



# Improving Pro-Sustainable Customer Responses Through Spiritual Marketing

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this section is to reveal the role of spiritual marketing in enhancing customers' pro-sustainability response among a sample of visitors to religious tourist sites in Karbala (the cities of Sayyid al-Awsiya and al-Za'ir). This objective stems from a key research question: "Can spiritual marketing be employed to improve customers' pro-sustainability response among the studied sample?" To address this problem, the research adopted a questionnaire as a tool to identify the root causes of the issue. Customers demonstrated significant cooperation in responding to the questionnaire items, resulting in the collection of 397 customer opinions regarding the services provided in the cities of Sayyid al-Awsiya and al-Za'ir in Karbala Governorate. The descriptive-analytical approach was adopted to interpret the items and dimensions of the study topics. Accordingly, the research employed several tests to analyze the results using SPSS and AMOS (Version 28). The most important finding is that spiritual marketing is closely linked to and has a strong influence on customers' pro-sustainability response among visitors to the cities of Sayyid al-Awsiya and al-Za'ir in Karbala Governorate. This finding motivated the studied sample. On developing its internal capabilities and providing*

*services that offer means of luxury and excellence compared to its counterparts in the region.*

**Keywords:** *Spiritual Marketing, Sustainability, Pro-Sustainability Customer Response.*

## Introduction

Sustainable religious tourism seeks to strike a delicate balance between environmental performance and community well-being (Lee&Xue,2020:394), in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (Lee et al,2021:6767), specifically PSCR to tourists and residents contributes to meeting their requirements and enhancing their lives by creating a sustainable positive mouthword, and encouraging them to engage in sustainability This avoids the deterioration of the usual and national environment, and only in the field of religious tourism has the subject of spiritual marketing gained great importance to contribute to stimulating the response of the pro-sustainability customer, creating a great inclusion and adoption of all the pillars of sustainability (Drăguleasa et al,2024:295)

Spiritual marketing plays an important role in changing customer behaviour, encouraging and convincing them of the importance of sustainability (Begum et al,2021:1607), through the use of spiritual values and a sustainable positive word of mouth (Silalahi & Fahham,2023:2110), so organisations can build a stronger relationship with

their customers by encouraging them to choose sustainable services and services (Arslan,2020:12; Vesal et al,2021:322), in today's world, awareness of sustainability has become a key goal in order to achieve corporate social responsibility, which contributed to encouraging them to follow mechanisms and methods that ensure the values of sustainability and attract the largest possible number of customers (Fallah Shayan et al,2022:1223), and therefore spiritual marketing has emerged as an effective tool in influencing the emotion of customers directly by entering the hearts and minds of customers and convincing them to experience services (Arora & Jain, 2020:3755 ; Abbas et al,2024:3).

Hence the current research to highlight the role of SPM in PSCR, by preserving the environment, reducing the mechanisms of depletion of natural resources and contributing to the positive response of customers to sustainability initiatives (Makhloufi et al,2022:425).

## Research Methodology

### Research Problem

Spiritual marketing helps customers to obtain competitive advantages in an era where work ethics are forgotten, and has important roles in determining the success of tourism organizations to achieve their goals in the short and medium term (Cavagnaro et al,2020:97). Sustainability provides marketing with a long-term consistent vision that focuses on environmental balance, recognition of all stakeholders and entitlement to current and future generations, it is mentioned that the tourist visits any tourist destination for his own purpose and with a spiritual motivation related to his personal belief in that destination(Uralovich et al, 2023:965), that the focus of marketers on the development of Principles of customer response in favor of sustainability in front of their eyes when formulating marketing strategies with spiritual orientations to ensure the achievement of sustainability of tourism and therefore can formulate the problem of the study in an important question "Is there a role for SPM in the customer response in favor of sustainability amongst the sample plotted and from the point of opinion of customers of the metropolises of the master of guardians and visitors in the province of Karbala?, and emerges from this question several questions:

1. What is the level of spiritual marketing in enhancing the attractiveness of the largest segment of customers?
2. Do the dimensions of spiritual marketing and pro-sustainable Customer responses contribute to the interpretation of the requirements of the sample surveyed?
3. What is the nature and type of relationship between spiritual marketing and customer response in support of sustainability among the surveyed sample?

