the critical success factors that influences the competitiveness of an organisation. Basically, the aim of in-store service is to build consumer relationship, increase consumers' pleasure of shopping in the store, and to encourage their intention to revisit the store (Reynolds & Beatty, 1999). Literature by researchers (Angelova & Zekiri, 2011; Mohamed et al., 2012) found that positive human interactions is more likely to positively impact customers and their satisfaction. In the case of Muslim consumers, in-store service is included as one aspect of humaneness considered as important in attracting them (Mohd Fauzi, 2013). In Islam, this finding is aligned with the most important concept in Islam, which is the concept of *tawhid,* an important factor for dealing with Muslim consumers. *Tawhid* describes the relationship between humans and their Creator and the inter-human relationships based on *Allah's* law. The practice focusses on brotherhood (good inter-human relationships) with other people and justice to society (Arham, 2010). The practice is one of the fundamentals in Islamic philosophy of marketing practices. McDaniel and Burnett (1990) found that religious people are more concerned with sale personnel friendliness and assistance as their store evaluative criteria. Based on the discussion, it is postulated that retail service quality will influence customer emotion experience among Malaysian customers in *Halal* cosmetic products.

2.2. *Halal* Advertising

This study focusses on media coverage providing the various sources of information on *Halal* products. This media covers television, radio, internet, banner/billboard/outdoor display, magazines, posters, brochures, bulletin, newspaper, documentaries, articles, advertisement, sales promotions and so on. Many researchers (Olson and Dover, 1979; Deighton, 1984; Deighton and Schindler, 1988; Boulding et al., 1993; Braun, 1999) have observed that advertising can influence experience. Consumers are practically influenced by what they see on television and the *Internet*, tow sources that can drive them towards their purchasing decisions (Abdullah Swidi et al., 2010). It has also been demonstrated by Norafni et al. (2013) that the role of the media in promoting *Halal* products is important; it showed a positive correlation with awareness and perception to the non-food products. Hussin et al. (2013) found that advertising is a mediating variable for price-purchase intention of *Halal* cosmetics. In the same regard, Teng and Wan Jamaliah (2013) also reported that the *Internet* is the most important source of information for *Halal* products, particularly, *Halal* cosmetics and personal care. Based on this, it is postulated that advertising has an influence on customer emotion experience for *Halal* cosmetic products in Malaysia.

2.3. Customer Emotion Product Relationship

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) have defined customer experience as a personal occurrence, often with important emotional significance founded on their interaction with the stimuli, the products or services offered for consumption. In their experiential view, the full range of possible consumer emotions (e.g., love, hate, fear, joy, boredom, anxiety, pride, anger, lust, and guilt) play an important role in the consumer's consumption process. Schmitt (1999) contrasted traditional marketing's product-oriented focus on functional features and benefits with experience marketing's customer-oriented focus on experiences. He argued that customers do not only engage in rational choices but are also driven by emotions. Pullman and Gross (2003) also pointed out that firms need to create emotional connections that can be revealed over time instead of merely at the moment of delivery. Yang and He (2011) further asserted that the emotional experience will generate effective experiences, ranging from a little positive moods and progressing to strong emotions of joy and satisfaction that are attached to a brand. Roos (1999) also mentioned that customers who experience negative emotional responses tend to have strong brand switching behaviour. It was also noted that customers were ready to pay higher prices, provide product referrals, give companies more share of their money whilst also establishing long term relationships with such products. This occurs when customers' experience is superior (Arussy et al., 2010; Mohamed et al., 2012). This demand to integrate emotion experience in its marketing strategy can be

challenging for any organisation. Therefore, understanding the antecedents of customers' emotion experience is critical.

2.4. Customer retention

Customer retention is the activity that an organisation undertakes in order to maintain customer loyalty. Successful customer retention starts with the first contact an organisation has with a customer and this continues throughout the entire lifetime of a relationship. In order to improve customer satisfaction, focus should be on the whole customers' experience (Pulido et al., 2014). Satisfaction is a positive reaction resulting from favourable appraisals of consumption experiences (Oliver, 1997; Babin & Griffin, 1998). Emotions arising from consumption experiences deposit affective memory traces which consumers process and integrate to form post-consumption evaluations of satisfaction (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). Studies in marketing (Ladhari, 2007; Walsh et al., 2011) confirm that there is a relationship between emotions and satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is viewed as an important indicator of customer retention but customer satisfaction is not always an assurance of customer retention. The main issue is that retention should not be taken as a substitute for loyalty. This suggests that marketers need to understand why their consumers choose to stay and should not assume that it is a positive conscious choice (Colgate et al., 1996). Yets despite the recognition of the importance of customer retention by practitioners, the academic marketing literature investigating this topic has been limited.

