

# Effects of Service Marketing Mix on Umrah Customer Satisfaction: Empirical Study on Umrah Traveling Industry in Malaysia

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## Abstract:

The objective of this research was to study the customer perception toward marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence, marketing communication and after sale service), and customer satisfaction of Umrah traveling industry in Malaysia". "A quantitative study was adopted for collecting data. The customers who performed Umrah more than once were on the focus of this study. The necessary data were collected from 384 respondents through a structured questionnaire using a convenience sampling technique". "Customer perception toward all dimensions service marketing mix have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. The present study enables the understanding of consumer behavioural features, especially in term of customer satisfaction in Umrah services, particularly in Malaysia and the overall Umrah industry". "The service sector plays a pivotal role in a country's economy specifically in Malaysia and part of this sector services is the Umrah services, becomes it is important for commercial activities and contributes to the quality of life. In short, it implies that the role of Umrah services is regarded as a basic need of life". "Thus, it is imperative to fulfil the requirements and expectations of customers in multifarious backgrounds. This study is an initial effort in investigating the satisfaction of Umrah customers in Malaysia, including their contributing factor, name service marketing mix.

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## 1. Introduction

These days, Umrah traveling is known as a trade and industry all over the world. There is much versatility in Umrah traveling and its importance is undeniable (Rashid et al., 2019). Umrah traveling plays a vital role to create personal values, to please and to recreate for the development of culture, mobilization of resources and development of other factors. In service based business, there is a great importance of consumer satisfaction and the strong linkage exists between consumer satisfaction and service provider profitability (Sadq et al., 2019; Saupi et al., 2019). Tourist attraction has been in high competition during few years in Malaysia as well where a large range of attractions have been seen in order to ascertain that they maintain high level of visitor satisfaction. Therefore, a thorough knowledge on effects of marketing mix elements for satisfying tourists may help the Umrah traveling operators for developing their tactics and strategies for maximizing the satisfaction of visitors and profitability (Zhengwei et al., 2019).

In Umrah traveling sector, marketing mix is not possible to be separated from customer satisfaction. In order to maximize the market share of Umrah traveling firms in Malaysia, there is a need to evaluate the customer satisfaction with marketing mix and its effect on firms. Though the prior researches have made the large number of contributions to develop the linkage between customer satisfaction and marketing mix, the present study may make further addition by understanding the linkage between them. The present study aims to find the effect of marketing mix on customer satisfaction in Umrah traveling industry in context of Malaysia. Furthermore, this study also tries to understand the influence of all factors on customer's satisfaction at individual level.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Customer Satisfaction

According to Arsanam and Yousapronpaiboon (2014) literature is evident that the key to long-term business success is Customer satisfaction.

Organizations must offer quality based products and services to outperform its competitors to ensure and gain Customer satisfaction to protect, gain and sustain its market shares (Khan & Fasih, 2014; Saupi et al., 2019). The industry of Umrah travelling must focus and understand customers service requirements and must learn how it impacts the service delivery and customer's attitude which according to Han and Hyun (2015), is the key factor to Customer satisfaction which in turn leads to customer retention and loyalty (Muala, 2016).

Companies can determine the actions requirement while understanding the customer's perceptions to meet and fulfil the customers' needs. Companies in industries like Umrah service agents must study and identify their strengths and weaknesses and compare themselves with their competitors at present and suggest strategies for improvements and progress in future (Khatab et al., 2019; Saghier & Nathan, 2013). The key element towards Customer satisfaction achievement is the products or services provider relationship with their customers specifically in the industry of Umrah travelling. Hence the offering of quality-based services and products are the key elements in retaining and satisfying valued customers (Kant & Jaiswal, 2017). According to Maula (2016) the offering and delivery of qualitative services to customers give the firms an opportunity to compare and differentiate themselves in highly competitive markets (Khatab et al., 2019a; Muala, 2016).