### The importance of research

The importance of research is evident through the following aspects through research and investigation as follows:

1. Provide a conceptual framework on the importance of a customer's pro-sustainability response by establishing its principles and important aspects in service delivery
2. Spiritual marketing gives customers a positive impression of how to market and price services and thus achieve customer loyalty to ensure continuous returns to the organization
3. Highlighting the importance of the tourist cities in Karbala Governorate because of their great role in economic and community development and improving the quality of living life and luxury

### *The Objectives of research*

The current research aims to reveal the role of SPM in the realism of "faith, ethics, realism, humanity" in pro-sustainable Customer responses represented in "Positive Word Of Mouth About Sustainable, Engagement In Sustainable" among a sample of customers of the cities of Slayed guardians and visitors in Karbala Governorate, and the research also aims to achieve several sub-goals:

1. Determine the level of spiritual marketing in enhancing the attractiveness of the largest segment of customers.
2. Identify the dimensions of spiritual marketing and the customer's response in favor of sustainability that contributes to the interpretation of the requirements of the sample studied.
3. Indicate the nature and type of relationship between spiritual marketing and customer response in support of sustainability among the surveyed sample.

### *Research Hypothetical Scheme*

The hypothetical scheme of the research aims to address the research problem, determine the objectives of the research and stand on the importance of the research by measuring and determining the hypotheses through which appropriate solutions can be developed for the research sample, and therefore only the hypothetical scheme of the research in two variables are:

- a. **Independent variable:** included (Spiritual Marketing) and was measured by four dimensions (faith, ethics, realism, and humanity), Based on (Sundari, 2020).
- b. **Dependent variable:** It was represented in (Pro-Sustainable Customer Responses) and was measured by two dimensions, namely "Positive Word Of Mouth About Sustainable, and Engagement In Sustainable" , Based on (Šerić et al, 2024).

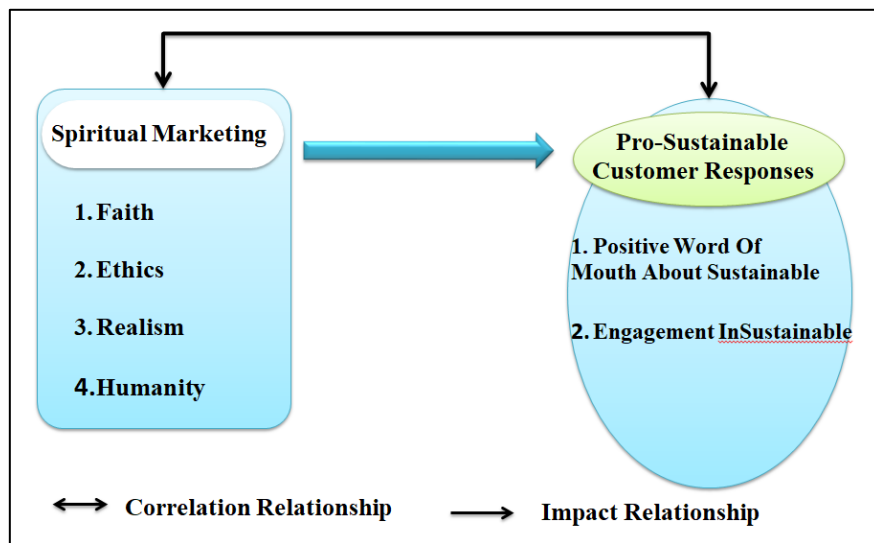


Figure (1) Research Hypothetical Scheme

Source: Prepared by the Researchers

### Research Hypotheses

The research proceeds from two hypotheses:

