



IMPACT OF RETAIL SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER REACTIONS: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF RETAILER PERSONALITY

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of retail service quality on customer reactions, emphasizing the mediating role of retailer personality. Retail service quality is defined through dimensions like tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, which collectively shape customer perceptions and experiences. The study examines how these dimensions influence customer satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth behavior. It also explores how the perceived personality of a retailer—characteristics such as sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness—mediates the relationship between service quality and customer reactions. Analysis of survey data from retail customers reveals that high service quality enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty, and promotes positive word-of-mouth. Moreover, the findings indicate that retailer personality significantly mediates this relationship, suggesting that customers' perceptions of a retailer's personality traits are crucial in translating service quality into positive customer outcomes. This research contributes to retail management literature by underscoring the significance of both service quality and retailer personality in shaping customer reactions, offering valuable insights for retailers to enhance their service strategies and customer engagement.

Keywords: Retail service, customer reaction, mediating effect.

INTRODUCTION

In India retail sector provide substantially to India's economy by 1.1 trillion in 2020 and supports and provide a number of jobs to the employees in an continuous process . The study aimed to assess the influence of service quality on customer loyalty and satisfaction within the framework of the SERVQUAL model across four prominent Islamic banks in the Sultanate of Oman. Employing a quantitative approach, data was collected from 120 customers via a structured questionnaire distributed through convenience sampling. Analysis was conducted using SPSS, with reliability accessed via Cronbach's alpha and relationships examined through correlation and regression analyses. Results indicated an overall favorable perception ("Agree" response) across five dimensions: tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships among service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, while regression analysis highlighted the positive impact of empathy and responsiveness on satisfaction.

Recommendations include prioritizing improvements in empathy and responsiveness while acknowledging the importance of other dimensions such as reliability, assurance, and tangibles based on participant feedback.

Contemporary business enterprises recognize that customer loyalty is pivotal to their success, concurrently playing an indispensable role in enhancing market value. However, ensuring customer satisfaction requires a focus on various factors such as product quality, features, reliability, sales performance, and customer service. Satisfied customers typically exhibit repeat purchases, emphasizing the importance of meeting or exceeding their expectations. Quality, defined as meeting customer needs effectively, underscores this imperative (Beverly et al., 2002). In the competitive landscape, companies leverage customer service as a strategic process to drive efficiency, tap into new opportunities, enhance market accessibility, and elevate consumer satisfaction and loyalty levels (Calif, 1987). According to Goofin and Price (1996), customer service holds significance as it contributes to enhancing product quality, gaining competitive advantage, seizing profitable opportunities, and consequently boosting sales and revenue. The amalgamation of "Service" and "Quality" underscores the importance of delivering top-notch services to end-users. The term "quality" pertains to the standards or specifications promised by service-generating organizations. There is no definitive boundary for quality; rather, it represents an endless pursuit of excellence. Scientific discoveries and innovations pave the path for quality enhancement. The more frequent the innovations, the narrower the gap in the process of quality improvement.

Similar to manufacturing organizations, service providers also play a pivotal role in research and development, striving to introduce novel elements that differentiate their services and schemes from competitors, thus creating lucrative market opportunities. This trend is particularly prominent in developed countries, where the frequency of innovation is higher.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

P.S. Venkateswaran, Suja Sundram (2021)

This study aims to examine how retail service quality and store service quality influence both patronage intention and positive word-of-mouth within the organized retail industry.

Abdul Rashid and Varsha Rokade (2017)

The study aims to explore the influence of Retail Service Quality (RSQ) as a precursor and subsequent Customer Satisfaction, Trust, and Loyalty (customer reactions) on Retailer Personality. Data was gathered from a convenience sample of 410 Indian food and grocery shoppers. Utilizing PLS SEM and SPSS, the research demonstrates that perceived RSQ significantly affects traits such as Sophistication and Humbleness positively, while negatively impacting Disingenuousness and Introversion. RSQ exhibits direct associations with customer reactions as well as indirect connections through retailer personality. These interrelationships among variables contribute novelty to the study, which has not been previously investigated in RSQ literature.

Albert (2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the expansion of e-commerce in South Africa, mirroring global trends and reinforcing online shopping dynamics. Businesses are actively seeking

sophisticated models to tailor services effectively to their customers' needs. The collected data encompassed customers' perceptions of information quality, privacy concerns, perceived security, product variety, and product delivery as factors influencing customer satisfaction. Moreover, information quality and satisfaction were identified as pivotal determinants of customer loyalty. Structural equation modeling was employed to analyze 287 completed responses. Findings indicate that online shoppers' satisfaction is influenced by product delivery, perceived security, information quality, and product variety.