### 2.2 Service Marketing Mix

Goi (2009) acknowledged that marketing mix is an influential concept to simplify the ways marketing tasks to be managed and permitted the segregation of marketing efforts towards fulfillment of customer needs and satisfaction. This statement was supported by study findings of Hassan *et al.*, (2016) in tourism context where six elements of service marketing mix except service price were found significant to customer satisfaction especially in Umrah travel services. Similarly, a study by Alegre and Garau (2010) also in tourism had found that the

relationship between five elements of service marketing mix namely service product, service price, service place, service people and service physical evidence and customer satisfaction are significant. In another word, the implementation of service marketing mix would influence customer satisfaction .

**H1 If the services marketing mix provided by Umrah travel  
: agents are excellent, then this will lead to Umrah Customer  
satisfaction.**

**2.2.1 The relationship between product and  
Umrah customer satisfaction**

In service industry, the product is intangible by nature. Similar to physical products like cars, service products perform similar function. However, they are limited in measurement. They cannot be measured like physical products. Umrah travel industry can be an ideal example of a product in service marketing mix .

Kotler and Armstrong (2010) defined the product as anything which is offered to the market to attend, acquire, use or consume and it may satisfy the consumers. The characteristics of tourist product are nicely explained by Vassiliadis (2006) who

***H1a If the product provided by Umrah travel agents are  
excellent, then this will lead to Umrah Customer  
satisfaction.***

**2.2.2 The relationship between price and Umrah  
customer satisfaction**

Pricing product is relatively considered better than pricing services. Moreover, right decisions are well supported to trade for organizations through taking a good pricing policy (Abdullah, Abdullah, & Abdullah, 2016; Amzad, Sarker, Candidate, Aimin, & Begum, 2012; Sadq et al., 2020). In order to encourage Umrah travelers services operators, the pricing strategy should be well supported by cost side (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010; Sadq, Khorsheed, & Mohammed, 2020). Furthermore, Umrah travelers and travel industry customers have the power to

However, the role of service marketing mix as one construct is still ambiguous and not clearly explained by past studies such as Charoensettasilp and Wu (2014) and Thamrin (2012). This is a gap that needs to be investigated in the present study . Therefore, the first hypothesis for the present study is proposed below:

defined the Umrah travelers as opportunities in the market to the recipients of the Umrah travelers market and its role is to support the sustainable travel design process . They further explained if the design of the elevation of the destination is viable, it must consist of three factors namely climate, taverns-restaurants and parking areas .

Some other studies on Umrah travelers destination management revealed that two factors including innovative and well-coordinated travel products are considered to be very important for tourism areas (Henderson, 2016; Hiransomboon, 2012). Hence, we propose the first hypothesis of the study:

choose prices for the services they intend to choose. It is indeed, important to determine all prices and values . As a result, customer participation is increased in Umrah travelers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the key to succeed in getting Umrah travelers is the price level. Umrah travel agents also need to focus on the prices as this industry is also very competitive in nature and ignoring such factors may mislead customers and reduce the satisfaction level. A prior research also revealed five significant points regarding marketing mix which enhance tourism production (Abdullah *et al.* 2016).

Price could be considered as an attribute that must be sacrificed to obtain certain kinds of products or

services (Kushwaha *et al.* 2015). The service pricing has to become more convenient according to the customer's ability, so that customer can afford it. Other than that, pricing decisions play a major role in the marketing strategy where the price should be placed in relation to other elements such as product lifecycle, sales targets and market share (Souar *et al.* 2015). People traveling for Umrah services are also

***H1b If the price charged by Umrah travel agents are affordable then this will lead to Umrah Customer satisfaction***

### **2.2.3 The relationship between promotion and Umrah customer satisfaction**

Promotion is an important component of service marketing mix considered from the aspect of declaration mix, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing instruments used by the organization for advertisement and marketing. Moreover, the marketers sell Umrah travel services by doing analysis and predicting Umrah traveler's market, designing Umrah traveler's products, packaging, and pricing, to enhance Umrah traveler's products and some documents after value addition and expanding consumer products (Abdullah *et al.* 2016). As already discussed in the literature review, Umrah travel agents are not using latest techniques to capture the attention of customers .