**H1: The existence of a significant correlation between spiritual marketing and pro-sustainable Customer responses, including:**

1. The existence of a significant correlation between the dimension of faith and the customer's response in favor of sustainability in its dimensions "positive word of mouth sustainable, Engagement In Sustainable"
2. The existence of a significant correlation between the dimension of ethics and the customer's response in favor of sustainability in its dimensions "positive word of mouth sustainable, Engagement In Sustainable"
3. The existence of a significant correlation between the dimension of realism and the customer's response in favor of sustainability in its dimensions "positive word of mouth sustainable, Engagement In Sustainable"
4. The existence of a significant correlation between the dimension of humanity and the customer's response in favor of sustainability in its dimensions "positive word of mouth sustainable, Engagement In Sustainable"

**H2: A significant impact of spiritual marketing in pro-sustainable Customer responses. It is divided from:**

1. The existence of a significant impact of the faith dimension in pro-sustainable Customer responses in its dimensions "Positive Word Of Mouth About Sustainable, Engagement In Sustainable"
2. The existence of a significant impact of the ethics dimension in pro-sustainable Customer responses in its dimensions "sustainable positive word of mouth, Engagement In Sustainable"

3. The existence of a significant impact of the realism dimension in pro-sustainable Customer responses in its dimensions "Positive Word Of Mouth About Sustainable, Engagement In Sustainable"
4. The existence of a significant impact of the human dimension in the customer's response in favor of sustainability in its dimensions "positive word of mouth sustainable, Engagement In Sustainable"

**Research Sample**

Representing the research community in spiritual tourist seats in the city of Karbala presented (the cities of the master of guardians, visitors), while the research sample included customers frequenting the cities of the master of protectors and visitors in the area of Karbala, and accordingly an electric questionnaire was distributed to this category, and (397) opinions of customers near the services provided in the cities of the chief of protectors and visitors in the province of Karbala were collected. According to the equation (Hair et al., 2010), the appropriate sample size is (83) customers, while the current research has expanded the research sample to include as much as possible.

**Research Variables and Stability**

Table (1) shows that the answers drawn from the sample plotted towards the dimensions of the research variables are characterized by relative stability and this shows consistency and high credibility due to the questionnaire tool to represent the researched community, and it also shows that the spiritual marketing variable got a stability of (0.963), while the customer's response in favor of sustainability reached the level of stability (0.953), and this represents high stability towards the answers of the research sample.

Table (1) Stability of the Research Tool

Variables	Dimensions	Code	Paragraphs	Coefficient of stability (Cronbach alpha)		source
<b>spiritual marketplace )SPM(</b>	Faith	SPF	2	0.825	0.963	Sundari,2020
	Ethics	SPE	2	0.855		
	Realism	SPR	2	0.845		
	Humanity	SPH	2	0.877		
<b>pro-sustainable Customer responses )PSCR(</b>	Positive Word Of Mouth About Sustainable	PSPW	2	0.856	0.953	Šerić et al.,2024
	Engagement In Sustainable	PSES	5	0.911		

**Part Two: Research Theoretical Framework**

**The Concept of Spiritual Marketing**

The concept of SPM arose as a result of the drought-related business disruption when swinging steps were restricted to satiating global desires, looking for something tangible, and putting aside immaterial things. This concept is shaped like marketing at the

intellectual or rational level (Rinallo et al., 2010:4). The idea of spiritual marketing also emerged from the realization by numerous business experts that emotional marketing, which was developed to counterbalance the seemingly uncontrollable pace of the times, was no longer able to effectively address the anxiety of a large number of people (Sundari 2020:21-22).

