

Effect of Implementation of Industry 4.0 on Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in Malaysia

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Abstract

Nowadays in Malaysia, increased use of smart technologies by customers is leading to recognition of their influence on practitioners' companies. However, academic literature fails to acknowledge the influence of smart technology usage on customer satisfaction and loyalty. This is because most research focuses on companies' perspectives and how they will adapt to the new technology. Even in this regard, we can refer to the policy of countries such as Malaysia, where most of the policy is focused on how it is presented and used technology by companies but in this research, the acceptance and use of technology is examined from the perspective of customers. This research utilizes explanatory research at the preliminary stage to examine this phenomenon in SMEs setting. Based on the academic information found in the body of existing literature, a conceptual framework was developed and tested by a convenience sample survey of 383 SMEs customers in Malaysia. Furthermore, the differences in technological readiness by age, gender, and educational attainment have been investigated in this study.

Keywords: Industry 4.0, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, SME, Malaysia.

Introduction

Customer service can be both tangible and intangible in a firm and its important consideration in customer satisfaction and attention (Rajathi & Siva, 2018). Service providers offer products or services that match a customer's expectations and hope to satisfy the customer and pay attention to them with their excellent customer services. The higher the satisfaction or attention, the more guaranteed the customer loyalty (Cheung & Lee, 2005) and then Loyal customers are likely to purchase additional services, share positive news through word of mouth and on social media, and pay higher prices (Broderick & Foroudi, 2018).

Malaysia's national policy provides the transformation agenda for the manufacturing sector and its related services encourage make the leap to Industry 4.0. Looking at Industry4WRD, the focus is on the structural aspects of the policy and on product quality. Not much attention has been paid to service quality and effective employees. Hence, the Malaysia government must consider service quality as a key of competitive advantage. They should also outline the best practices for achieving this.

According to the definition, the concept of e-service quality would cover from the pre-use phase to the post-use phase (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000). Many researchers have created frameworks that explain how e-service quality affects customers. Through extensive literature on e-service quality analysis, this research found that there is no conceptual framework for the evaluation of e-service quality after the use of new industry 4.0 technology from the customer perspective. Later studies (e.g., Parasuraman, 2000) do not deal with aspects of the E-service quality of Industry 4.0 from the customer perspective Therefore, creating the instrument for the evaluation of e-service quality from the customer's perspective we should integrate both customer satisfaction and attention. Based on the reasons above, this study suggests the following: What is the relationship between E-service quality towards customer satisfaction and attention?

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Literature Review

Manufacturing technologies are advancing at a faster rate than ever before. In such a fast-paced and busy environment, it can be hard to cut through the information and noise to get to what really matters and what will really make a difference (McMorrow, 2019). In other words, Industry 4.0-related technologies are driving much of the changes that are currently taking place in manufacturing. This applies in all sectors, but it is particularly important in high-specification and highly regulated industries like Service Company and manufacturing (Aziz, 2018). While some would look at this as a potentially massive opportunity, there are concerns among the majority of firms and industry sectors as to how the Fourth Industrial Revolution would transform both the products and services that will be offered, and the processes or business models that are used to generate them (Abbas, 2021).

Customer Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction has been a critical term in business that has received extensive attention among researchers and practitioners. Customer Satisfaction has gained centrality in marketing literature because of its importance as a key component of business strategy and an aim for business activities, especially in today's competitive market. However majority of companies are more interested in using new technology as a business approach, which results to customer satisfaction because they move from a Product and sales philosophy to a marketing philosophy which gives a company a better chance of outperforming the competition (Giese & Joseph, 2017). Overall customer satisfaction translates to more profits for companies and market share increase (Churchill, 1992). The primary concern of promotion is to connect with customers by building strong survives in order to meet their expectations (Matsui, 2018). Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on an organization's profitability (Mcfarlane, 2018). The more customers are satisfied with produces or services accessible, the more are chances for any successful business as customer satisfaction leads to repeat purchase, brand loyalty, and positive word of mouth marketing (Rajathi.M & Siva, 2018). Customer satisfaction leads to repeat purchases, loyalty and to customer retention (Mcfarlane, 2018).

