

Adoption of Interactive Role of Spiritual Support of Service Provider Between Brand Association and Perceived Benevolence in Handling Customer's Complaints through Mediating Role: Service Engagement

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Abstract: The study Purpose to measure adoption of the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider between brand association and perceived benevolence in handling customer's complaints through the mediating role for service engagement?, Depending on literatures that focused on the importance of the brand and the customer's benevolence towards the studied companies, Therefore, the study focused on a survey, a sample of the customers of the 3 tour companies operating in Iraq (Ahabab Abu Al Qasim Company, Al-Hateem Company, and Al-Awasheer Company) was surveyed in (367) questionnaire forms valid for analysis, and the results showed that the brand association is linked to service engagement, but the perceived benevolence is weakly associated with the service engagement of the service provider, and therefore, the spiritual support of the service provider works on adjusting the relationship between brand association, benevolence and service engagement. Moreover, the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider works on enhancing the influence of benevolence on handling customer complaints which contributes in balancing and enhancing the impact of the service provider's interactive role between brand association and perceived benevolence to handle customer's complaints through the mediating role of service engagement.

Keywords: Spiritual Support, Service Provider, Brand, Perceived Benevolence, Handling Customer's Complaints & Service Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Most tourist companies suffer from a weakness in the possibilities of handling the customers' tastes and intentions, which led to increase competition among tourist companies, whether at the local or regional levels, to indicate the customers' increased awareness and perception of adequate information about these companies and the services they provide in order to satisfy these different tastes, which led to customers' increasing complaints about these companies (Vinh, 2017:177). Thus study Purpose to measure adoption of the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider between brand association and perceived benevolence in handling customer's complaints through the mediating role for service engagement, as such it has become a priority for tourist companies to support service providers spiritually in order to strengthen the relationship between brand association and perceived benevolence to achieve the goals that companies seek to achieve at the expense of the quality of the provided services and attract as many

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customers as possible, so companies should anticipate customers' requirements through service engagement (Tait et al., 2002:193). But, the problem that companies will face is to improve the relationship between perceived benevolence and service engagement so they have to invest the spiritual support of the service provider to handle this situation in order to ensure successful handling of customer's complaints. Therefore, the study problem can be determined through this question: is it possible that the interactive role of the service provider's spiritual support between brand association and perceived benevolence in handling customer's complaints through the mediating role of service engagement could be done?, as well as to verify the impact of service engagement on handling customers' complaints in order to highlight the importance of the interactive role among variables and detect negative reactions among them.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The spiritual support of the service provider represents the use of the spirituality of the service provider as a means to face customers' complaints and their negative reactions (Wilks et al., 2013:313). Spiritual support improves the nature of communication between service providers and customers and overcomes difficulties that prevent meeting customers' requirements with the quality expected by the customer (Meluch,2018:137). According to (Nasser& Overholser,2005:125), the spiritual support of the service provider represents the amount of perceived aspects and it is the supporter of the service provider regarding the beliefs and values preferred by the customer, and that was argued by (Chukwudi et al.,2018:2) through dedicating the spiritual support of the service provider to be a means to improve and support the spiritual relationship of service providers with customers through improving intimacy, emotional and cognitive correlations. As for (Krause& Hayward,2016:485), they showed that spiritual support reflects the service provider's support to enhance customer's positive beliefs and behaviors. (Carleton et al.,2008:113) found that spiritual support of the service provider helps customers feel and anticipate the services provided. (Krause,2016:131) noticed that spiritual support in particular sustains the strength of the correlation between service providers and customers by respecting the beliefs and behaviors preferred by both parties. **According to the given argument, it is obvious that** spiritual support is a cornerstone for motivating and encouraging service providers to build positive relationships with customers by anticipating their spiritual relationship and directing their capabilities and desires and investing them in a way that meets the objectives of the studied tour companies.

Brand association reflects positive feedbacks and information that remains in the customer's imagination and memory (Loureiro & Santana,2010:743) that, in its turn, affects the emotional state of customers by building a positive spoken word for the products, services and company dealing with it (Chen,2017:1-2). (Wijaya,2013:63) believed that the brand association represents the group of brand-related symbols through which unique product offerings can be created, as well as repetitive and consistent activities such as sponsorship activities, social responsibility, or issues that are strongly related to the brand, individuals and owners, as well as symbols and meanings which is strongly related to the brand. (Wu et al.,2020:321) showed that brand association achieves a range of advantages for the company by distinguishing the company's brand from other competitors. **Therefore, brand association** represents a combination of the skills and practices that the organization uses to build unique marketing offerings and achieve its primary purpose, as well as enhancing the strength, reputation and state of the company among similar companies in the same industry.