Accordingly, an initial examination of the company's present value reveals that the company places a high priority on brand management strategies and uses a variety of promotional techniques as part of its branding, such as newsletters, short-term message festivals, sales festivals, and digital marketing (Oh, 2014:39). These advertisements place less emphasis on spiritual marketing and more emphasis on brand positioning and emotional marketing (Zwissler, 2020:151). According to Vekemans (2021:33), spiritual marketing is a developing field in brand management and brand building. It goes beyond character building. (Sinitiere,2009:14) Marketers should now concentrate more on the consumer ethos, which is the soul and philosophical core of the individual, rather than the minds and hearts of the consumer, as traditional brand management techniques focus on doing (Bowman,2019:181).

A significant shift in marketing strategies has resulted from changes in the business environment, including globalization, recession, consumer empowerment, climate concerns, new social media, and emerging technologies. As a result of these modifications, spiritual marketing is a new, value-driven era in marketing (Appau & Bonsu,2020:166).

The consumer-focused and product-centered era is directly at odds with spiritual marketing (Slagle, 2011:4). Marketing ought to be viewed as an invitation and a whisper of conscience on a spiritual level (Vekemans, 2022:189). Here, marketing strategies went back to their fundamental purposes and were highly moral. Even the values of integrity, compassion, love, and caring for others have gained traction (Gregory, 2019:209).

Defined (Laughlin,2023:141) it as a marketing phenomenon to design models and integrate spiritual variables consisting of beliefs and practices with marketing activities systematically for spiritual interaction with the consumer Uddgren (2024:4) noted that it is to find meaning and purpose of a meaningful action, to perform actions that match a person's personal values and to foster a sense of connection or community within the context of that work, From the above, spiritual marketing container be defined as process of instilling spiritual values in every marketing process and transaction based on honesty, ethics and honesty in business and increasing stakeholder satisfaction in a way that ensures the survival and enhancement of brand characteristics and achieves competitive differentiation

### ***The Importance of Spiritual Marketing***

Giving more attention to spiritual marketing is an attempt to provide greater meaning and achieve the goals sought by the organisation, as well as building relationship and trust with others and quality in marketing operations and goes beyond the material limits or current gratification and through the following we explain the importance of spiritual marketing:

1. Seeing the customer as an individual with the mind, heart and soul and that spiritual need is the greatest motivator for the customer (Vekemans,2022:189).
2. The customer tries to find beyond material needs and how to adopt them with his needs and the spiritual is now able to make the need for survival a basic need for customers (Sinitiere, 2009:14).
3. The spiritual perception by the customer to obtain inner gratification, explore true meaning, and connect his inner mind to the known and unknown world (Zwissler,2020:151).
4. Strong commitment to social responsibility and active participation in charitable activities (Rinallo et al., 2010:4).
5. Bring joy and spiritual care to markets and communication in relationships with customers and vendors (Knibbe,2020:186).

### *Dimensions of Spiritual Marketing*

Spiritual marketing can be measured by a set of important dimensions (Sundari 2020:22-23):

1. **Faith:** This monotheistic or divine spirituality, according to the spirit of the spiritual marketer, is the most perfect, the most harmonious with all forms of goodness, the most able to prevent all forms of harm, the most adept at grasping the truth, dispelling falsehood, and propagating benefits (Arjana,2020:3)
2. **Ethics:** Since moral and ethical values are universal principles that are imparted by religion, spiritual marketing places a strong emphasis on ethical issues (ethics) in all facets of its operations (Borup,2023:421)
3. **Realism:** Both the concept of the spiritual marketer and the flexibility and breadth of spirituality that supports it are malleable. Professionals in the marketing industry who prioritize religious values, piety, ethical aspects, and honesty in all of their marketing endeavors are known as spiritual marketers. They maintain a tidy, modest, and clean appearance regardless of their attire (Vekemans, 2022:189)
4. **Humanity:** Another feature of SPM is its universal humanoid nature which is that holiness has been created for humanoid existences so that their rank is raised and their human countryside is conserved and conserved and their human traits can be limited by spirituality guidelines, holiness of human existences is created rendering to their abilities irrespective of race, gender, skin colour, population and status This is what makes spirituality so universal that it becomes a universal human law (Sinitiere, 2009:14)