Hadiyati (2019) has further defined satisfaction as a feeling of pleasure or disappointment of a person, resulting from comparing a product or service noticed performance (or result) towards his or her expectations? In line with this idea, (Bradyb & Mhulta, 2018)also states that customer satisfaction is a collective result of view, evaluation and psychological reaction to the consumption experience with a product or service. It is important for recognizing various types of satisfaction. Previous studies by Johnson et. Al, 2008, Omachonu et al, 2008; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999, it clearly defines the difference between the two types of satisfaction - overall satisfaction and finding satisfaction. Satisfaction is the customers or clients experience that have experienced or received contact with the organization. Satisfaction on the other hand, is about the specific experience customers who have received various stages of service (Humayon, 2018). It means that customers have high expectations of the role of the employees of an organization especially, for the front-line staff; therefore, the successful meeting of customer expectations will reflect their satisfaction. (Sriyam, 2019) has conducted research customer satisfaction about the quality of the front office staff services. The results show the quality of service affects the customer satisfaction. Assurance may raise expectations to the highest level, while the tangibility meets the highest perception (Fogli, 2018).Ahmed et. Al, 2018 has conducted a research on the association between customer satisfaction and service quality and it has expanded to customer loyalty. Today most successful companies have taken the strategy of raising expectations and delivering performance to match. Such companies track their customers' expectations, perceived company presentation, and customer satisfaction. Highly satisfied customers produce several benefits for the company. Satisfied customers remain connected for a longer period and talk favourably to others about the company and its products and services (Suy, Chakriya Choun, & Chhay, 2018).

Optimism

Optimism can be defined as a positive attitude toward technology and believes that technology will increase control, flexibility, and efficiency in life (Parasuraman & Colby, 2001). Optimism in the model can be described as the belief that one will have a good experience in life or that the outcome of an activity will generally be positive.

It is argued here that as optimistic individuals, they are assumed to be less likely to focus on negative events of technology and would instead be confronting technology more openly. With optimism on their side, they would be more likely to accept their situation rather than be escapists. This is why optimistic people would be more willing to use new technologies available to them (Berkowsky, Sharit, & Czaja, 2019) stated that an optimistic person is generally less inclined to focus on negative aspects and they tend to adopt technology easier as they consider it as easy to use and beneficial. Using the same line of argument, in the case of industry 4.0 technology, it means that consumers with optimism would be more likely to have the intention to use .The relationship between optimism and technology usage intention was supported by several scholars. For example, (Chen, Yu, Yang, & Wei, 2018) found that optimism positively affects the consumer's intention to use the self-service parcel delivery service. In another study that examines business-to-business (B2B) customer intention to use digital services in their procurement processes, it was identified that optimism serves as the most influential dimension of TR followed by innovativeness, discomfort, and insecurity respectively (Hassan, 2018). (Makkonen & Frank, 2018) Also, there was a strong positive relationship between optimism and attention to using intelligent-sensor-based services, both when consumers received positive and negative information about the technology.

H1: Optimism has a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction.

Innovativeness

Innovativeness is a tendency to be a technology pioneer and thought leader. Innovativeness measures the extent to which an individual believes he or she is at the forefront of trying out new technology-based products and/or services (Demirci & Ersoy, 2020). Technology readiness explains the possibility of someone appreciating and applying new technologies. At the same time, innovation defined in the product development literature is one's willingness to adopt new products (Ricardo & Bianca , 2019). Therefore, regarding technology adoption, we expect that individuals with a high degree of innate innovativeness (i.e., openness to new things) shows inherent interest in trying new technologies and become innovators or early adopters (Blut & Wang , 2019).

Innovativeness is related to people's inclination to explore and try new things (Parasuraman & Colby, 2001). Innovative people prefer to explore their world which makes them more open to accepting new technology. Another key aspect of innovativeness is the tendency for people to collect and share information. Innovative individuals prefer learning new things and developing as they would then tell other people what they have learned. In general, innovative consumers play an important role in giving advice to other consumers (Parasuraman & Colby, 2001). People with high innovativeness traits have been described as those who possess powerful inherent inspiration when it comes to the use of new technology as they cherish the excitement of trying the innovation (San-Martín, 2018). (Gaitan, 2019) Added that the innovativeness trait represents the degree that which individuals want to try and use new technology services and products to become thought leaders on technology-related issues. In particular, these innovative people are also found to be very intrigued by new technologies in general and in exploring their attributes.