NOEL Y.M JEFF TAK-HING CHEUNG (2001)

Presently, there is a dearth of measures assessing service quality in retail establishments. Utilizing a validated Retail Service Quality Scale, this study scrutinizes the delivery of service quality within a department store chain and its influence on consumer behavior. The analysis reveals six distinct dimensions: personal interaction, policy adherence, physical environment, fulfillment of promises, problem-solving capabilities, and convenience. Results indicate that the appearance of the physical environment and adherence to store policies significantly impact overall perceived service quality and subsequent consumer behavior. Notably, among these dimensions, physical appearance and policy adherence exert the most substantial influence on overall service quality and future consumption, respectively. The study concludes by discussing the practical and scholarly implications of these findings.

EUPHEMIA F T YUEN & SIAN SL CHAN (2010)

This study aims to investigate the influence of various dimensions of retail service quality (namely, Personal Interaction, Policy, Physical Aspects, Reliability, and Problem Solving) and product quality (encompassing Features, Aesthetics, and Customer-perceived Quality) on customer loyalty within the curtain retail sector. Focusing on both store and staff interactions, data were gathered via a survey administered to patrons of a window fashion gallery and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Results indicate that only three dimensions of retail service quality (Physical Aspects, Reliability, and Problem Solving) exhibit a positive correlation with customer loyalty to the store, while Personal Interaction emerges as the sole dimension positively associated with customer loyalty to staff. This research contributes valuable insights to the understanding of consumer behavior within the curtain industry, offering novel perspectives that enrich the existing body of knowledge in this domain.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH GAP

The existing literature extensively examines the impact of retail service quality on customer reactions. However, there remains a noticeable gap regarding the mediating role of retailer personality in this relationship. While studies have explored the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase intentions, few have delved into how the distinct personality traits of retailers may moderate or enhance these effects. Understanding how the perceived personality of a retailer interacts with service quality to shape customer reactions is crucial for both academia and industry. This research gap presents an opportunity to explore the nuanced dynamics between service quality, retailer personality, and customer responses, providing valuable insights for retailers aiming to improve customer satisfaction, loyalty, and overall business performance.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Understanding the impact of retail service quality on customer reactions is crucial in today's competitive market landscape. By delving into this relationship, businesses can enhance their service offerings, thus fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, investigating the mediating effect of retailer personality provides valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms driving customer perceptions and

behaviours. Such knowledge enables retailers to tailor their strategies effectively, aligning their brand personality with service quality to resonate better with their target audience. Ultimately, this study not only contributes to theoretical advancements in consumer behaviour research but also offers practical implications for retailers seeking to optimize customer experiences and drive business success in the dynamic retail environment.

PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The study examines the correlation between retail service quality and customer reactions, focusing on the mediating role of retailer personality. It aims to identify how retail service quality influences customer perceptions and behaviors, and how retailer personality factors mediate this relationship. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for businesses to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. By exploring this relationship, the study seeks to provide valuable insights for retailers to improve their service quality and overall performance.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. Investigate the relationship between retail service quality and customer reactions to understand how service standards influence customer perceptions and behaviors.
2. Explore the mediating role of retailer personality in shaping the connection between service quality and customer reactions, elucidating how the retailer's perceived characteristics moderate this relationship.

RESEARCH DESIGN

RESEARCH TYPE: Descriptive in Nature

Sampling Technique: The study utilizes a stratified random sampling technique to gather data on the impact of retail service quality on customer reactions. It examines how retailer personality acts as a mediating factor, shaping customer perceptions and behaviors within the retail environment.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

- Primary data: This data was collected by conducting a survey
- Secondary data: The was collected through books, articles and from websites.

POPULATION: 50

SAMPLE SIZE: 41

SAMPLE UNIT: Hyderabad

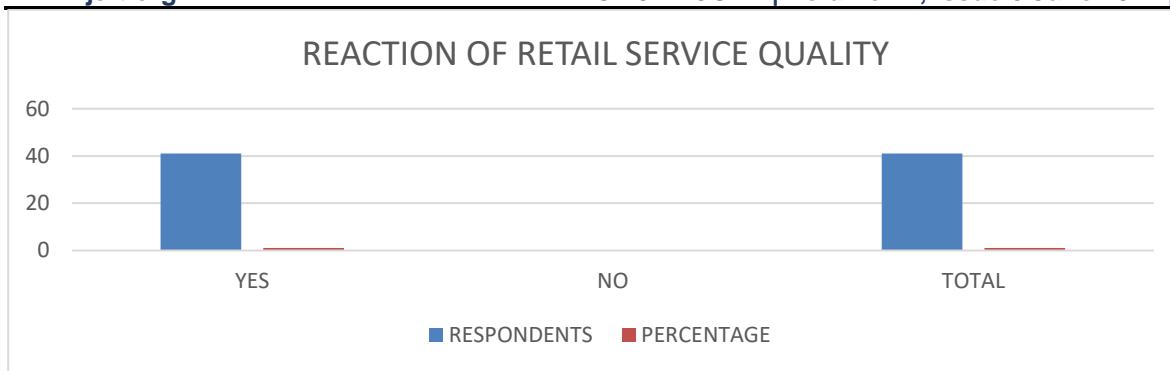
TOOLS USED: Google forms, Microsoft Excel, charts, Bar graphs and Chi – square test .