### *3.4 The Concept of Pro-sustainable Customer responses*

In recent years, sustainability issues such as climate change, pollution and resource depletion have become more prominent and urgent, consumers are increasingly aware of the impact of their consumer choices on the natural environment and society, and many are willing to adopt more sustainable and responsible behaviours (Chang&Fong, 2010:3) 2018:1161) Pro-sustainable Customer responses is not only a matter of personal preference

or moral values, but also a response to various external factors, such as social norms, peer pressure, government regulation, and market incentives (Deng&Yang,2022:1476).

Pro-sustainable Customer responses is an important and growing trend that marketers cannot ignore (Martinez, 2015:898) Environmental consumers tend to be more loyal, engaged, and influential than regular consumers, making them a valuable segment for businesses to target and retain (Huang et al, 2014:141) However, marketing to environmental consumers is not a simple task, as it requires a deep understanding of their motivations, preferences and barriers, as well as the strategic alignment of the product, price, location and elements of promoting the marketing mix (Šerić et al,2024:12)

***Dimensions of Pro-sustainable Customer responses***

A customer's pro-sustainability response can be measured in two dimensions:

**a. Positive Word Of Mouth About Sustainable**

A sustainable positive word of mouth is a trustworthy source of portraying the positive side of a destination to a global audience, and consumers reach out to each other to determine product sustainability (Salinero, 2022:3) Consumers are motivated to engage in sustainable, positive word of mouth reviews left by writers, bloggers, and reviewers (Lee et al, 2021:366) Product accessibility on sustainable positive word of mouth influences potential customers to engage in comprehensive surveys and planning (Tölkes & Butzmann, 2018:14).

**b. Engagement In Sustainable**

Everyone is impacted by the critical issue of sustainability, including individuals, corporations, and governments. Recent years have seen an increase in awareness of how businesses affect society and the environment, and many organizations have started to take action to become more sustainable (Martinez, 2015:898) Reducing energy consumption is one of the most significant ways businesses can support sustainability. This can be done in a number of ways, including by installing lighting fixtures and energy-saving equipment, utilizing renewable energy sources like solar or wind power, and putting in place policies encouraging staff to turn off computers and lights when not in use (Tölkes&Butzmann, 2018:14).

**Part Three: The Applied Aspect of the Research**

*Testing the Normal Distribution of the Research*

It appears from the information in Table (2) that data withdrawn from the research sample follow the normal supply and this is the owner that the data is characterised by a important level advanced than (0.05) and this proves that the withdrawn data follow the normal distribution, and therefore reject the alternative hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis

Table (2) Results of the Normal Distribution Test

Standard	Variables						
	SPF	SPE	SPR	SPH	SPM	PSPW	PSES

<b>Mean</b>	3.59	3.53	3.41	3.46	3.50	3.45	3.52	3.48
<b>Std. Deviation</b>	0.94	1.04	1.01	1.05	0.91	1.06	1.02	0.98
<b>Test Statistic</b>	0.254	0.222	0.22	0.23	0.164	0.219	0.162	0.162
<b>Sig.</b>	0.200 <sup>c</sup>	0.200 <sup>c</sup>	0.200 <sup>c</sup>	0.200 <sup>c</sup>	0.200 <sup>c</sup>	0.200 <sup>c</sup>	0.200 <sup>c</sup>	0.200 <sup>c</sup>

**Description and Analysis of Research Variables**

The results of Table (3) showed that customers show a significant interest in spiritual marketing, as their Mean interest reached 3.50 on the Likert scale, with a S.D of 0.91, indicating the presence of a variance in interest. Perhaps the dimension of faith (SPF) is what contributed to supporting the strength of this variable due to its effective role in achieving the highest mean of (3.59), with a S.D equal to (0.94), while the dimension of realism (SPR) came in last place, and this discouraged the variable in general, which achieved an mean of (3.41) and a S.D of (1.01).