H2: Innovativeness has a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction.

Discomfort

Parasuraman (2000) defined discomfort as the perceived lack of control over technology and a feeling of being overwhelmed by it. Discomfort also refers to the degree to which people might have prejudice towards technology (El Alfy, Gomez, J., & Ivanov, 2017). It represents the degree to which people have a general paranoia about technology-based services and products, where they believe that these services and products tend to be exclusionary, rather than being used for all kinds of people (Parasuraman & Colby, 2001). Individuals with high discomfort traits would consider technology as more complex. They believe that technology is too complicated and is not designed to be used by normal people (Palupi, 2018). As such, they perceive technology as something that is not easy to use (Shirahada, 2018). They find technology use as something overwhelming and uncontrollable, which ultimately would lead them to a lower quality perception no matter what the actual outcome would be (Walczuch & Lemmink, 2019). Individuals with discomfort traits were described as individuals who become anxious and uncomfortable when it comes to using technology because they think that they are being controlled by technology (Ali et al., 2019). Perceived lack of control is the reason why individuals with high discomfort traits often possess little confidence when it comes to using technology; henceforth consider using it as more difficult (Walczuch & Lemmink, 2019).

The individuals who felt uncomfortable with new technology also felt unable to adopt that technology and felt uneasy because they could not control the technology, as well as anxiety about being controlled by the technology (Dabholkar, 1996; Norman, 1998). Therefore, individuals with a high level of discomfort perceive a new technology as complex and subsequently, this affects the level of the individual's technology acceptance.

H3: Discomfort has a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction.

Insecurity

Distrust of technology and skepticism about its ability to work properly. Although somewhat related to discomfort, this dimension focuses on specific aspects of technology-based transactions, rather than on a lack of comfort with technology in general. Insecurity, the second negative trait or inhibitor is defined as the distrust people have towards technology as well as them having skepticism about the technology's ability to work properly (Parasuraman & Colby, 2015) (Parasuraman, Technology-Readiness Index (TRI): A Multiple-Item Scale to Measure Readiness to Embrace New Technologies. , 2000). While it shows some degree of similarity with discomfort, there is a fundamental difference between this facet and discomfort, as insecurity focuses more on specific technology-based transaction aspects rather than lack of comfort pertaining to the technology in general (Parasuraman & Colby, Techno-ready marketing: How and why customers adopt technology., 2001) Parasuraman along with Colby (2015) stated that insecurity is a combination of user's concerns on technology's undesirable consequences, its safety issues, as well as the need for assurance.

Janssen and Dwivedi (2019) Explained that insecurity results from the absence of trust in technology and its capacity to function legitimately. According to (Blut & Wang, 2019), insecurity is negatively related to value, where skeptical individuals have the tendency to anticipate danger instead of benefit when it comes to using technology which would result in the development of a lower value perception of technology and its usage.

H4: Insecurity has a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction.

E-Service Quality

Customers derive satisfaction from a product, or a service based on whether their need is met effortlessly, in a convenient way that makes them loyal to the firm. Hence, customer satisfaction is an important step to gaining customer loyalty (Filho, 2018).

Companies are aware of the importance of the customer experience. When a customer is having a bad experience with a product or service they want help immediately, and they use every channel possible to get it. Companies are faced with the daunting task of having to take calls, and emails and monitor social media conversations, purchasing, inventory, and mentions. It's a dizzying array of options for customer contact, and ignoring any one channel could cost brands loyal customers (Newman, 2018).

Developing an effective marketing strategy requires the compilation of good data about customers, competitors, and markets, and the innovative conversion of that data into meaningful and leverageable information (Aaltonen P. G., 2018). Given today's competitive environment, a quality services firm must determine which channels are most appropriate and cost-effective for its various customer segments. It must accurately predict which customers will embrace technology as a substitute for personal service and still be highly satisfied and which customers will demand service with a predominantly personal touch (Aaltonen, Theresa A, & Edward P, 2019). It is especially important to understand this in the context of a firm's "highly valued" segments of its population. With appropriate technology in service, customer satisfaction and loyalty rates should increase, and long-term relationships should flourish (Crumbly, 2019).