QUESTIONNAIRE:

This study investigates the influence of retail service quality on customer reactions, with a focus on the intermediary role of retailer personality.

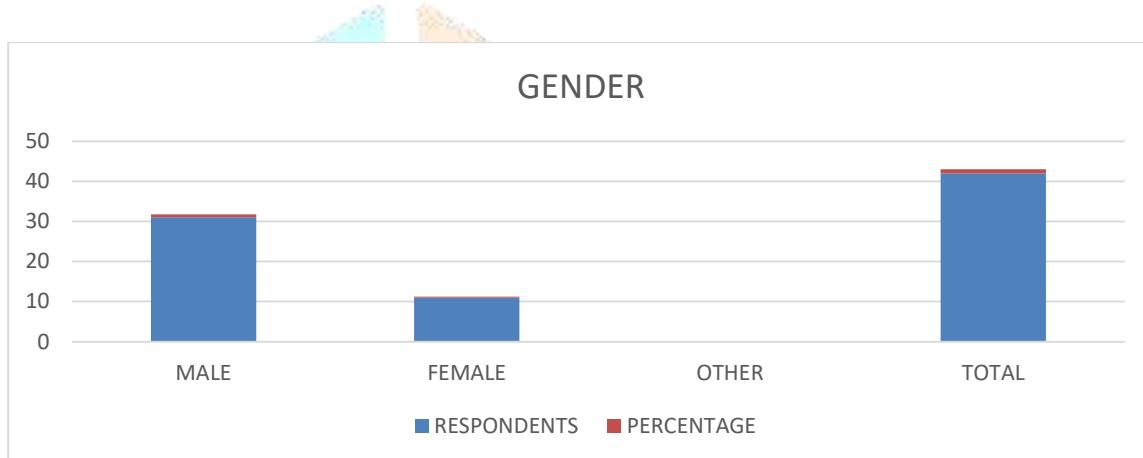
DATA ANALYSIS

RETAIL SERVICE QUALITY	YES	NO	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	41	0	41
PERCENTAGE	100%	0%	100%



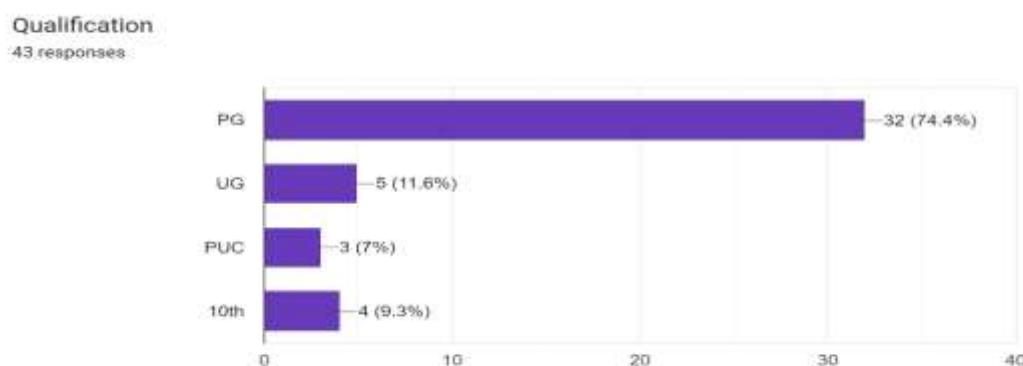
INTERPRETATION: The overall support for this retail service quality is for the yes with 100%.