On the other hand, the results showed that the general mean of the variable of customer response in support of sustainability was (3.48) with a S.D of (0.98), which shows that customers have a priority towards interest in adopting the sustainable development standards imposed by the researched society, and perhaps the dimension of Engagement In Sustainable (PSES) is what contributed to supporting the strength of this variable because of its effective role in achieving the highest mean of (3.52), with a S.D equal to (1.02), while the dimension of sustainable positive word of mouth (PSPW) came in last place, which discouraged the variable in general, which achieved an mean of (3.45) and a S.D of (1.06).

Table (3) Description and Analysis of Research Variables

NO.	Mean	S.D	NO.	Mean	S.D
SPF1	3.66	1.04	PSPW1	3.48	1.20
SPF2	3.52	1.17	PSPW2	3.41	1.19
<b>SPF</b>	<b>3.59</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>PSPW</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>1.06</b>
SPE1	3.57	1.25	PSES1	3.57	1.10
SPE2	3.50	1.15	PSES2	3.56	1.13
<b>SPE</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>1.04</b>	PSES3	3.56	1.22
SPR1	3.55	1.14	PSES4	3.49	1.22
SPR2	3.27	1.19	PSES5	3.43	1.30
<b>SPR</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>PSES</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>1.02</b>
SPH1	3.51	1.10	PSCR	3.48	0.98
SPH2	3.41	1.29			
<b>SPH</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>1.05</b>			
<b>SPM</b>	<b>3.50</b>	<b>0.91</b>			

**Testing Research Hypotheses**

**H1: There is a significant correlation between spiritual marketing and pro-sustainable Customer responses.**

Table (4) shows a significant correlation between spiritual marketing and customer response in favor of sustainability, which generated a strong amount of (0.891), and this

indicates the interest of customers dealing with the sample towards building a sustainable positive word of mouth and engaging in sustainability by participating in the design and innovation of mechanisms and ways to improve the well-being and comfort of customers. It is also clear that there is a sub-correlation of the dimensions of spiritual marketing towards the dimensions of pro-sustainable Customer responses, which generated a correlation strength of (0.692) between the dimension of faith and the sustainable positive word of mouth to (0.852) between the dimension of humanity and Engagement In Sustainable, hence it can be said that the validity of the first main hypothesis is accepted.

Table (4) Correlation Matrix

	SPF	SPE	SPR	SPH	SPM	PSPW	PSCR	PSES
SPF	----							
SPE	.771**	----						
SPR	.726**	.716**	----					
SPH	.726**	.715**	.825**	----				
SPM	.890**	.890**	.908**	.910**	----			
PSPW	.692**	.786**	.707**	.771**	.823**	----		
PSCR	.773**	.841**	.791**	.852**	.906**	.948**	----	
PSES	.771**	.804**	.790**	.841**	.891**	.788**	.943**	----

**H2: A significant impact of spiritual marketing on pro-sustainable Customer responses**

The results of Table (5) shown in Figure (3) indicate that increasing the interest of customers of Sayyid Al-Awassi and Al-Wazir cities in Karbala Governorate in spiritual marketing contributes to an improvement of (0.875) of the customer's response in favour of sustainability, which pushes customers to engage in the service and reduce the standard error rate to (0.023) and this achieves a high comparative value, hence the validity of the second main hypothesis