***H1c If the promotion provided by Umrah travel agents are excellent, then this will lead to Umrah Customer satisfaction.***

### **2.2.4 The relationship between place and Umrah customer satisfaction**

Places help to identify the right service. Place plays a significant role in Umrah travelers field and it also provides some principles in combination with other factors to make the decision to choose Umrah travelers services (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). The place can provide time and distances as well . It also offers some novel ideas for traveling ways and declares some possible customers for Umrah

curious in terms of prices . In Umrah travel services, the package includes the prices and value additions need more attention and also various searchers used this relationship in various studies in various setting of travel services (Almuhzzi and Alsawafi, 2017). Therefore, we can assume the following hypothesis:

Promotion is concerned with any method you employ for getting people to know more about your product or service. Advertising, public relations, point-of-sale displays and word-of-mouth promotion are all traditional ways in promoting a product. Promotion can be viewed as a way of closing the information gap between the would-be sellers and would-be buyers (Wahab *et al.* 2016). Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) described promotion as part of the specific effort to encourage customers to tell others about their services (Owomoyela, Ola, and Oyeniyi, 2013). As we already discussed in our previous sections that promotion plays a very important role in creating the satisfaction in customers of travel services (Almuhzzi and Alsawafi, 2017). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis: Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

travelers service. A prior research also explained about some marketing channels and put marketing mix with the best distribution of services for many travel agencies (Huang, Chen, & Wu, 2009).

Furthermore, it is very important to note that many researchers have found travel agency is considered to be at high priority among all distribution channels. However, some travel agency sites are second in priority when compared to other distribution channels. In one of the researches



conducted by Douglas who tried to develop a concept to study Umrah travelers distribution by offering a model in order to fulfill tourist needs .

Transportation facility is another important determinant in the development of Umrah travelers services whereas infrastructure, security and social factors are also considered to play positive roles in

***H1d If the place provided by Umrah travel agents are strategic, then this will lead to Umrah Customer satisfaction.***

### **2.2.5 The relationship between people and Umrah customer satisfaction**

Though people are not considered as an essential marketing mix element, it plays an important role in human resource in the field of Umrah travelers marketing and looking for quality sightseeing and personal buying in hospitality sector (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010), compared to Malaysia with other countries on the basis of training and development .

People are the most basic elements of the service production and delivery, which is part of a different

the progression of Umrah travelers industry (Dimmock and Musa, 2015). But in Umrah services dealing with the issue of placement is very difficult as already discussed that its execution and offerings have two distinct places . Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

management. (Abdullah *et al.* 2016) pointed out that if there is no support from the personal, a customer-orientation is not possible to get the achievement .

In the eyes of customers, a part of the enterprise product, and service is pointed out by Davidson: "the secret of success lies in recognizing the services and customer contact staff is the company's key role. So people are categorized as an important factor in the product and service. More trainings, communication, learning offered to personnel, they will achieve to display the value of the Umrah services . Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

***H1e If the people provided by Umrah travel agents are excellent, then this will lead to Umrah Customer satisfaction.***

### **2.2.6 The relationship between process and Umrah customer satisfaction**

Process means a mix of Umrah traveling procedures and schedules of activities and routine work. The process flow facilitates customers without comparing process and suppliers. For example, it is not possible for the Umrah travelers to wait for a long time to gather information from the Umrah traveling office. Kannan (2009) explained that the Umrah travel marketing includes planning a trip, location, plane tour, maps, travel attraction, meals, souvenirs and momentous .

Process is inseparable, in the service process, if the service provider can focus, carefully, patiently, for customer service, can give customers high-quality service impression, so customer service satisfaction is high, the process of service management is the key to improve the quality of service (Abdullah *et al.* 2016). Pimpa Hirankitti, Panisa Mechinda (2009) stated that the process is clearly perceived by the customer and it forms the basis of customer satisfaction with the purchase . Therefore, process management ensures the availability of Umrah Service's quality. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

***H1f If the process provided by Umrah travel agents are excellent, then this will lead to Umrah Customer satisfaction.***

#### **2.2.7 The relationship between physical evidence and Umrah customer satisfaction**

Physical evidence is related to all the seller has that is place, decoration, people and everything else in the travel office which may be related to the travel experience which is of no profit to the seller. For instance, when the tour is made for a historical place the first time may carry some beautiful memories but they also remember the factors other than the beautiful memories such as transport facilities, markets and the behavior of the local people towards them . Hence Umrah travelers are vital in the travel experience .