2.5. General Information on Halal Cosmetics Product

According to Al-Qardawi (1995), the term *Halal* means permissible for consumption and used by Muslims whereas *haram* is anything that is unlawful or forbidden. *Halal* (lawful) and *haram* (unlawful) are clearly shown in Islam to be serious matters. *Halal* is about trust, responsibility, respect and strict compliance (Che Man et al., 2007). *Halal* in cosmetics and personal care products not only must include the ingredients, safety issues and production process; it must also include aspects such as the manufacturing process, storage, packaging and delivery which must all be duly complied with the *Shariah* requirement (Hashim & Mat Hashim, 2013). The overall awareness about *Halal* cosmetics is still low due to the amount of cosmetics available in the market. The matter is compounded by the difficulty to access the raw materials and ingredients which are certified by *Halal* certificates vouching *Halal* integrity (Kamaruzzaman, 2008; Abdullah Swidi et al., 2010; Norafni et al., 2013; Teng & Wan Jamaliah, 2013; Azreen Jihan & Rosidah, 2014).

3.0 Research Method

3.1. Sampling

A total of 414 Muslims and non-Muslims adult customers who have used *Halal* cosmetic products were drawn using the quota sampling technique. Out of these questionnaires, 385 sets were returned. A total of 359 valid questionnaires were included in this study.

3.2. Data Collection Method

This study used self-administered questionnaire survey as a method. Screening questions were asked in the first section to understand and filter the respondents. The survey respondents were asked to determine their favourite *Halal* cosmetics brands, whether they have purchased a *Halal* cosmetic product within the last month, their purchase frequency and usage behaviour. The second part consists of questions using a 5-point Likert scale (5=strongly disagree, 1=strongly agree) as the measurement for all the tested constructs. In order to ensure validity, most items were adopted from past literature. In this study, the measurement of retail service

quality was adapted from Lovelock (2010) and Angelova and Zekiri (2011) who had examined the performance of the retail personnels in terms of staff knowledge, willingness to help and service performance. The measurements of *Halal* advertising effect were adapted from Norafni et al. (2013) and Teng and Wan Jamaliah (2013) who had examined customers' experience influences. The last part of the survey consists of questions which aimed to determine the demographic characteristics of the respondents which were then analysed. The variables noted in this study include gender, age, ethic group, income and current residence. All of these constitute the data.

3.3 Research Hypothesis

The basic hypotheses noted in the direction of the aim and model of this study are as follows:

H1: There is a significant relationship between retail service quality and customer emotion.
H2: There is a significant relationship between *Halal* advertising and customer emotion.
H3: There is a significant relationship between customer emotion and customer retention.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

Data were analysed using SEM-PLS 3.0. The first step involves the analysis of the measurement model where assessment of validity and reliability of items was carried out. The second step involves the analysis of the structural model where assessment of relationship between the latent constructs and hypothesis was tested.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The respondents comprised 33.1% males and 66.9% females. Their age range spanned from 16 to 64 years with the majority, 40.9%, being between the ages of 25-34 years, followed by 28.7% at the 35-44 age group and 20.9% at the 16-24 age group, 8.4% at the 45-54 age group and 1.1% at the 55-64 age group. In looking at the ethnicity, it was noted that 46.5% were Malays, 36.5% were Chinese, 16.4% were Indians and 0.6% were from other ethnicity. In terms of monthly income, 37.6% respondents earned between RM1,001 to RM3,000; followed by 29.8% who earned between RM3,001 to RM5,000; 19.8% who earned RM1,000 and below; 9.2% who earned between RM5001-RM7000 and 3.6% who earned above RM7001. In terms of current residence, 32% were from Kuala Lumpur, 18.1% from Johor, 12.8% from Pulau Pinang, 8.6% from Melaka, 7% from Sabah, 6.7% each from Kuantan and Terengganu, followed by 4.5% from Sarawak and 3.6% from Selangor. The statistics also showed that 68.2% of the respondents were current users of *Halal* cosmetics in the last one month and 31.8% had not bought any *Halal* cosmetics within the last one month.

4.2 Measurement Model

According to Hair et al. (2014), two types of validity are assessed under the measurement model: convergent validity and discriminant validity. The recommended AVE value should be above 0.5 and the recommended value for CR should be above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014). Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the AVE values ranged between 0.526 and 0.684, which are above the recommended values. This indicates a good level of construct validity. It was also noted that the CR ranged between 0.839 and 0.920 which exceeds the recommended value of 0.7 as mentioned above. Therefore, the results confirmed the convergent validity of the measurement model or outer model of this study.