GENDER	MALE	FEMALE	OTHER	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	31	11	0	42
PERCENTAGE	73.80%	26.20%	0	100%



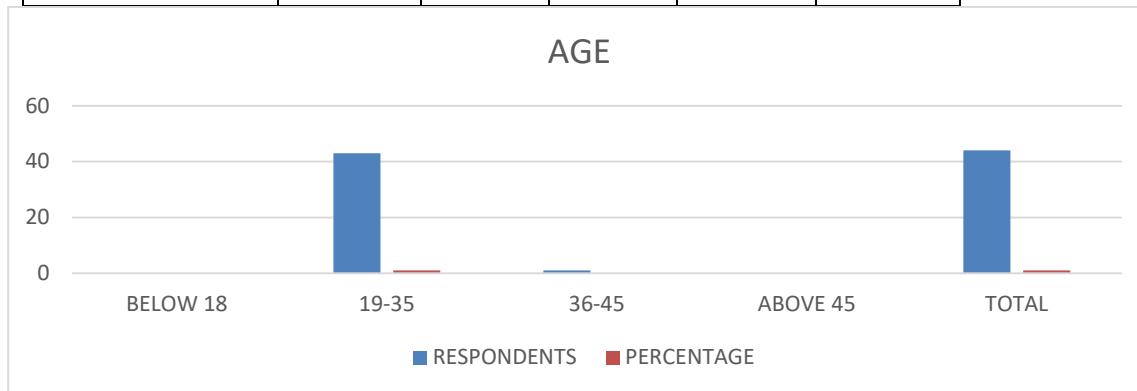
INTERPRETATION: There are most support given by the male with 73.8% and followed by female with 26.20%.

QUALIFICATION	PG	UG	PUC	10TH	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	32	5	3	4	42
PERCENTAGE	74.40%	11.60%	7%	9.30%	100%



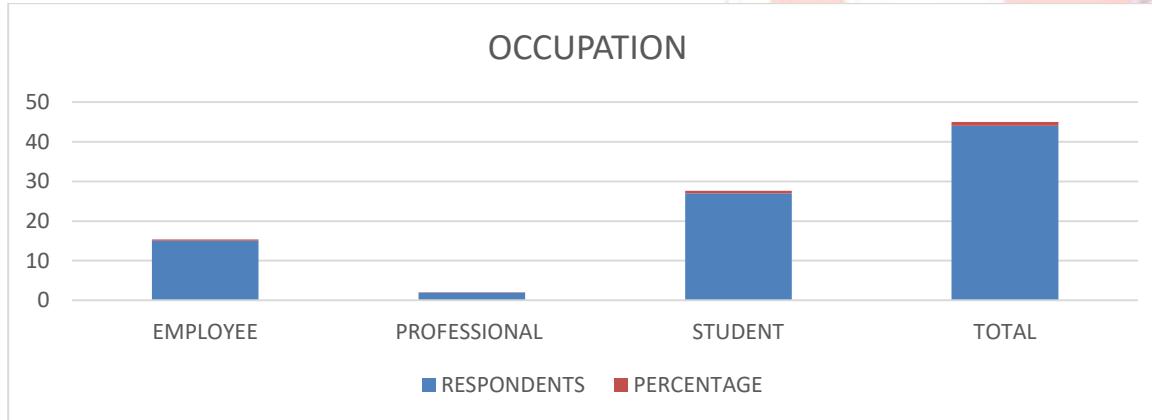
INTERPRETATION: The most of the respondents are from the PG and followed by UG with 74.4% and 11.6% respectively.

AGE	BELOW 18	19-35	36-45	ABOVE 45	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	0	43	1	0	44
PERCENTAGE	0.00%	97.70%	2.30%	0.00%	100.00%



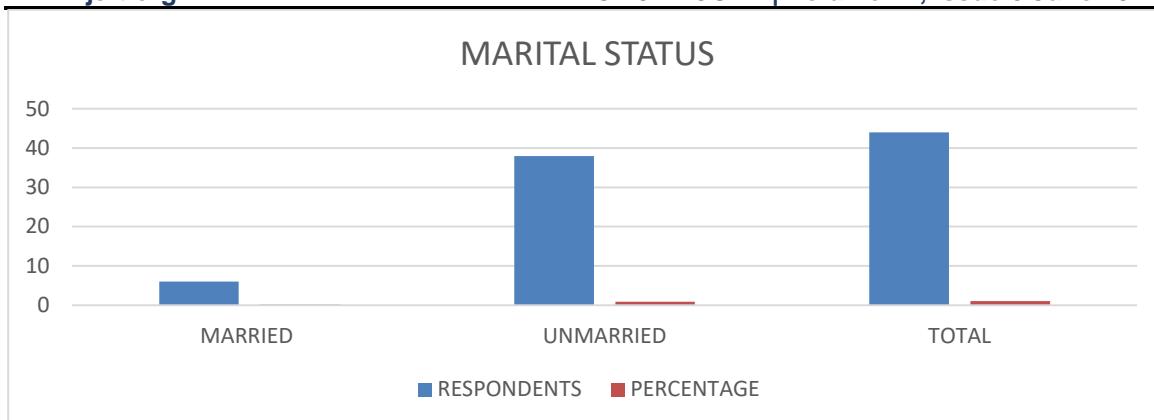
INTERPRETATION: The most of the age groups are from the 19-35 with 97.7 and 36-45 with 2.30.