Services are often intangible and customers cannot assess their quality well. So consumers use the service environment as an important proxy for quality. Service environments, also known as servicescape or physical evidence, relate to the style and appearance of the physical surroundings and other experiential elements encountered by customers at the service delivery sites. Service firms need to manage physical evidence carefully because it can have a profound impact on customers' impressions (Kushwaha *et al.* 2015). In some services, physical evidence has a great significance but in Umrah travel services it needs to explore through our framework because there still no any particular study that explores this relationship (Almuhri and Alsawafi, 2017). Thus, we state the following assumption:

***H1g If the physical evidence provided by Umrah travel agents are excellent, then this will lead to Umrah Customer satisfaction.***

#### **2.2.8 The relationship between marketing communication and Umrah customer satisfaction**

Marketing communications between a company and its customers which highlight the benefits and unique differences of a particular service. It is a process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create an exchange that satisfies individual and organizational objectives. Human and social needs identified as per what producer and customer focus on and advertising purchase intention (Senguo, Xixiang, and Kilango, 2017). When Umrah travel agents get any information which benefited to the customer, they must inform their customers, for example when Umrah travel agents read an article (Achyar and Oktora, 2014; Hassan *et al.*, 2016, 215; Khan and Shambour, 2017). Umrah travel agents do not send

all new information for customers. Customers want to get new information. They must be the best in providing a great quality customer care. When there is an association that a customer is interested in, if the customer gets enough information about an association, it will reduce the problem doubts hence they will feel more comfortable traveling with the association .

If any company has such relationship with its clients, then they can convert their potential customers into loyal customers after having a good satisfaction level with services and rest of all offerings. When Umrah travel agents get any information benefit to the customer, they must inform them for example when Umrah travel agents read an article. Umrah travel agents do not send all new information to their customers .

***H1h If the marketing communication provided by Umrah travel agents are effective, then this will lead to Umrah Customer satisfaction.***

**2.2.9 The relationship between after-sale service and Umrah customer satisfaction**

After-sales services can create sustainable relationships with customers and contribute significantly to customer satisfaction (Kurata & Nam, 2010). By offering different after-sales services during the various stages of the primary product lifecycle, the provider can ensure product functionality and thereby customer satisfaction. This may lead to a fruitful relationship between the provider and the customer over time, allowing for more transactions (Ahn & Sohn, 2009). Returning customers are the most profitable ones as they require less marketing effort and relationship building (Hoffman & Bateson, 2010; Othman et al., 2019; Jacob & Ulaga, 2008). Therefore, after- sales services have acquired a critical role as a means to satisfy and retain customers. Especially in a time when the firms are experiencing increased pressure to downsize operations and to become more highly specialized in their core competencies, they demand

more tailored services (Weissenberger- Eibl & Koch, 2007).

Other services should be reviewed to establish a link to improve customer satisfaction and produce increased income for the organization (Othman et al., 2018; Achyar and Oktora, 2014; Hassan *et al.*, 2016, 2015; Khan and Shambour, 2017). The other point of after sale services are ensuring continual customer satisfaction with the services received. For example, selling during holiday and issuing the tickets to the customer is not necessarily the end of the sale for either party .

Umrah travel agents must call for clients after a trip to find out if the customer enjoyed it. This demonstrates genuine concern and good public relations, that is creating a good image for the company. Also, this will help the organizations to use it effectively and get results in multiple dimensions like competitive advantage, profitability, loyalty and return on marketing effort (Debi and Al-waely, 2015).

***H1i If the after sale service provided by Umrah travel agents are excellent, then this will lead to Umrah Customer satisfaction.***

**3. Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology**

The service marketing mix consists of seven essentials called Ps like “product, price, place, promotion, process, people, and physical evidence”, all of which examined as independent variables, while customer loyalty is the dependent variable (See Fig. 1). The elements are aimed at examining the connexion amongst the marketing mix with customer loyalty. This is a quantitative research with convenience method used to gather the necessary

data from 384 respondents mainly among Umrah customers who used to have some experience on Umrah travel services . The data was further analysed using structural equations modelling through partial least squares approach “PLS”. The questionnaire comprised of three sections. The first section is the demographic information of the respondents. The second section contains questions linked with 7Ps of marketing mix (price (Al-Dmour et al., 2013), product (Othman., 2020), place (Helm & Gritsch 2014), promotion (B. A. Othman, Harun, Rashid, et al., 2019), people (Lee et al., 2014), process (Sreenivas et al., 2013) and physical

evidence (Akroush & Al-dmour, 2006)). The final part was about questions about customer loyalty. Five points Likert scale was used.