As for **perceived benevolence**, it works on improving the relationship with customers by enhancing customer gratitude to the company, as well as guiding the company to improve its features more permanently and continuously communicate with customers as well as keeping them. (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2022:3-6). (Fazal e Hasan,2013:193) believes that customer's perceived benevolence plays an

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important role in enhancing emotional commitment, gratitude and customer engagement, as well as building a positive spoken word and improve customers' expectations for the value provided by the service provider. In other words, customer's perceived benevolence indicates the customer's expectations that the company with its abilities and capabilities will work to meet his/her requirements and satisfy them, and in return, he/she has loyalty, reliability and credibility towards it.

Handling Customer Complaints is considered as an important marketing strategy to keep customers during service failure (Fan et al., 2013:15; Ahmed et al.,2020:1). (Yang et al.,2018:202) argued that handling customer complaints represents a decision-making process that inherently involves classifying complaints and developing exclusive and appropriate solutions to deal with them as much as possible. According to (Bell& Luddington,2006:221), customers' complaints improve the company's ability to develop its capabilities in order to note the negative behaviors that customer suffers from and work to solve them as soon as possible. (Davidow,2014:70) showed that the response to handle customers' complaints is done through three dimensions (the possibility of the spoken word that refers to the possible intentions to provide service to relatives and friends by the service provider, equality of the spoken word and refers to the positive and negative feedbacks expected from the customer, and the intention to repurchase which means encouraging the customer to re-deal with the company). Through out what was mentioned above, it can be said that the response to customers' complaints refers to the mechanisms and methods used by the company to deal with negative feedbacks that violate the behaviors of service providers and the company whose reputation and status in the market could be affected. Therefore, the following hypotheses can be imposed:

The first hypothesis: The increased interest of tour companies in the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider with brand association contributes in handling customers' complaints.

The second hypothesis: The increased interest of tour companies in the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider with perceived benevolence contributes in handling customers' complaints.

Service engagement is a process used by service providers to improve the relationship with customers to determine their requirements and work range, handling problems and provide potential solutions to provide the service as best as possible and achieves customers' satisfaction (Meng et al., 2007:477). According to (Melecio,2015:1), service engagement works on building a relationship of trust with customers who are not reluctant to the company and focuses primarily on providing services efficiently and effectively in order to ensure the customer's re-engagement with the company. (Vogt et al.,2019:6) argued that service engagement plays an important role in improving the company's service environment by motivating service providers to engage in the service in order to gain customers' confidence and to understand their requirements. (Osei-Frimpong et al.,2018:3) indicates that service engagement works on improving the relationship between the service provider and customers who deal with the company by taking into account the contextual and relational factors that affect the context of the relationship, as well as ensuring that services are provided with high effectiveness to customers, and their visions and loyalty are gained (Monero,2005:3). (Tait et al.,2002:193) showed that service engagement can be measured in four dimensions: availability (attendance) which indicates that the customer attends on time, cooperation i.e. participation in the management of the activities of the service provider, requesting assistance i.e. the customer asks the service provider for help in order to meet a certain need or desire, and the commitment to meet the desires which refers to the customer's behaviors towards the service provided. **Through out what was mentioned above, it can be said that service engagement** represents a range of the marketing practices and skills that the service provider classify in a way that they build customers' high trust and credibility in order to gain their satisfaction and loyalty and guide them in a way that serves the interests of the company. Therefore, the following hypotheses can be imposed:

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The third hypothesis: The increased interest of tour companies in the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider with brand association contributes in handling customer complaints through the mediating role of service engagement.

The fourth hypothesis: The increased interest of tour companies in the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider with perceived benevolence contributes in handling customer complaints through the mediating role of service engagement. And figure (1) represents the study hypothetical diagram.