H5: E-Service Quality has a significant effect on Customer Satisfaction.

Customer Loyalty

It costs a business 5 to 10 times more to acquire a new customer than get a repeat customer to purchase a product or service. Current customers, on average, spend 67% more than new customers (Raheem, 2019). Given these statistics, having an outstanding customer loyalty program is essential for any business. More than getting customers to repeat purchase, a loyalty program also helps businesses understand their customers to better cater to them in the future. The core of loyalty programs is, after all, to help a business identify their customers, unearth their needs, and address them (Smith, 2017). Attracting and maintaining loyal customers is becoming increasingly difficult as more and more businesses join the market looking for a piece of the customer loyalty pie. Not only is it important to maintain a degree of customer loyalty to stay competitive, but it helps with costs too (Paim, 2020).

Technology advancements have changed how customers buy from and interact with businesses and brands. From services, online shopping to virtual personal shoppers and the new ability for businesses to deliver exquisite customer care on a large scale, customers are more loyal than ever like (Khatibi, 2020), Artificial intelligence has helped retailers increase customer engagement, boost contemporary consumer demand, and individually deliver personalized, targeted messaging. Most companies have already jumped on the AI bandwagon. According to a (Haque, 2022) report, 80% of enterprises say their organization already has some form of AI in production. The same report showed that one of the top planned uses for AI was customer experience.

H6: Customer Satisfaction has significant effect on Customer Loyalty.

Based on the above description, the proposed framework has been developed.

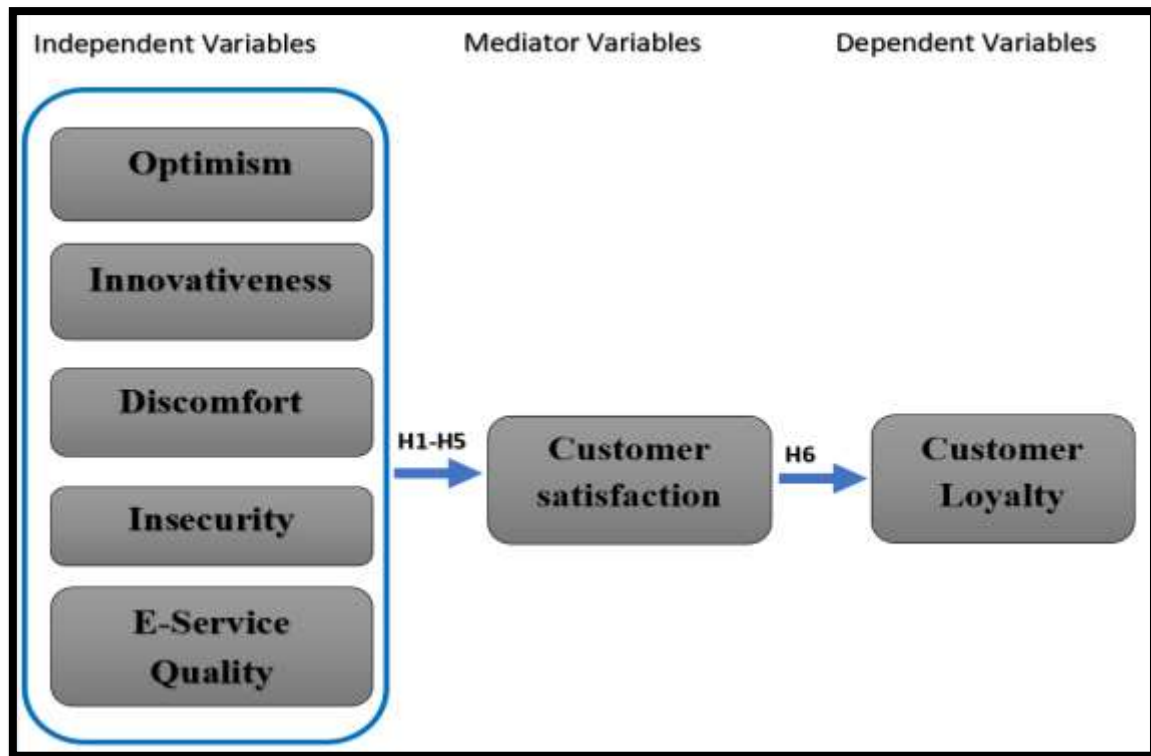


Figure 1. The Proposed Framework

Methodology

Quantitative questionnaire was sent out to 400 Malaysian customers who are familiar with using industry 4.0 in central regions in Malaysia. The respondents were selected using quota sampling method, age between 18 to above 67. Participation was voluntary and the questions were designed in English.