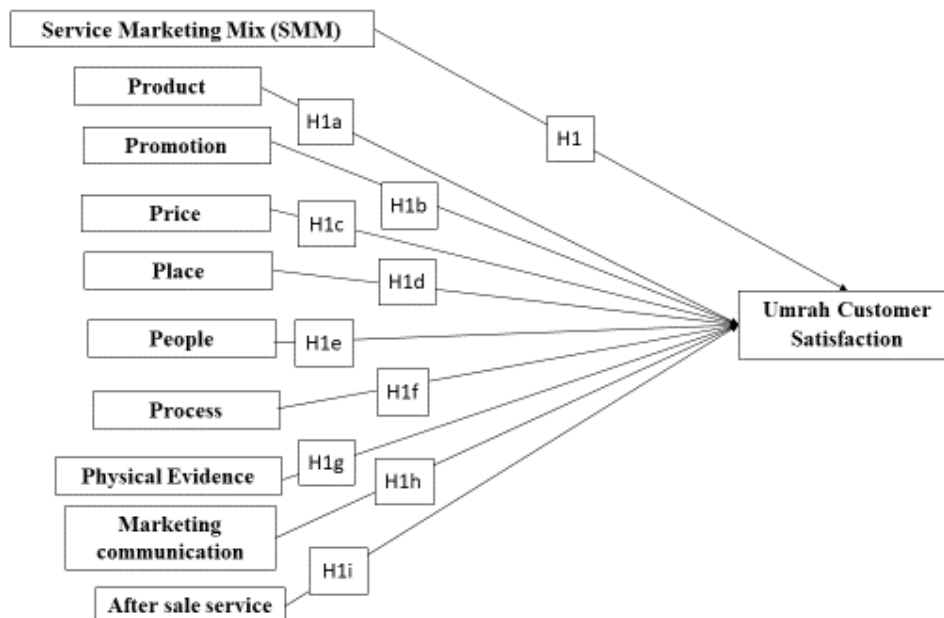


Figure. 1 Conceptual Framework

## 4. Data Analysis

### 4.1 Demographic Variables

The statistics results show that among all the respondents 57.3% with 220 respondents, while the female participant was 42.7% (164 respondents). From the data collected, the majority of the respondents were in the age group category of 31 to 40 years old (26.3%; 101 respondents). Meanwhile, the least age group category was 61 years old and above (10.7%; 41 respondents). The occupation position of the respondents shows that 28.9% (111 respondents) are employed in the government sector while 35.7% (137 respondents) are employed in the private sector. The frequency statistics also show that 17.4% (67 respondents) are self-employee and the remaining 4.2% (16 respondents) and 13.8% (53 respondents) are students and having another employment status, respectively. The married status of the respondents' frequency analysis indicated that 14.1% (54 respondents) are single and 79.9% (307 respondents) are married while the rest is in the other status category 6% (23 respondents). The

number of visits to perform Umrah of the respondents shows that 13.3% (51 respondents) visitors performed Umrah once while the majority of respondents performed Umrah more than two times (62.2%; 239 respondents), 11.5% (44 respondents) visited to perform Umrah three times and 2.6% (10 respondents) visited to perform Umrah four times while the remainder visited to perform Umrah more than four times (10.4%; 40 respondents).

### 4.2 Scale Validity and Reliability

The study is valid if its measures actually measure what they claim to and if there are nological errors in drawing conclusions from the data (Garson, 2002). Validity of the constructs has been tested by the factor loading method. Table I shows the values of factor loadings of the constructs . The study has also used Cronbach's alpha to check the internal reliability of the constructs used in the questionnaire. As shown in Table I, the value of Cronbach's alpha for marketing mix and customer satisfaction have been found to be 0.736 and 0.795 respectively.