OCCUPATION	EMPLOYEE	PROFESSIONAL	STUDENT	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	15	2	27	44
PERCENTAGE	34.10%	4.50%	61.40%	100%



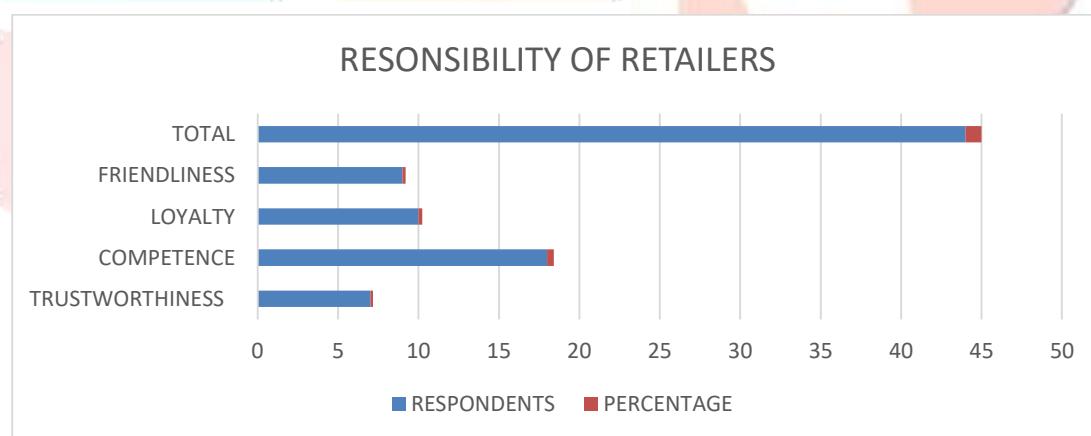
INTERPRETATION: The majority of the people are from students with 61.40% and followed by employee with 34.10%.

MARITAL STATUS	MARRIED	UNMARRIED	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	6	38	44
PERCENTAGE	13.6%	86.40%	100%



INTERPRETATION: The most of the people are unmarried with 86.40% and followed by married with 13.6%

RETAILER PERSONALITY	TRUSTWORTHINES	COMPETENC	LOYALT	FRIENDLINES	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	7	18	10	9	44
PERCENTAGE	15.90%	40.90%	22.70%	20.50%	100.00%



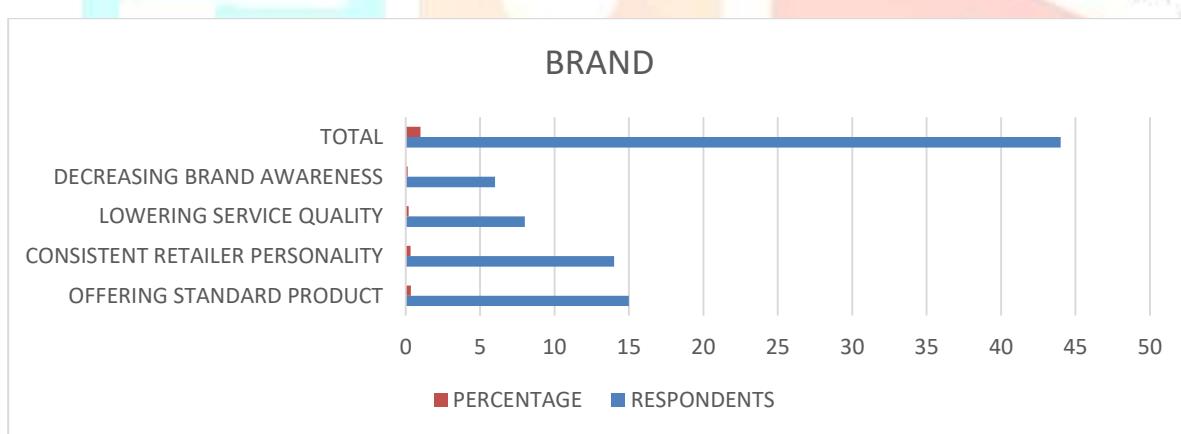
INTERPRETATION: The majority is goes for the responsibility of the retailer with competence with 40.9% and followed by loyalty with 22.7%.

ULTIMATE GOAL	REVENUE FOR RETAILERS	ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY PRACTICE	TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENTS	STOCK MARKET TRENDS	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	9	19	13	3	44
PERCENTAGE	20.50%	43.20%	29.50%	6.80%	100%



INTERPRETATION: The ultimate goal of research on the academia and industry practice with 43.20% and followed by technology advancements with 29.50%.