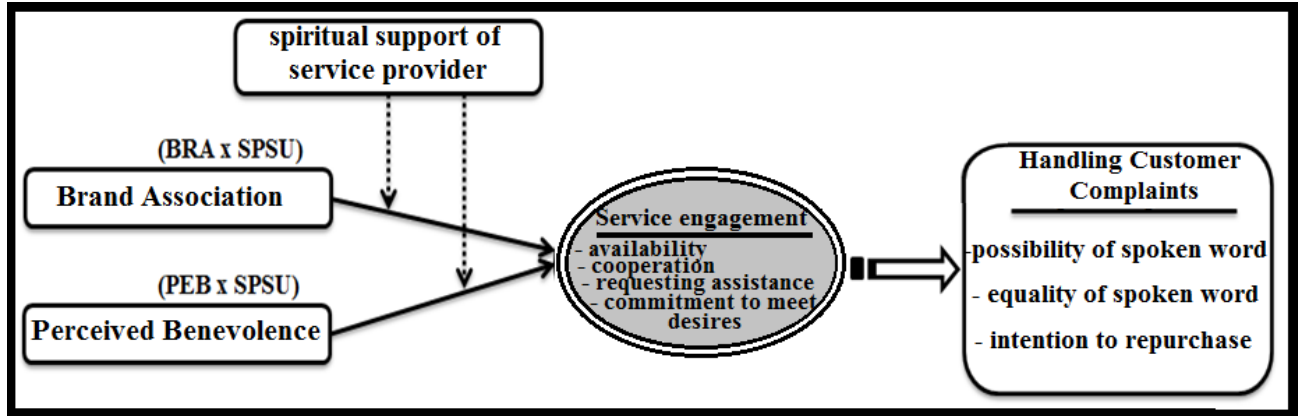


Figure (1) The study hypothetical diagram.

THE STUDY METHODOLOGY

1. Study Problem

The subject of spiritual support for the aunt provider and brand association is of great importance as they play a role in the survival and success of business organizations. This has led many marketing researchers and practitioners alike to further scientific verification towards the well-meaning study in order to address customer complaints through the intermediary role of service engagement and in the interests of companies, by highlighting an important question that (What are the stimuli of the interactive role of service provider spiritual support, brand association and well-meaning perceived in addressing customer complaints by mediating service engagement) Identifying and addressing the causes of this question reduces negative behaviors that can affect the service provider and limit performance during the service encounter.

2. The study scales

The study depended on the questionnaire measurement tool in order to measure the level of availability of study variables in the tour companies (Ahhbab Abu Al Qasim Company, Al-Hateem Company, and Al-Awasheer Company), the spiritual support of the service provider (SPSU) was measured in (13) items using (Genia,1997) scale. Meanwhile, a new scale for brand association was developed to measure the correlation with the brand (BRA) in (4) items based on the researcher's ideas (Wijaya,2013), whereas (Fazal-e-Hasan et al., 2020) scale was adopted to measure perceived benevolence (PEB) in (3) items. The HCC represents three dimensions (HCCA probability), HCCB, and HCCC in three items per dimension using the (Davidow, 2014) scale. Finally, to measure service engagement (SEE), the study relied on four dimensions, three items for each of (attendance SEEA) and cooperation (SEEB), and four items for each of (assistance request SEEC), and a commitment to meet the customer's desire (SEED), by adopting (Tait et al., 2002) scale.

3. The study sample

The sample of the study was represented by a group of customers dealing with three tour companies (Ahabab Abu Al Qasim Company, Al-Hateem Company, and Al-Awasheer Company). (400) questionnaires were given to a group of customers dealing with the above-mentioned companies. After data analysis, it was found that the number of forms suitable for analysis was (367), (10) of them were damaged and (15) were invalid for analysis, whereas (8) of them were not returned, i.e. the response rate was 91.75% with a significance level less than (0.05) i.e. the trust rate was (95%), with a Cronbach’s alpha stability rate of more than 70% (Hair et al., 2010), its values were (SPSU=0.864, BRA=0.771, PEB=0.737, HCC=0.871, SEE=0.936). The stability variable for the study as a whole was (0,964), which refers to the consistency, harmony and compatibility of the questionnaire tool with the opinions and requirements of the studied sample.

RESULTS

3.1 Description of the study sample

Looking at the results of table (1), it is obvious that the general rate of the arithmetic means of the spiritual support variable of the service provider was (4.1) with a standard deviation of (0.84) to indicate harmony and compatibility of the opinions of the studied companies towards paying attention to the customers’ requirements whom they deal with, and this was shown by the item (SPSU3) with a high arithmetic mean of (4.29) and a standard deviation of (0.86) so that the studied companies could support the spiritual potentials of service providers in a way that contributes in convincing and attracting customers to deal with the studied companies.

Moreover, the results showed that the general rate of the arithmetic means of the brand association variable was (3.86) with a standard deviation which was equal to (1.11) and this was consistent with the perceived benevolence variable in an arithmetic mean of (3.91) with a standard deviation of (0.99) to indicate the compatibility and harmony of the opinions of the studied companies towards providing convenient tourism means and facilities to customers.