According to Guelford (1965), when Cronbach's alpha is greater than 0.7, it shows the questionnaire has a relative high internal reliability. Since the values of Cronbach's alphas for all the constructs have been found to be higher than 0.7, it indicates that the questionnaire is reliable .

#### 4.2.1 Measurement Model

According to Table 1, the “latent variables” are categorised by the “convergence validity” of all loading factors and for all variables of the study the value of (AVE) is greater than 0.5 and for all latent variables, the values of Composite Reliability are above the criteria of 0.7, which shows that the

qualified components maintain good reliability . In addition, using “Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ” test of reliability, all latent values are greater than 0.6, and this evidence is enough to decide that the study material has good reliability. While reviewing the discrimination validity, Table 2 tells that for all variables, the values of AVE root square are greater than inter-structure correlations. So, we can conclude that the measurement model has good reliability and its validity is constructive and reliable to indicate the variables of the study .

Table 1: Variables Measurement Model

	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</b>
<b>After Sale Service</b>	<b>0.946</b>	<b>0.955</b>	<b>0.725</b>
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>	<b>0.935</b>	<b>0.951</b>	<b>0.795</b>
<b>Marketing Communication</b>	<b>0.939</b>	<b>0.947</b>	<b>0.621</b>
<b>People</b>	<b>0.915</b>	<b>0.932</b>	<b>0.664</b>
<b>Physical evidence</b>	<b>0.955</b>	<b>0.962</b>	<b>0.736</b>
<b>Place</b>	<b>0.916</b>	<b>0.932</b>	<b>0.630</b>
<b>Price</b>	<b>0.913</b>	<b>0.931</b>	<b>0.659</b>
<b>Process</b>	<b>0.906</b>	<b>0.928</b>	<b>0.681</b>
<b>Product</b>	<b>0.822</b>	<b>0.876</b>	<b>0.585</b>
<b>Promotion</b>	<b>0.933</b>	<b>0.945</b>	<b>0.681</b>

Table 2: Discriminant Validity of Latent Constructs

	<b>AFSS</b>	<b>CS</b>	<b>MC</b>	<b>PEP</b>	<b>PHY</b>	<b>PLC</b>	<b>PRC</b>	<b>PRO</b>	<b>PRD</b>	<b>PRM</b>
<b>AFSS</b>	<b>0.852</b>									
<b>CS</b>	<b>0.724</b>	<b>0.891</b>								
<b>MC</b>	<b>0.783</b>	<b>0.748</b>	<b>0.788</b>							
<b>PEP</b>	<b>0.734</b>	<b>0.880</b>	<b>0.718</b>	<b>0.815</b>						
<b>PHY</b>	<b>0.790</b>	<b>0.799</b>	<b>0.773</b>	<b>0.708</b>	<b>0.858</b>					
<b>PLC</b>	<b>0.851</b>	<b>0.782</b>	<b>0.771</b>	<b>0.733</b>	<b>0.746</b>	<b>0.794</b>				
<b>PRC</b>	<b>0.804</b>	<b>0.712</b>	<b>0.870</b>	<b>0.691</b>	<b>0.615</b>	<b>0.688</b>	<b>0.812</b>			

<b>PRO</b>	<b>0.704</b>	<b>0.717</b>	<b>0.857</b>	<b>0.804</b>	<b>0.740</b>	<b>0.683</b>	<b>0.654</b>	<b>0.825</b>		
<b>PRD</b>	<b>0.775</b>	<b>0.749</b>	<b>0.759</b>	<b>0.764</b>	<b>0.681</b>	<b>0.705</b>	<b>0.746</b>	<b>0.758</b>	<b>0.765</b>	
<b>PRM</b>	<b>0.724</b>	<b>0.750</b>	<b>0.677</b>	<b>0.646</b>	<b>0.769</b>	<b>0.755</b>	<b>0.722</b>	<b>0.760</b>	<b>0.736</b>	<b>0.825</b>

Note: AFSS = after sale service; CS = customer satisfaction; MC = marketing communication; PEP = people; PHY = physical evidence; PLC = place; PRC = price; PRO = process; PRD = product; PRM = promotion

