

Determinants of Customer Satisfaction in Takaful (Islamic Insurance) Services in Malaysia

(Penentu Kepuasan Pelanggan dalam Perkhidmatan Takaful (Insurans Islam) di Malaysia)

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the pertinent components of satisfaction variables that could help the Takaful Insurance to identify and prioritise ways to gain customers. The study employed a quantitative research approach by conducting surveys through questionnaires to respondents from two universities in Malaysia. The findings from the research proved that service quality and the role of agents are significant towards the determinants of customer satisfaction in Takaful insurance services. However, the performances of the takaful operators are found to be insignificant to the service quality. In conclusion, takaful operators need to improve and strengthen their service quality and the role of their agents as well. As for the performance of these takaful operators, customers do not rely much on it, and takaful operators should not concentrate much on this factor while offering their services.

Keywords: Takaful; customer satisfaction; service quality; takaful performance; role of agents; Malaysia

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyelidik komponen pembolehubah kepuasan pengguna terhadap Insurans Takaful bagi mengenal pasti dan mengutamakan cara untuk mendapatkan pelanggan. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan penyelidikan kuantitatif dengan menyebarkan soal selidik kepada responden dari dua universiti di Malaysia. Penemuan kajian ini membuktikan bahawa kualiti perkhidmatan dan peranan ejen adalah penting kepada kepuasan pelanggan dalam perkhidmatan Insurans Takaful. Walau bagaimanapun, prestasi syarikat takaful didapati tidak signifikan kepada kepuasan pelanggan. Kesimpulannya, syarikat takaful perlu meningkatkan kualiti perkhidmatan dan menguatkan lagi peranan agen-agen mereka bagi meningkatkan lagi kepuasan pelanggan mereka. Bagi penunjuk prestasi syarikat takaful ini, kepuasan pelanggan tidak bergantung sangat padanya dan syarikat tidak perlu untuk memberikan penekanan yang lebih dalam memberikan perkhidmatan mereka.

Kata kunci: Takaful; kepuasan pelanggan; kualiti perkhidmatan; prestasi takaful; peranan agen; Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there are many operators that offer insurance services and takaful for protection against any risks in Malaysia. People's preference varies as some choose to opt for conventional insurance, whereas some choose takaful. Malaysia has achieved significant milestones in the development of the takaful industry. Selecting the right takaful literally means that all the rules and guidelines of the policy are based on the shariah or Islamic laws, which are often free from the elements of Riba (interest), *Gharar* (uncertainty), and *Maisir* (gambling).

According to Hamid (2011), Islamic and conventional insurances are potentially diverse contracts. Islamic insurance which is also referred to as Takaful is based on the concept initially developed on the following three principles: (1) Mutual responsibility, (2) Co-operation with each other, and (3) Protecting one from any kind of difficulties, disasters and other misfortunes. The financial contribution (premium) of the Takaful is usually based on the concept of '*tabarru*'.

The word Takaful is derived from the Arabic word "*kafala*" which means to guarantee, look after and trust. *Tabarru* is derived from the Arabic noun that elucidates donation, gift or contribution. In relation to this, the members mutually provide guarantees to each other against loss or damage and the participant fulfils his / her obligation by contributing a certain amount of donation (or *tabarru*) into the fund (Billah 2002).

In the event of a loss or damage suffered, the takaful operator will reimburse the funds as per norms to all its members. Any surplus is paid out only after the obligation of assisting the participants has been fulfilled. This principle has enabled takaful as a secure and profitable sharing venture between the takaful operators and the participants.

The first takaful industry in Malaysia started in 1985 with the enactment of the Takaful Act 1984. Since then Malaysia's takaful industry has been gaining momentum and has been progressively recognised as a significant contributor to Malaysia's overall Islamic financial system.

Compared to the conventional insurance, it can be seen that Takaful industry only succeeded in conquering the Malaysia market at 13% as compared to conventional insurance which is 87% (Abu Hassan et al. 2014). However, according to Bank Negara Report (2017) on Annual Takaful and Insurance Statistics, shows that the net contribution income for 2016 from takaful industry is RM7.534 billion compared to the premium income from insurance industry of RM48.678 billion for the same period of time.