The results show that the general arithmetic mean of the customers’ complaints variable was 4.14 with a standard deviation of (0.79), and the results also showed that the service engagement had an arithmetic means which was equal to (4.42) with a standard deviation of (0.81) so that the studied companies can enhance their capabilities in order to improve the ability of service providers to engage in the provided services.

Table (1) The arithmetic means and the standard deviations of the study items and variables

No.	Mean	S.D	No.	Mean	S.D	No.	Mean	S.D	No.	Mean	S.D
SPSU1	4.07	0.87	BRA1	3.8	0.75	HCCB1	4.25	0.92	SEEB1	4.19	0.82
SPSU2	3.89	0.84	BRA2	3.88	0.74	HCCB2	4.02	0.94	SEEB2	3.98	0.89
SPSU3	4.29	0.86	BRA3	3.84	0.99	HCCB3	4.06	0.93	SEEB3	3.72	1.28
SPSU4	3.75	0.85	BRA4	3.73	0.96	HCCB	3.77	0.93	SEEB	3.96	0.78
SPSU5	3.84	1.05	BRA	3.86	1.11	HCCC1	3.87	0.9	SEEC1	3.83	0.82
SPSU6	4.16	0.78	PEB1	4.02	0.83	HCCC2	3.98	0.78	SEEC2	4.12	0.73
SPSU7	3.39	1.17	PEB2	4.04	0.82	HCCC3	4.34	0.84	SEEC3	4.02	0.92
SPSU8	3.49	0.91	PEB3	3.8	0.89	HCCC	4.17	0.84	SEEC4	3.86	0.97
SPSU9	3.81	0.92	PEB	3.91	0.99	HCC	4.14	0.79	SEEC	3.88	0.82
SPSU10	3.98	0.79	HCCA1	3.47	0.88	SEEA1	3.71	0.8	SEED1	4.06	0.85
SPSU11	3.84	0.92	HCCA2	3.57	0.85	SEEA2	3.87	0.84	SEED2	4.26	0.81

SPSU12	3.84	0.8	HCCA3	3.85	0.83	SEEA3	4.11	0.76	SEED3	4.2	0.74
SPSU13	3.91	0.9	HCCA	4.08	0.91	SEEA	4.07	0.96	SEED4	4.14	0.86
SPSU	4.1	0.84							SEED	4.17	0.87
									SEE	4.42	0.81

3.2 Hypotheses test

Figure (2) indicates that the standard model of the study follows the criteria set by (Hair et al., 2010) in values of (CMIN/DF=1.406, GGF=0.915, AGFI=0.901, CFI=0.927, RMSEA=0.065). This refers to the compatibility and harmony of the study model with the opinions of customers who deal with the four studied companies.

The results of table (2) indicates that the interactive role of the service provider's spiritual support in brand association achieved the level of impact of (0.291) in encouraging customers to engage in service to refer to the interest of studied companies in supporting service providers spiritually.

Table 2 results indicate that the interactive role of the service provider's spiritual support in brand association achieved the level of impact of (0.787) to encourage customers to engage in service and with a standard error which is equal to (0.261) and critical value of (3.015), to indicate the interest of studied companies in supporting service providers spiritually and improving positive feedback towards brand association so that studied companies can build a positive spoken word that contributes in handling any customers' complaints about the service provided in the future. This proves what was mentioned in the first hypothesis which is that (the increased interest of tour companies in the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider with brand association contributes in handling customer complaints)

The results also showed that the interactive role of the service provider's spiritual support in the perceived benevolence contributed in the handling the relationship towards service engagement by (0.291) and with a standard error of 0.129 and a critical value of (2.256), so that the studied companies can handle the customers' benevolence towards engaging in the service provided by supporting service providers spiritually and developing their capabilities and methods in dealing with customers in order to ensure building positive relationships, and enhance customers' gratitude for the provided services and enhance customer durability and loyalty to the companies. This proves what was mentioned in the second hypothesis which is that (the increased interest of tour companies in the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider with perceived benevolence contributes in handling customer complaints).