There are 10 questions measuring optimism, 10 questions measuring innovativeness, 10 questions measuring discomfort, 10 questions measuring insecurity, 10 questions measuring e-service quality, 10 questions measuring customer satisfaction and 10 questions measuring customer loyalty. All 70 questions in the questionnaire were verified by 2 industrial experts and 2 academics in terms of face validity and construct reliability before distributing to the respondents.

400 respondents were approached face-to-face, consent was obtained before the questionnaire was distributed. Each respondent was given 20 minutes to answer the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

Data Analysis

Descriptive Analysis

In this study, out of 400 questionnaires submitted, 384 viable responses were received. This adds to the 96.00% response rate. For this study, 384 valid replies were subjected to descriptive statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics software.

Table 1. Demographic Information

| | | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 211 | 54.9 |
| | Female | 173 | 45.1 |
| Age | 18-30 years | 84 | 21.9 |
| | 30 to 48 years | 156 | 40.6 |
| | 48 to 50 years | 97 | 25.3 |
| | 50 to 68 years | 27 | 7.0 |
| | above 68 years | 20 | 5.2 |
| Ethnicity | Malay | 110 | 28.6 |
| | Chinese | 164 | 42.7 |
| | Indian | 81 | 21.1 |
| | Other nationality | 29 | 7.6 |
| Educational Level | SPM below | 15 | 3.9 |
| | SPM/ Foundation | 36 | 9.4 |
| | Diploma | 91 | 23.7 |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 155 | 40.4 |
| | Master's Degree | 74 | 19.3 |
| | Doctorate / PHD | 13 | 3.4 |
| Income Level | Less than RM2000 | 8 | 2.1 |
| | RM2000-RM4000 | 56 | 14.6 |
| | RM4001-RM6000 | 113 | 29.4 |
| | RM6001 – RM 8000 | 128 | 33.3 |
| | RM 8000 above | 79 | 20.6 |
| Years of experience in technology | less than 1 year | 7 | 1.8 |
| | 1-5 years | 36 | 9.4 |
| | 5-10 years | 136 | 35.4 |
| | 10-15 years | 187 | 48.7 |
| | 15 years above | 18 | 4.7 |

From above the Table 1, there was almost equal balance number of females and males which was at 54.9% and 45.1% respectively. The age group of the respondents where respondents aged between 30 to 48 years formed 40.6% followed by between 48 to 50 years formed 25.3%, and lastly those who were above 68 years old stood at 5.2%. In terms of ethnicity, most of the respondents are Chinese (42.7%), followed by Malays (28.6%), Indians (21.1%) and others (7.6%). A vast majority of respondents were Bachelor's Degree holders (40.4%), followed by Diploma (23.7%), next Master's degree with 19.3%, SPM/ Foundation with 9.4%, SPM below with 3.9%, and the remaining 3.4% possess Doctorate / PHD. The income level of the respondents was formed 33.3% with monthly income RM6001 – RM 8000, followed by monthly income between RM4001-RM6000 formed 29.4%, and lastly those who were paid Less than RM2000 per month stood at 2.1%. The largest group in terms of Years of experience in technology are 10-15 years (48.7%), followed by 5-10 years (35.4%), 1-5 years (9.4%), 15 year above (4.7%), and less than 1 year (1.8%).

Structural Equation Model

A structural equation modelling technique called partial least squares path modelling, or partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-PM, PLS-SEM), enables the estimate of intricate cause-and-effect

linkages in path models containing latent variables. When it comes to analysing and making predictions with non-normal, categorical, or ordinal data, small sample sizes, intricate models containing several variables and indicators, formative assessment, higher-order constructs, and managing mediation and moderation effects, PLS-SEM performs better.