Previous studies have investigated the extent of customer satisfaction in various industries and shed light on customer satisfaction in the overall insurance industry. Some studies have reviewed certain practices of the insurance industry by narrowing their scope of study to one particular type of insurance. However, not much research has been carried out to reveal about the takaful insurance services that is available in insurance industries especially in Malaysia. Few studies have presented comparative analysis between conventional insurance policies and the Takaful insurance. The development of the insurance industry has influenced the method business that is usually offered to the customers till date (Kaur & Negi 2010).

Customer satisfaction leads to the growth of the financial sector which in turn leads to the overall growth of economic sector of a country (Shahid, Saeed & Tirmizi 2015). For the progress of any industry, customer satisfaction is very important. Thus, it is imperative to understand the determinants that affect customer satisfaction specifically in takaful insurance services. The factors that influence Malaysian customers to choose Takaful services over the conventional insurance policy need to be explored further. Many studies have been carried out to determine the factors that contribute to customer satisfaction and service quality (Bahari 2014; Razak et al. 2013; Hamid 2011), Takaful performance (Dunbar & Schwalbach 2000; Dusuki & Abdullah 2007; Bashir & Mail 2011) and role of agents (Annuar 2004; Lai et al. 2014; Kamal & Mat Nor 2014). The current study aims to investigate these factors extensively in order to specify the contribution of these factors on customer satisfaction in Takaful services. The findings of the current study will indirectly help takaful operators to improve the quality of their products and services, so as to attract more people to buy their products. The significance of this study is to contribute to the management of takaful services in Malaysia. This study will enable operators to work with their limited resources and positively contribute to customer satisfaction. The current study will also be an addition to the enrichment of knowledge in the takaful service industry.

The present study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the pertinent components of factors contributing to customer satisfaction that help the Takaful insurance operators to identify and prioritize ways to optimize customer satisfaction? Is it possible

to develop a guideline to cover most of the common characteristics of the Takaful insurance?

2. Are there any significant correlations between the factors such as service quality, takaful performance and role of agents on overall customer satisfaction? and
3. What is the impact of these predicted variables on customer satisfaction?

LITERATURE REVIEW

SERVICE QUALITY

Several studies have revealed different types of determinants that contribute towards customer satisfaction. According to Bahari (2014), good quality service leads to customer satisfaction and their decision to suggest and promote the policies to others. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) defined service quality as an overall judgement criterion similar to the attitude towards the service and generally accepted it as an antecedent of all aspects of customer satisfaction (Zeithaml & Bitner 1996). Previous studies on customer satisfaction clearly demonstrate that the relevant advice is necessary to deal with all kinds of insurance sectors including the Takaful industry. It is assumed that the provided advice is universally applicable to all the insurance sectors. All types of insurances can be treated the same and can address the customer satisfaction concept in general terms without making any explicit reference to any type of insurance.

Razak et al. (2013) reported that the most effective and influential factor is service quality because it is important to the customer for their evidences. Service quality is considered as a company's competitive advantage and a route to corporate profitability (Newman 2001). According to Headley and Miller (1993), service quality has now become a critical competitive consideration. Service quality is about meeting customer needs and requirements and delivered compatible of the service in line with the customer's expectations (Al-Tamimi & Al-Amiri 2003).

A study conducted by Lai et al. (2014) reported that service quality significantly affects overall customer satisfaction. Customers expect the service providers to do what they are supposed to do fairly and this is considered as the key to fulfil the customer's expectations. Being accurate and dependable is expected to satisfy the customer needs. Customer satisfaction is the result of the buyer's perception of service quality and this satisfaction further leads to customer retention. This ensures good reputation and repetition of purchase while enhancing the relationship (Hamid 2011).

As stated by Gronroos (1997) and Ryals and Knox (2001), the perspective of customer satisfaction is mainly driven by the service quality of the takaful operator. Service quality is important because, as the customer may switch to another service if they are not satisfied. The feeling that customers endure when they experience

a service that fulfils or surpasses their expectation is called as customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is defined as the global evaluation of relationship fulfilment by any firm (Dwyer & Oh 1987). Generally, customer satisfaction is known as an outcome of service quality, which means that it is related to the quality of the products or services provided to the customer in a positive manner. Brady and Robertson (2001) and Cronin and Taylor (1994) confirmed a positive relationship between high service quality and customer satisfaction.