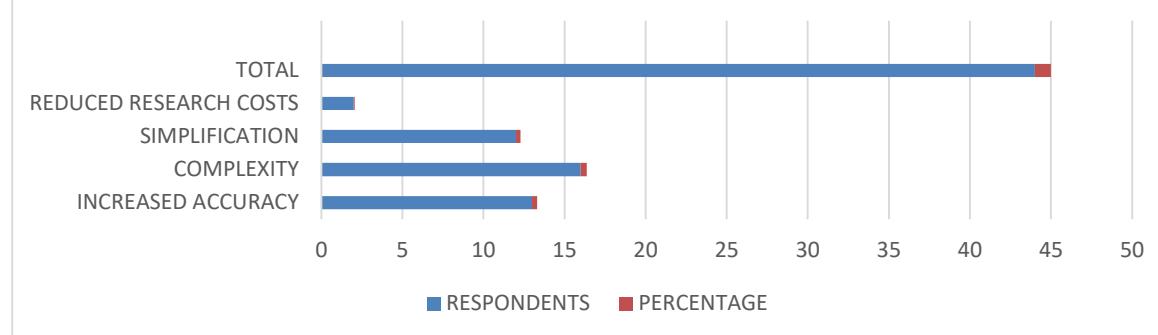
RAND	OFFERING STANDARD PRODUCT	CONSISTENT RETAILER PERSONALITY	LOWERING SERVICE QUALITY	DECREASING BRAND AWARENESS	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	15	14	8	6	44
PERCENTAGE	34.90%	32.60%	18.60%	14%	100.00%



INTERPRETATION: The majority of the support goes for the offering standard product with 34.90% and followed by consistent retailer peronality with 32.60%.

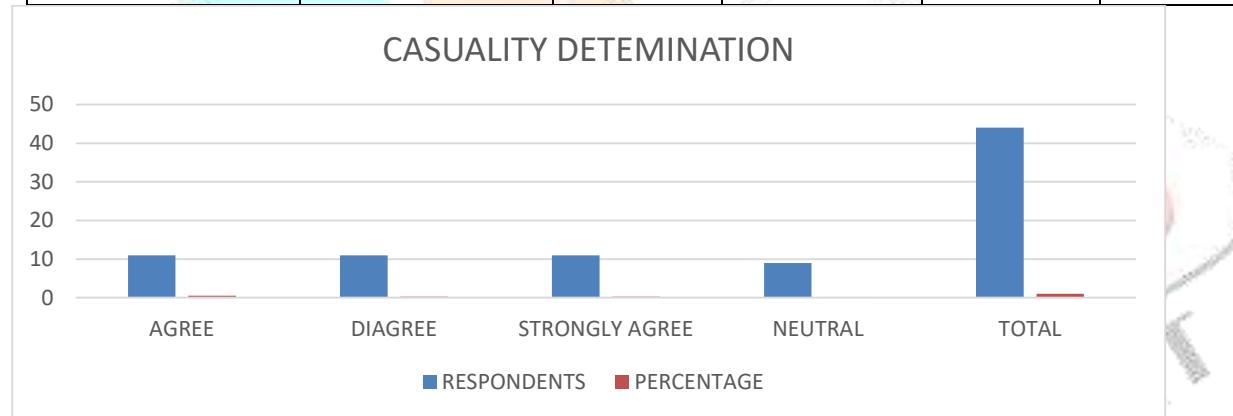
SERVICE QUALITY AND RETAILER PERSONALITY	INCREASED ACCURACY	COMPLEXITY	SIMPLIFICATION	REDUCED RESEARCH COSTS	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	13	16	12	2	44
PERCENTAGE	30.20%	37.20%	27.90%	4.70%	100.00%

SERVICE QUALITY AND RETAIL PERSONALITY



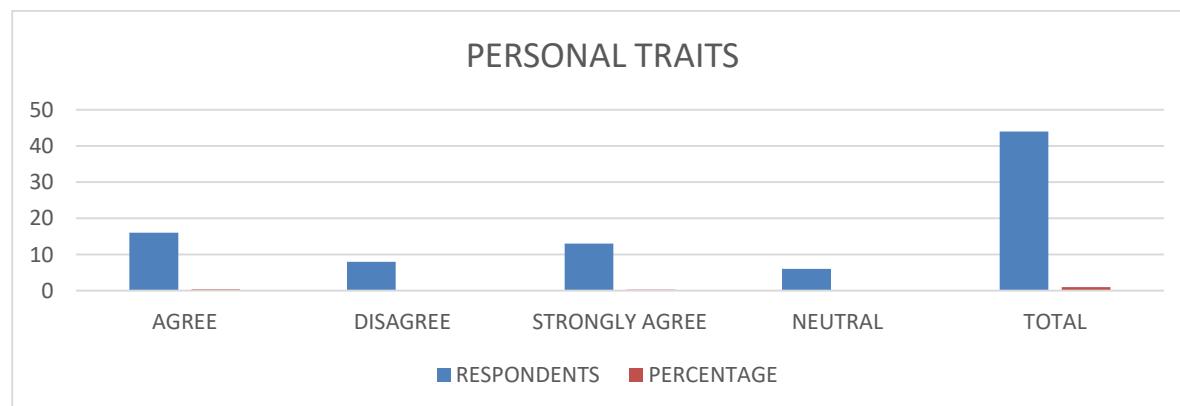
INTERPRETATION: Service quality and retail personality has more support on complexity with 37.20% and followed by increased accuracy with 30.20% .