Table 2. Convergent Validity and Internal Consistency Reliability

| Construct | Item | Factor Loading | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Discomfort | Discomfort10 | 0.826 | 0.851 | 0.741 |
| | Discomfort11 | 0.895 | | |
| E-service | EService3 | 0.93 | 0.91 | 0.771 |
| | EService4 | 0.891 | | |
| | EService5 | 0.809 | | |
| Innovativeness | Innovativeness4 | 0.892 | 0.876 | 0.703 |
| | Innovativeness5 | 0.863 | | |
| | Innovativeness6 | 0.754 | | |
| Insecurity | Insecurity1 | 0.794 | 0.895 | 0.681 |
| | Insecurity2 | 0.885 | | |
| | Insecurity3 | 0.865 | | |
| | Insecurity4 | 0.749 | | |
| Optimism | Optimism1 | 0.724 | 0.883 | 0.602 |
| | Optimism2 | 0.778 | | |
| | Optimism3 | 0.789 | | |
| | Optimism4 | 0.829 | | |
| | Optimism5 | 0.754 | | |
| Customer satisfaction | CS1 | 0.857 | 0.883 | 0.656 |
| | CS2 | 0.85 | | |
| | CS3 | 0.818 | | |
| | CS4 | 0.705 | | |
| Customer loyalty | CL1 | 0.829 | 0.907 | 0.71 |
| | CL2 | 0.891 | | |
| | CL3 | 0.86 | | |
| | CL4 | 0.787 | | |

Table 2 tabulates all indicators' outer loadings. Generally, loading values of at least 0.6 are adequate with the condition that the AVEs are more than 0.6 (Byrne, 2016). It is shown that majority of the items are substantially loaded on their intended construct which are equal to or above 0.708. Thus, scores of all the indicator loadings are within the recommended threshold.

Table 3. Results of Structural Model Assessment for Hypotheses H1 to H6

| Hypothesis | Relationship | Standardised Beta | Standard Error | T-value | P Values | Decision | R2 | Q2 | f2 | VI F |
|------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------|----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| H1 | Optimism -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.191 | 0.052 | 3.666 | 0* | Supported | 0.169 | 0.102 | 0.039 | 1.128 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|--------|-------|-------|-----------|---------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| H2 | Innovativeness -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.163 | 0.057 | 2.864 | 0.002* | Supported | | | 0.031 | 1.026 |
| H3 | Discomfort -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.172 | 0.051 | 3.368 | 0* | Supported | | | 0.023 | 1.517 |
| H4 | Insecurity -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.102 | 0.053 | 1.927 | 0.027** | Supported | | | 0.008 | 1.502 |
| H5 | E-Service quality -> Customer Satisfaction | -0.009 | 0.044 | 0.214 | 0.415**** | Not Supported | | | 0 | 1.017 |
| H6 | Customer Satisfaction -> Customer Loyalty | 0.106 | 0.057 | 1.86 | 0.032** | Supported | 0.06 | 0.025 | 0.011 | 1.05 |

The t-test was performed for each path estimate in order to assess the statistical significance of the t-values and determine if the direction of the relationships was positive or negative. Thirteen hypotheses were formulated as a consequence of the structural model's link between the constructs. Results from the evaluation of the hypotheses as exhibited in Table 3, The one-tailed t-test with a significance level of 1%, the path coefficient will be significant if the T-value is larger than 2.3263; with a significance level of 5%, the path coefficient will be significant if the T-value is beyond 1.6449; with a significance level of 10%, if the T-value is less than 1.2816, it will fail to reject the null hypothesis. A p-value is not a negotiation: if $p > 0.05$, the results are not significant. Overall, out of the six hypotheses tested, only five are supported. They are H1, H2, H3, H4, and H6. The comprehensive results can be viewed by Table 3, which provides the comprehensive findings in a tabular format.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the government's Industry Revolution 4.0 on the market and the service sector and to generate a theoretically guided proposal based on the relevant issues' results. It is anticipated that governments, multinational corporations, SMEs, and aspiring entrepreneurs will find value in the study's findings. It will assist them in comprehending the impact of Industry Revolution 4.0 on the marketplace. Meanwhile, it is the responsibility of government officials to plan and create an effective marketing strategy that can work in both the local and global market environments. The impact of Industry Revolution 4.0 on consumer attention, satisfaction, and brand loyalty will also be a major topic of the study. The study's findings might motivate SMEs to change.

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