TAKAFUL PERFORMANCE

According to Dusuki and Abdullah (2007), Islamic and financial reputation and the quality of services offered by the Islamic banks is the reason for the selection of the Islamic banks in Malaysia. Fast and efficient services reputation and the adherence to Islamic rules in the banks is considered as the most important criteria considered by the consumers while choosing the service provider (Erol & El-Bdour 1989). Naser, Jamal and Al-Khatib (1999) supported these findings. This idea was also concluded in previous studies which confirmed that the strong image of a bank (Ekrem, Ayyildiz & Er 2007; Rammal & Zurbruegg 2007; Hoq, Sultana & Amin 2010) and its reputation (Naser et al. 1999; Almosawi 2001; Dusuki & Abdullah 2006; Gait & Worthington 2008; Mansour et al. 2010) are important contributors in the selection of Islamic banking among customers. However, research by Anamitra, Fauzia and Rajesh (2018) on consumer expectations on Islamic banks in United Arab Emirates found that the decision to open an account with an Islamic bank is influenced by consumer expectations regarding the conformity of the bank's operations with Islamic principles in addition to a consumer's Arab language skills. Variables such as consumers' nationality, gender, education and familiarity with IB do not have a significant influence on the decision to open an account at an Islamic bank. This is in line with the Takaful study, which found that 32.4% of the respondents chose reputation as their reason behind selection of Takaful services with regards to the business (Bashir & Mail 2011). Dunbar and Schwalbach (2000), related this to reputation of performance of the Takaful operators and concluded that performance has a strong effect on subsequent reputation. This suggests that a good reputation gives good performance of the takaful company and thus lead to customer satisfaction.

ROLE OF AGENTS

Recent study from Lai et al. (2014) revealed that the role of agents significantly affected overall customer satisfaction. This is also supported by Hui-Chen (2006), where he claimed that in the insurance industry, a vital role in developing the relationship among the buyer and seller is portrayed by the agent. There is indirect motivation that enables consumers to maintain the relationship with

service providers (Jap 2001). Reynolds and Beatty (1999), found that the relationship between the satisfaction or loyalty towards the sales-person or agents were based on feelings of either pleasure, joy, dejection or detest rather than the trust towards. Doney and Cannon (1997) and Jap (2001) also supported this through their research. Both studies found that trust towards the agents or sales-person affected the decision of the consumers and retention of the relationship, where the agent's personality or characteristic traits were taken into account. Hui-Chen (2006) performed studies suggested that a customer attitude towards sales agents becomes positive when customers receive benefits from the agents and thus the attitude of the agents' attitude appears to be customer satisfaction criteria.

A similar study related to the agents and efficiency of the system was carried out by Annuar (2004). The aim of the study was to ascertain the perception on the importance of the agents and to examine which marketing channels contribute to the most selected by current and potential customers. The result from the study by Kamil and Mat Nor (2014) concluded that the roles of takaful agents in explaining the concept of takaful and the benefits is a primary factors that influences the choice of takaful and promotes customer satisfaction. The agent's role is considered as an aspect of worship (*Ibadah*). The obligation by Takaful agents in promoting the Takaful product to Muslims is being attributed as an act of *Da'wah*.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

The study was conducted by adopting the following theoretical framework as depicted in the Figure 1. The figure examines the connection between independent variables (service quality; role of agent and Takaful performance) and dependent variables (customer satisfaction).

Based on the theoretical framework, the study

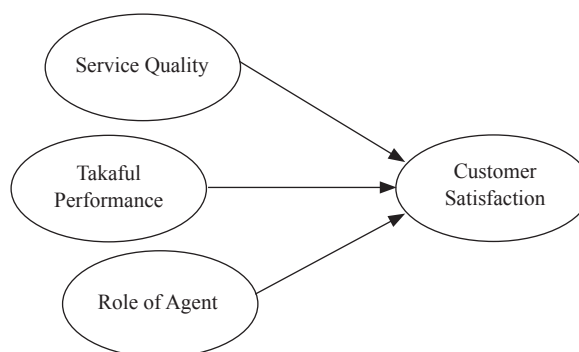


FIGURE 1. The proposed research model

hypotheses were set as stated below:

- H₁ There is a significant relationship between the service quality and customer satisfaction in Takaful Insurance services
- H₂ There is a significant relationship between the takaful

- performance and customer satisfaction in Takaful Insurance services
- H₃ There is a significant relationship between the role of agents and customer satisfaction in Takaful Insurance services