CASUALITY DETERMINATION	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NEUTRAL	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	11	11	11	9	44
PERCENTAGE	56.20%	26.20%	26.20%	21.40%	100.00%



INTERPRETATION: Casualty determinanition are agree with 56.20% and followed by strongly agree and disagree with 26.20% .

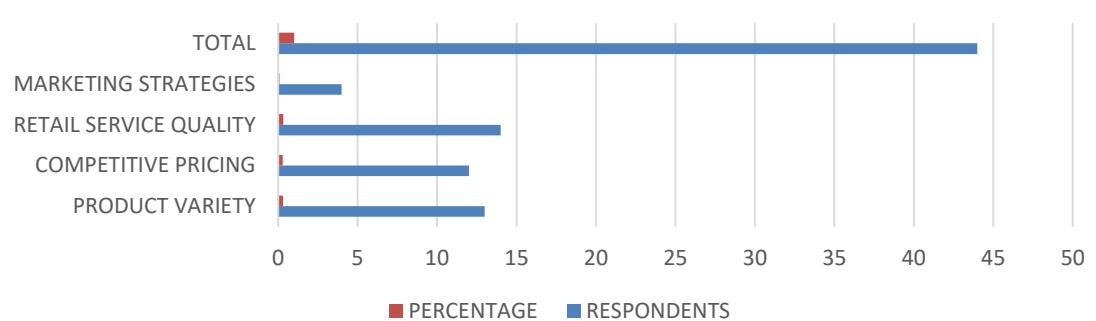
PERSONAL TRAITS	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NEUTRAL	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	16	8	13	6	44
PERCENTAGE	37.20%	18.60%	30.20%	14%	100.00%



INTERPRETATION: Retail Environment of the customers are responded that retail service quality with 32.60% and followed by product variety with 30.20%.

RETAIL ENVIRONMENT	PRODUCT VARIETY	COMPETITIVE PRICING	RETAIL SERVICE QUALITY	MARKETING STRATEGIES	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	13	12	14	4	44
PERCENTAGE	30.20%	27.90%	32.60%	9.30%	100%

RETAIL ENVIRONMENT OF THE CUSTOMERS



INTERPRETATION: Retail Environment of the customers are responded that retail service quality with 32.60% and followed by product variety with 30.20%.

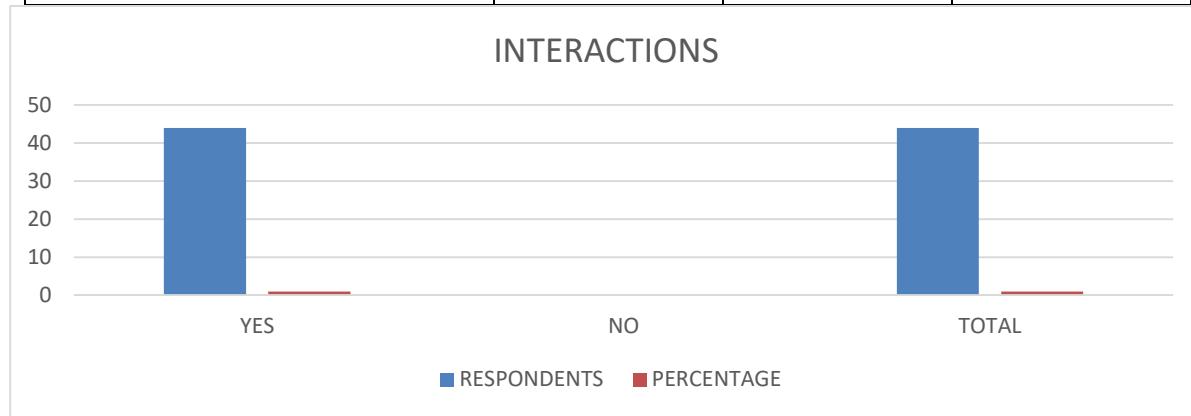
CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS	DICTATING PRODUCT PLACEMENT	DETERMINING EMPLOYEE SALARIES	INFLUENCING CUSTOMERS PERCEPTIONS AND INTERACTIONS	HAVING NO IMPACT ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES	TOTAL
RESPONSIBILITIES	13	10	16	4	44
PERCENTAGE	30.20%	23.30%	37.20%	9.30%	100.00%

CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS



INTERPRETATION: Customer Interactions are Influencing customer perceptions and interactions with 37.20% and followed by Dictating Product placement with 30.20%.