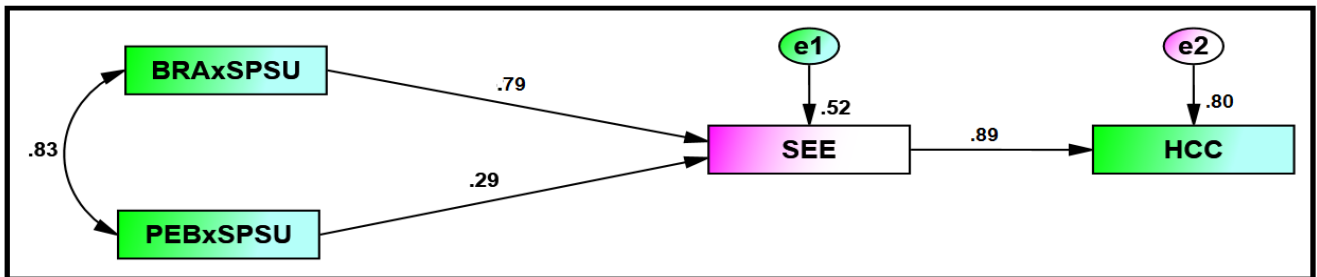
The results show the contribution of service engagement as a mediating role in developing the relationship towards the interactive role of the service provider's spiritual support between brand association and perceived benevolence to handle customers' complaints of (0.894) and reduce the standard error rate to (0.029) and develop the critical value to the maximum possible of (30,828). This indicates that the interactive role of the service provider's spiritual support towards brand association and perceived benevolence contributed in improving the relationship with customers through involving them in the service provided, and handling any potential customers' complaints now or in the future, so that studied companies can enhance the emotional role, gratitude and engagement of the customer, and build a positive spoken word and improve the companies' anticipation of the needs and desires of customers. In other words, to develop the ability of the studied companies to respond to handle the negative behaviors that customers suffer from as a result of the provided services, as well as handling customer violations of standards of the companies by building a positive relationship aimed at gaining customers' satisfaction, loyalty and gratitude and encouraging them to engage within the service. This proves what was mentioned in the third and fourth hypothesis.

Table (2) Standard results of the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider between brand association and perceived benevolence in handling customer’s complaints through the mediating role for service engagement

path				Estimate	S.E	C.R	R ²	P
BRAxSPSU	--->	SEE		0.787	0.261	3.015	0.521	0.001
PEBxSPSU				0.291	0.129	2.256		0.001
BRAxSPSU	--->	SEE	--->	HCC	0.894	0.029	30.828	0.799
PEBxSPSU								***

The interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider between brand association and perceived benevolence in handling customer’s complaints through the mediating role for service engagement also contributes in interpreting (0.799) of the reasons that lead to customers’ complaints and their negative behavior towards the provided services while the remaining value goes to factors outside the study requirements.

Figure (2) the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider between brand association and perceived benevolence in handling customer’s complaints through the mediating role for service engagement



DISCUSSING RESULTS

The results of the study show a set of essential points that can benefit the studied companies in order to handle customers’ complaints and their negative feedbacks, as follows:

A. Conclusions

1. the existence of a positive relationship between the interactive role of the spiritual support of the service provider between brand association and perceived benevolence
2. the existence of a rather weak relationship between the perceived benevolence of customers and service engagement.
3. the existence of the need to invest the spiritual support of the service provider as an interactive variable to handle the relationship between perceived benevolence and service engagement.
4. Service engagement also contributes as a mediating variable to develop the ability of the studied companies to handle customers’ complaints in the light of the interactive role of the service provider's spiritual support between brand association and perceived benevolence, which contributed in interpreting (0.799) of the reasons leading to customers’ complaints.
5. the results showed that increased interest of tour companies in the interactive role of spiritual support of the service provider with perceived benevolence contributes in handling customers’ complaints.

B. Recommendations

1. The study recommends the need to invest the necessary efforts, resources and policies in order to encourage customers to engage in service by developing the capabilities of service providers through the interactive role of spiritual support between brand association and perceived benevolence in order to handle customers’ complaints.
2. the necessary that the spiritual support of the service provider is a useful marketing tool to achieve a kind of balance between brand association and perceived benevolence as an interactive role on the mediating role of service engagement.
3. the necessary noted that there is a rather weak influence on the perceived benevolence on service engagement, but the entry of spiritual support as an interactive variable between them has contributed in developing the relationship and this is in the interest of the studied companies by enhancing the relationship between the service providers and targeted customers.

4. Future studies

The current study focused on the use of the interactive role (spiritual support of the service provider) in order to achieve balance between the brand association and perceived benevolence and develop this relationship through service engagement as a mediating variable to handle customers’ complaints in the light of a group of tour companies. Therefore, future studies can use larger and more comprehensive models in order to study culture, values and organizational behaviors in order to handle customers’ complaints. And thus, the future studies can use more comprehensive models representing in the service recovery, service friendship and service enhancement in order to handle customers’ complaints, negative feedbacks, negative spoken word that may directly or indirectly impact on the industrial or service performance, reputation and status of the studied company.

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