METHODOLOGY

The current study was conducted by quantitative techniques through a survey method by collecting data from the respondents. The survey method is chosen because of the high degree of reliability and time and cost effectiveness (Sekaran 2003). The instrument for this study is a questionnaire that was distributed to all the respondents. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method was followed in order to determine the sample size. This study focused on the university students and staff members, owing to their knowledge about the takaful service industry. The sample population for the current study comprised of 210 respondents from Universities Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) and University Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) including both staff (lecturers and administrative staff) and students (undergraduates and postgraduates). Simple random sampling method was used for selecting the sample population. The chosen sample was selected because the researcher is currently working in one of the universities, therefore it data from the sample population was easily assessable. For data collection, the study used a self-administered questionnaire that was distributed through emails and by hand to the 210 participants of the UniSZA and UMT. A structured self-administered questionnaire was adapted from previous

studies. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended multiple choice questions which were divided into four sections and were represented by a demographic profile with three independent variables and one dependent variable. The data was analysed using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)* software version 22.0.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Table 1 represents the genders of the respondents. In this research, female respondents were slightly higher than male respondents that is, 47.7% (105 male respondents) and 52.3% (115 female respondents).

A majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 26-30 years and depicted a total of 35.5% of respondents. 22.3% of the respondents belonged to the 31-40 year age group and 21.4% belonged to 20-25 year age group. The age groups 41-50 year and 51 years and above depicted the least in number as compared to other age groups, at 12.7% and 8.2% respectively. The questionnaires were distributed solely to Malay race. About 21.4% of the respondents resided in the rural area (47 individuals). Meanwhile, the majority of the participants that is about 78.4% belonged to urban areas (173 individuals). About 38.2% (84 individuals) of the respondents were from the UniSZA, whereas only 26.8% (59 individuals) of the respondents belonged to UMT. Around 9.1% (20 individuals) were UMT staff members.

The monthly income of most of the respondents

TABLE 1. Demographic profile

Variable	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	105	47.7
	Female	115	52.3
Age	20-25 years old	47	21.4
	26-30 years old	78	35.5
	31-40 years old	49	22.3
	41-50 years old	28	12.7
	51 years old and above	18	8.2
Race	Malay	220	100
Residency	Rural	47	21.4
	Urban	173	78.6
Current Position	UMT Staff	20	9.1
	UniSZA Staff	57	25.9
	UMT Student	59	26.8
	UniSZA Student	84	38.2
Monthly Income	RM1,000 below	141	64.1
	RM1,000 – RM1,899	11	5.0
	RM1,900 – RM2,999	23	10.5
	RM3,000 – RM4,999	28	12.7
	RM5,000 and above	17	7.7

(64.1%) was approximately in the range of RM1,000. 12.7% (12 individuals) of the respondents had a monthly income ranging from RM3,000 to RM4,999. Only 5% of the respondents fall under the monthly income level range of RM1,000 and RM1,899, which is less than the group of respondents (10.5%) that have a monthly income level of RM1,900 to RM2,999. About 7.7% of the total respondents earned a monthly income of RM5,000.

As 65% of the total respondents are students from both universities, their monthly income was below RM1,000. The staff of both universities that is, about 35% of the respondents, the monthly income level is more than that of RM1,900. Comparing the profile of the respondents, the current study concluded that most of the respondents (78.6%) who resided in the urban area were students with a monthly income of below RM1,000. It demonstrated that urban students were more receptive to takaful services as compared to rural students.

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

The findings of the current study were tested for its reliability and the results are depicted in Table 2. There were a total of 20 variables measured in this study. Each variable was measured with five items. Based on the results, the ‘role of agents’ variable achieved the highest Cronbach’s Alpha value at 0.791, whereas ‘Takaful performance’ variable obtained the lowest Cronbach’s Alpha value at 0.716. Service Quality ($\alpha = 0.788$), Takaful performance ($\alpha = 0.716$), Role of agents ($\alpha = 0.791$) and Customer satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.782$) variables are of good reliability as their Cronbach’s Alpha value exceeded a value of 0.7 (Hair et al. 2003).