INTERACTIONS	YES	NO	TOTAL
RESPONDENTS	44	0	44
PERCENTAGE	100%	0%	100%



INTERPRETATION: Interactions are Yes with 100% and No with 0%.

STATISTICAL TOOL FOR ANALYSIS

HYPOTHESIS

Ho: there is no significant relationship between IMPACT OF RETAIL SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER REACTIONS: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF RETAILER PERSONALITY.

H1: There is a significant relationship between IMPACT OF RETAIL SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER REACTIONS: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF RETAILER PERSONALITY.

The chi-square statistic, *p*-value and statement of significance appear beneath the table. Blue means you're dealing with dependent variables; red, independent.

Results			
	Yes	No	Row Totals
Male	18 (19.93) [0.19]	13 (11.07) [0.34]	31
Female	9 (7.07) [0.53]	2 (3.93) [0.95]	11
Column Totals	27	15	42 (Grand Total)

The chi-square statistic is 1.9953. The *p*-value is .157787. The result is *not* significant at *p* < .05. Since *p* is less than 0.05, we reject H0 and accept H1 i.e. there is a significant relationship between impact of retail service quality on customer reactions: the mediating effect of retailer personality.

FINDINGS

- The overall support for this retail service quality is for the yes with complete 100%.
- Interactions are Yes with 100% and No with 0%.
- Customer Interactions are Influencing customer perceptions and interactions with 37.20% and followed by Dictating Product placement with 30.20%.
- Retail Environment of the customers are responded that retail service quality with 32.60% and followed by product variety with 30.20%.
- Casulatly determinate are agree with 56.20% and followed by strongly agree and disagree with 26.20%
- Service quality and retail personality has more support on complexity with 37.20% and followed by increased accuracy with 30.20% .
- The majority of the support goes for the offering standard product with 34.90% and followed by consistent retailer peronality with 32.60%.

- The ultimate goal of research on the academia and industry practice with 43.20% and followed by technology advancements with 29.50%.
- The majority is goes for the responsibility of the retailer with competence with 40.9% and followed by loyalty with 22.7%.
- The most of the people are unmarried with 86.40% and followed by married with 13.6%.
- The majority of the people are from students with 61.40% and followed by employee with 34.10%.

SUGGESTIONS

Understanding the intricate relationship between retail service quality and customer reactions is crucial in the modern retail landscape. However, a significant yet often overlooked aspect is the mediating effect of retailer personality on this relationship. Retailer personality encompasses the distinct characteristics, values, and traits projected by a retail brand, influencing customers' perceptions and interactions.

Research suggests that a positive retail service quality enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. Yet, the impact of this quality can be further amplified or mitigated by the perceived personality of the retailer. For instance, a retailer perceived as trustworthy and reliable may magnify the positive effects of superior service quality, fostering stronger emotional connections with customers. Conversely, if a retailer's personality is perceived as negative or incongruent with customer expectations, it could diminish the positive effects of even exceptional service quality.

Therefore, to effectively manage customer reactions, retailers must cultivate a coherent and appealing personality that aligns with their service offerings and target market. This can be achieved through strategic branding, consistent communication, and employee training to embody the desired personality traits. By understanding the mediating role of retailer personality, retailers can better anticipate and influence customer reactions, ultimately enhancing overall customer satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability in the competitive retail landscape.

CONCLUSION

The study delved into the intricate relationship between retail service quality, customer reactions, and the mediating role of retailer personality. Findings underscored that while retail service quality significantly influences customer reactions, the presence of a distinctive retailer personality acts as a crucial mediator in this dynamic. This mediation elucidates how customers perceive and respond to service quality, shaping their overall experience and loyalty towards the retailer. Through a comprehensive analysis, it was revealed that a positive retailer personality enhances the impact of service quality on customer reactions, fostering deeper connections and stronger brand relationships. Consequently, retailers must prioritize not only service excellence but also cultivate a distinct and favorable personality to optimize customer experiences and drive sustainable competitive advantage in the retail landscape. This study thus provides valuable insights for retailers to strategize and tailor their approaches to effectively engage and retain customers in an increasingly competitive market environment.

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