Table 1 Convergent validity and reliability for the constructs

Construct	AVE	CR
Customer retention	0.684	0.915

Customer emotion	0.526	0.899
Retail service quality	0.590	0.920
Halal advertising	0.626	0.839

4.3 Structural Model

The purpose of this step is to test the hypotheses. The PLS algorithm and bootstrapping were run by using 5,000 samples with the 359 cases provided from the data. This follows the guidelines recommended by Hair et al. (2014). The results of the R2 values and path coefficient are shown in Table 2 and Figure 2. It is noted that the R2 of the endogenous variables namely, customer satisfaction to purchase a Halal cosmetics product and consumers' emotion experience toward the Halal cosmetics product are 0.222 and 0.346 respectively.

Table 2 Path coefficient and hypothesis testing

| Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-value	Decision
H1	Retail service quality -> Customer emotion relationship to purchase a Halal cosmetics product	0.261	4.361	Supported
H2	Halal advertising -> Customer emotion relationship to purchase a Halal cosmetics product	0.095	1.213	Not supported
H3	Customer emotion relationship -> Customer retention to purchase a Halal cosmetics product	0.471	12.592	Supported
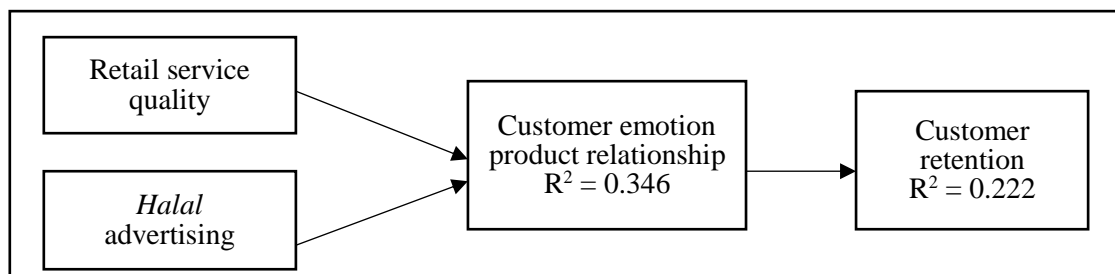
Figure 2 Results of structural model analysis

5. Discussion and Implication

The results showed that retail service quality has a significant relationship with customer experience. This finding is consistent with the findings of Reynolds and Beatty (1999) and Lloyd and Luk (2011) who found that service quality is a kind of personal selling that involves direct interactions between salespeople and potential buyers. The direct interaction process enables the sales personnel to convey information and to make instant service recovery according to the individual customer's requirement. Additionally, more than half or 57% of the Muslim respondents in this study noted that a sale personnel's friendliness and assistance while attending to customers, according to their store's evaluative criteria, is important in consumption emotion experience for *Halal* cosmetic products. Likewise, this finding is also consistent with the findings of McDaniel and Burnett (1990).

Further, this study also found that the relationship between *Halal* advertising and customer emotion indicate that they were not significantly related. The reason suggesting that *Halal* advertising is not significant could be attributed to the survey respondents who may have felt that the information in the advertisements had increased their experiences through purchasing a *Halal* cosmetic product. The respondents may have received deceptive advertising information that had harmed or created a dysfunctional effect on the consumer's purchasing decision (Olson & Dover, 1979).

The results of the path model shown in Figure. 2 also indicate that the R2 of the endogenous variables namely, customer retention to purchase a Halal cosmetics product and consumers' emotion toward the *Halal* cosmetics product are 0.222 and 0.346 respectively. This means that retail service quality and *Halal* advertising can account for a moderate customer value. In this regard, it shows 34.6% of the variance in customers' emotion value towards the *Halal* cosmetic products. In contrast, customers' retention to purchase a *Halal* cosmetic product was accounted for by 22.2% of the variance of retail service quality, *Halal* advertising and customer emotion value toward the Halal cosmetic product. This reflects a moderate indication. From the R2, it can be concluded that retail service quality and *Halal* advertising can explain customers' emotion towards *Halal* cosmetic products more than customer retention to purchase *Halal* cosmetic products. This is because customer emotion forms before customer retention can develop. Therefore, consumers' emotion product relationship plays a role in this framework.

5.1 Managerial Implications

The findings of this study have provided some insights to store managers in their strategy planning by identifying the important factors that influence customers' emotion product relationship and customer retention. Managers should concentrate on building strong customer experience by providing consistent retail service quality to their *Halal* cosmetic products customers. Another implication for managers is that deceptive information in advertising not only harms the image and reputation of the company/brand but also creates a deceptive image in the customers' long term memory. Therefore, managers are advised to follow strict ethical standards when planning and delivering advertising messages. Lastly, the results also showed that customers' emotion product relationship has a significance with retention. To overcome the problem of quantifying emotions and be on the way to building profitable relationship-based brand experiences, managers are advised to use the right feedback tools, that is, to listen to their customers systematically and authentically.

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