### 4.3 Hypothesis Testing

The result for hypothesis was the strongest compared to other direct effect hypothesis's result. The result generated by SmartPLS had shown that there was a significant association between SMM

and CS ( $\beta = 0.698$ , S.E. = 0.029,  $t = 24.438$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ). Both  $\beta$  value and the  $t > 2.58$  are high and substantial enough to have the strongest relationship than the other direct relationship in the study. Thus, the hypothesis was confirmed and supported". "Another statistical finding is the  $R^2$  for CS was to be 0.358 which was close to moderate level of variance accounted through SMM. Based on table 3, all variables under SMM were found to significantly represent the SMM construct".

Table 3: Hypotheses testing results

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Path</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>Sample Mean (M)</b>	<b>S.E</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>P Values</b>
<b>H1</b>	SMM ->CS	0.698	0.700	0.029	24.438	0.000
<b>H1a</b>	PRD ->CS	0.039	0.039	0.008	4.940	0.000
<b>H1b</b>	PRM ->CS	0.093	0.092	0.006	15.969	0.000
<b>H1c</b>	PRC ->CS	0.078	0.079	0.006	13.619	0.000
<b>H1d</b>	PLC ->CS	0.082	0.082	0.006	14.301	0.000
<b>H1e</b>	PEP ->CS	0.088	0.088	0.005	16.034	0.000
<b>H1f</b>	PRO ->CS	0.071	0.071	0.004	16.436	0.000
<b>H1g</b>	PHY ->CS	0.131	0.130	0.008	17.168	0.000
<b>H1h</b>	MC ->CS	0.124	0.125	0.007	17.547	0.000
<b>H1i</b>	AFSS	0.126	0.127	0.008	16.757	0.000

	->CS					
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Note: SMM= Service marketing mix; AFSS = after sale service; CS = customer satisfaction; MC = marketing communication; PEP = people; PHY = physical evidence; PLC = place; PRC = price; PRO = process; PRD = product; PRM = promotion

#### 4.4 Discussion

This research objective was focused on investigating a direct relationship between service marketing mix and customer satisfaction with respect to the provision of Umrah travel agents in Malaysia. Hence, hypothesis three was formulated to answer this research objective and be tested using PLS-SEM path output regression . This study argues the importance of service marketing mix, operationalised as a second-order construct where nine elements of service marketing should be performed simultaneously and measured formatively. The idea of the service marketing mix to be used as higher-order construct has long been established but rarely adopted in previous studies (Jobhaarbima, 2017). Another essential point, customer satisfaction in the present study was constructed from the reflectivity of six items to accommodate the complexity of human responses in consumer behaviour, which is also rarely adapted in past studies. Both constructs were validated systematically and contributed to meaningful findings .

The empirical finding reveals that there was a significant relationship between service marketing mix and customer satisfaction (refer to Table 4.30) where the variance in customer satisfaction was moderately explained by 35.8% (refer to Table 4.31). This highlights the importance of service marketing mix as one of the main contributory factors in simulating satisfaction response among customers in Umrah services context . This finding is also in line with the concept definition of service marketing mix adopted in the present study in which service marketing mix was pointed to create the response it wants in the target market (Kotler &

Armstrong, 1989). The significant result on the relationship between service marketing mix and customer satisfaction was consistent with past studies such as Charoensettasilp and Wu (2014) in Thailand low-cost airlines, Sarker *et al.*, (2012) in China tourism and Thamrin (2012) in Indonesian ship passengers' satisfaction. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the concept and methodology adapted in the said studies may not be similar with the present study, and thus, it was considered as partially supported .

In structuring service marketing mix in Umrah travel agent, the present study found that marketing communication and after-sale service dimensions contributed significantly to the service marketing mix construct with the highest outer weights score. The result of the relationship between service marketing mix and customer satisfaction was strongly explained by all the dimensions namely product, price, promotion, place, people, process, physical evidence, marketing communication and after-sale service, all of which demonstrated a significant part in developing service marketing mix which creates a significant relationship with customer satisfaction .