TABLE 2. Reliability analysis

Variable	No. of Item	Cronbach’s Alpha
Service quality	5	0.788
Takaful performance	5	0.716
Role of agents	5	0.791
Customer satisfaction	5	0.782

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 3 represents the value of $R^2 = 0.370$, which shows that there is a 37.0% change in the dependent variable (customer satisfaction) arising from the changes in the independent variables (service quality, takaful performance and role of agents). The adjusted R^2 was set at 0.230 and F statistic at 2.748. The adjusted r-square value in the model summary indicates that 23% of the three independent variables explain their influence on overall customer satisfaction. However, the remaining 77% could be due to some other variables which were excluded in

the current study. Although the R^2 value is considered at a low level, the independent variables are found statistically significant, demonstrating that the service quality and the role of agents are important factors in determining overall customer satisfaction in takaful services.

TABLE 3. Model summary and anova of multiple regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
1	0.192 ^a	0.370	0.230	2.748	0.044 ^b

a. Predictors: (Constant), RO Agent, Takaful Performance, Service Quality

b. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Based on coefficient of multiple regression analysis tables, (Table 4) it is evident that service quality is the most significant variable that contributes to the customer satisfaction. This was concluded due to the highest Beta of un-standardised coefficient which is 0.137, among all the independent variables. The second is the role of agents that represented 0.067 Beta of un-standardised coefficient. However, this shows that Takaful performance variable is not significant individually in regards to the customer satisfaction variable. This was concluded as the p-value of customer satisfaction variable was calculated to be more than 0.1 of the significant level, whereas the p-value of Takaful performance variable was about 0.255.

TABLE 4. Coefficient of multiple regression analysis

Model	Unstandardised Coefficient		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	3.306	0.347	9.527	0.000
Service Quality	0.137	0.064	2.122	0.035
Takaful Performance	-0.066	0.058	-1.140	0.255
Role of Agents	0.067	0.048	1.395	0.016

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction The result analysis of the current study show that service quality has a p-value of 0.035 (less than $\alpha = 0.05$) and coefficient value of 0.137, which signifies that service quality has a significant positive relationship towards customer satisfaction. Therefore, a high quality service will positively enhance customer satisfaction in Takaful Insurance services. This will indirectly create customer loyalty which plays a crucial role in takaful insurance industry that offers homogeneous products and services to the customers. This allows the takaful insurance to stay competitive in the market. Thus, the hypothesis H_1 , which states that there is a significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in Takaful Insurance services is accepted.

Relationship between Takaful Performance and Customer Satisfaction This current research highlighted that the takaful performance and customer satisfaction has a negative relationship with a p-value of 0.255 (more than $\alpha = 0.05$) and coefficient value of -0.066 . Thus, the hypothesis H_2 which stated that there is a significant relationship between takaful performance and customer satisfaction in Takaful Insurance services is rejected. This variation may be due to customer's indifference and ignorance to the performance of takaful business as it does not affect them directly. This factor could be considered if the customers were given some monetary benefits pertaining to the increase in the performance of this takaful business.

Relationship between Role of Agents and Customer Satisfaction The analysis of obtained results revealed that the role of agents and customer satisfaction has a positive relationship with a p-value of 0.016 (less than $\alpha = 0.05$) and coefficient value of 0.067. A takaful agent acts as the front-line employee that represents the firm to serve the customers. They are responsible for recruiting new customers, selling insurance policies, and also ensuring that the policies are beneficial to their customers. Thus, if an insurance agent is responsible, knowledgeable and serves a customer cordially, there will be noticeable positive influence on overall customer satisfaction. Hence, hypothesis H_3 is accepted, which stated that there is a significant relationship between the role of agents and customer satisfaction in Takaful Insurance services.

The current study concluded that the management of Takaful services needs to concentrate their resources towards improving their service quality and upgrading their services by providing after sales services to their customers, to determine the extent of customer satisfaction. Such services will also ensure that the customers are well informed and up-to-date with the terms of the services. The management should also establish more takaful agents by giving their agents a higher percentage of commission on the takaful sales.

The findings of this study are in line with the study conducted by Haslina Kartini and Norudin (2016), but the independent variables used are different. The low adjusted r-square value of 23% suggests that further research is required to be conducted by using other independent variables such as takaful image, customer knowledge or other monetary values. It concluded that, Takaful operators need to improve and strengthen their service quality and the role of the agents. It is also evident that the customers do not rely much on the performance of the Takaful operators, so the industry must not concentrate much on this factor while offering their services.

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