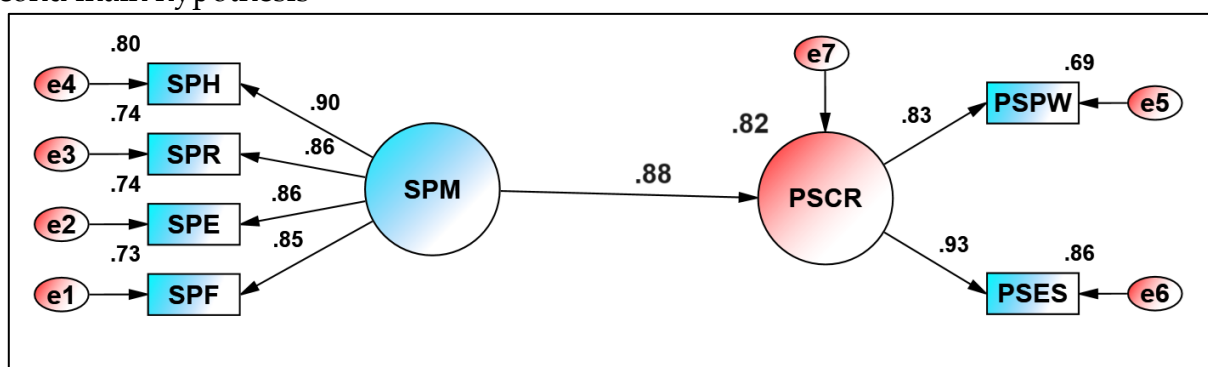


Figure (3) Measurement Model for the Impact of Marketing Spirituality in the customer's response in support of sustainability

The results of Table (5) showed that spiritual marketing in its dimensions contributed to explaining the amount of (0.820) of the variation in pro-sustainable Customer responses, and this achieved a comparative score of (F) of (1801.775)

Table (5) Outputs of the measurement model for the effect of spiritual marketing on the customer's response in support of sustainability

Path	Estimate	S.E	C.V-value	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.
SPM ---> PSCR	0.875	0.023	38.043	0.820	1801.775	0.001

**Part Four: Conclusions, Recommendations And Future Directions**

**Conclusions**

1. The results showed that spiritual marketing has a significant correlation with pro-sustainable Customer responses, which contributed to encouraging customers to participate in expressing their opinions towards improving existing services.
2. The interest of customers dealing with the sample towards building a sustainable positive word of mouth and engaging in sustainability by participating in the design and innovation of mechanisms and ways to improve the well-being and comfort of customers.
3. Customers have a priority towards attention in adopting sustainable development standards imposed by the surveyed community, which contributed to educating customers about the importance of sustainability and participating in initiatives to achieve sustainability goals.
4. Focus the target sample on building positive relationships with customers by enhancing their services and commitment to sustainability
5. The interest of the sample surveyed in implementing selected strategies and evaluating their results in order to determine the best possibilities to push customers to participate in the design of services, which enhances the construction of effective channels with customers to understand their requirements and expectations.

**Recommendations**

Building a strong reputation requires earning customer satisfaction and encouraging positive recommendations to family and colleagues. This necessitates cultivating customer loyalty in a way that resonates with them and fosters their appreciation for the service. Integrating sustainability principles into customer interactions is also crucial. This involves motivating customers to participate in finding sustainable solutions to any service shortcomings, thereby raising awareness about the importance of environmental conservation. Furthermore, environmentally conscious consumers tend to be more loyal, engaged, and influential than average consumers, making them a valuable target and retention segment for companies.

Understanding customer needs requires a deep understanding of their motivations, preferences, and constraints to optimize strategic alignment between product, price, positioning, and other marketing mix elements. Therefore, it's essential to cultivate a strong interest among the target audience in integrating promotional and distribution

methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the consumer's mindset and philosophy, ultimately leading to more effective promotional messages.

As a result, it is clear that future trends must focus on the fact that spiritual marketing is a powerful factor in determining the value of any product or service and boosting customer demand. Therefore, organizations need to prioritize building positive relationships with their customers to develop an attractive brand that contributes to achieving a larger market share among competitors. Hence, this research emphasizes the need for future studies to focus on spiritual marketing and customer responses that support sustainability, along with other topics related to customer regret, the environmentally conscious customer, and negative customer behavior, according to the capabilities of individual companies.

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