This finding indicates that Malaysian Umrah customers are conservative where they prefer Umrah service product such as transportation in the holy land (Mecca, Medina), hotel provided (Mecca, Medina), Malay meals provided at the hotel and experienced mutawwif. Also the practitioners have to conserve their marketing, for example, the price of the Umrah package must be relevant to the services offered, the price of the Umrah package must be relevant to the facilities provided, and the price of the Umrah packages must be reasonable, the prices offered must be better compared to those offered by competitors, and the method of payment must be flexible while the promotion aspect was always interrelated and vital to the foundation of Umrah services such as the production of an advertisement (e.g. electronic media/print media),

sales promotion and public relations to enhance its image. Malaysian Umrah customers had demonstrated that they desire physical evidence such as office design, professional look of employee and facilities with modern technology. They also prefer the right Umrah staff, the professionalism of employees, the confidence of employees in serving customers, the management system to handle customers and representatives at the airport for the facilitation of check-in.

In addition to this finding, service marketing was extensively associated with customer satisfaction in terms of place and process, where they reacted actively in moulding service marketing mix for customer satisfaction assessment. Customer of Malaysian Umrah services favours a short distance of the hotel from Masjid Al nabawi, distance of the hotel from Masjid Haram, waiting area at the travel agent, accessibility to approach travel agent office, car parking facility. They are preferred friendly procedures to be provided, Umrah application process in general, Umrah application process time, Umrah application problem handling, the ability of the online system to process the inquiry, and Umrah courses provided.

Additionally, they prefer marketing communication and after-sale service to help find lost luggage, attractive after-sale service provided, responding quickly to service requests, changes in packages after availing one package, Information provided after reaching Malaysia from Umrah and Bus service from the airport to a designated destination in Malaysia. The responses from Malaysia Umrah customers implies that they favoured when chosen packages deliver exactly the service requested, clarity of message delivered through marketing communication and video information about Umrah. Therefore, marketing communication and after-sale service are important dimensions of the service marketing mix. The findings of marketing communication and after-sale service dimensions were positively and significantly related to Umrah

customer satisfaction. These results, therefore remind practitioners to advance their understanding of customer needs in formulating service marketing mix as they incorporate these aspects in their company's vision and mission.

## 5. Conclusion

This study acknowledges the competitive environment and the relevance of a scientific approach to pilgrimage driven travel services as an emerging area for expanding traditional touristic traveling research, focusing on leisure, world heritage, historical or commemoratives sites tourism. Malaysia, a country where 60 per cent of the population is Muslim, is used as a case study to investigate the effects on customer satisfaction of a novel service marketing mix strategy for Umrah service that include the traditional 7P's (promotion, place, people, product, price, process and physical evidence) plus two additional dimensions: marketing communication and after sales service. The results of 384 usable questionnaires demonstrate that after sale service and marketing communication have a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. These are two important dimensions in the service marketing mix that can be studied in other regions of the world offering Umrah services. Moreover, the results provide a basis for additional validation of client behavior and are useful to grasp relationships among service selling combination, customer satisfaction. There is some data concerned with service marketing mix and customer satisfaction; however, these selling terms studied show only occasional use in the Umrah travel field.

Furthermore, there was an absence of proof of such analysis in Malaysia particularly in the Umrah travel service sector. The present study fulfills this gap. In order to achieve justifiable growth, Umrah travel agents need to place emphasis on service marketing mix which leads in customer loyalty as specified in results of the study. The results are of use for policymakers and various high level experts in developing various plans and strategies for this sector. Furthermore, the study can be used by



scholars of different industries and different places throughout the world .

Apart from the many unique aspects coupled with findings and implications in various contexts within organizations at the micro level and also for society at large, still there are limitations because of the wider scope of study which goes beyond the borders. This study contains the respondents of Malaysia only, whereas the users of these services are living across the globe . Therefore, researchers, government institutions, regulatory bodies, academicians and policymakers as stakeholders should be vigilant in expending and implementing the outcomes of the study. It would be a better study if the data was collected from different districts and countries. Future research can be carried out to study service marketing mix and customer satisfaction in diverse industries. Comparative studies can also be helpful among different nations using these services to discover variations in customer satisfaction .

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