

Conference Paper

Praying Rooms in Shopping Centres: Are They Important?

Rieke Retnosary^{1,2}, Nor Zafir Md Salleh¹, and Siti Masrurroh²¹Faculty of Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia²Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Buana Perjuangan Karawang**ORCID:**Rieke Retnosary: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0289-7400>**Abstract**

The majority of Indonesia's population are Muslims who must perform the obligatory five prayers daily in which the prayer times have been determined. Shopping centres can encourage ease of worship for Muslim visitors by preparing a praying room to make them feel comfortable and linger longer in the shopping centre, which positively impacts economic development. In this study, 85.3% of respondents selected praying rooms as the most important category compared to the other three categories in shopping centres. A questionnaire, observations and interviews were conducted in a shopping centre in Kabupaten Karawang as a case study to corroborate these initial findings, to determine if religious facilities are essential for Muslim visitors. Praying rooms are important for visitors, especially to promote cosiness for worship, and after praying, visitors can decide to stay and spend more time in the shopping centre. The respondents reported that the provision of worship facilities would benefit the management and tenants/outlets which offer products because the visitors linger in the shopping centre, increasing the products purchased.

Keywords: Muslims, shopping centre, praying room, positive impact, economic movement

Corresponding Author:

Rieke Retnosary

rieke.retnosary@ubpkarawang
.ac.id

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1. Introduction

Muslim Population by Country 2020 informed that Indonesia is the largest, and an estimated 229 million or 87.2% from 263 million population of Indonesia, also recognized 13% of the world's population of Muslims (worldpopulationreview.com, 2020). This shows that places of worship for Muslims will be more needed than other religions in Indonesia, including public areas and shopping centres.

However, from the observation on shopping centres made it appears that the management does not pay enough attention to Muslim facilities for worshipping even though the employees who work in tenants are mostly Muslim and have to pray five times a day.

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This can be seen from the provision of a modest praying room in almost all shopping centres visited. Wondering why the shopping centre is the one public business that must be considered.

The intention to eliminate boredom can change the position to become consumers accidentally because the situation offered is the needs or desires of visitors.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Shopping Centres

Shopping centres are one of the economic activities that connect buyers and sellers directly and indirectly (online shop). Although shopping can be done online from home, it was perceived to have lower behavioural costs than in-store purchases (Fricka and Matthies, 2020), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic that is sweeping the world today. Shopping is a healing tool for people who experience boredom and the most important thing is that direct shopping is considered safe because people can choose goods directly. Direct shopping allows many places to provide different offers of trademarks, prices of goods, and categories of goods. In-store shopping has a complementary relationship (Etminani-Ghasrodashti and Hamidi, 2020).

2.2. Praying Room (Praying Facilities)

Finding goods is usually not brief since consumers will go to different outlets to find the best price. This often takes more than 1-2 hours. If they are Muslim visitors and need a place to pray, they will look for prayer rooms during shopping time. Bidding for places of worship is not only applied to local visitors because domestic or foreign visitors also need these facilities when purchasing local goods and spending time in shopping centres. Previous studies highlighted that praying rooms for both men and women is critical (Han et al., 2019) because the prayers law is mandatory, and the time has been determined. As stated in Surah An-Nisa from the Holy Qur'an An-Nisa, the 103rd verse reads: "Verily, the prayer is fardhu, the time is determined for those who believe".

Muslims are obligated to pray regardless of their location, therefore, the place of visit is one of the most important considerations for Muslims. An example in a previous study revealed a statement from a Muslim visitor who was on a trip said that praying

room, Masjid, and other worship facilities are important and must be available for Muslim visitors to feel more calm and comfortable (Han et al., 2019).

3. Methods

3.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaires are administered using a WhatsApp group. There are 7 groups with a total of 211 prospective respondents and 83 respondents were identified to be willing to complete the questionnaire. However, only 75 respondents completed the questionnaire between 20th until 30th June 2020.

The purpose of the initial data collection is to determine the shopping centre award categories that are expected by Muslim visitors so that they feel comfortable and can linger in that place. As known, spiritual values are considered important since can evoke the spirit that affects the balance of life (Dewiyanti and Kusuma, 2012).

Talking about spiritual, Muslims' aware is not just talking about prayer time, but also the consumptions. The Republic of Indonesia Law No. 8, 1999 concerning Consumer Protection stressed on consumers rights which encompass the right for comfort, security, and safety in consuming goods and/or services and the right to choose goods and/or services and to obtain goods and/or services accordingly with the promised exchange rate and conditions and guarantees. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the right for a Muslim to obtain halal food or products is protected by law because of the guarantees. Religious belief, certification, and health reasons are potential sources of Muslim awareness about halal consumption. However, health reasons are the predictors that significantly contribute to the level of halal awareness (Ambali dan Bakar, 2014). Therefore, it is appropriate for food products to be provided following what is known by foreign people to help people feel safe when consuming outside such as shopping centres and restaurants. Indonesia has developed halal food to protect people from consuming non-halal products and gaining earnings from the export of halal products (Ratanamaneichat, Chiratus and Rakkarn, Sakchai, 2013). For Muslim consumers, halal food and drink represent products that meet the requirements set by the Sharia law, while for non-Muslim consumers, the products represent a symbol of hygiene, quality, and safety that are strictly produced under the halal holistic guarantee management system (Ambali dan Bakar, 2014), including for cosmetic products which are Muslim women are interested in, but the use or purchase of these products must be careful and

follow Islamic law (Briliana dan Mursito, 2017). Halal label or certification in consumption is also important for legalisation (Henderson, 2016).

The above studies are used to compare the category of prayer places to see how important according to respondents is compared to other categories based on these studies, and for this study, the categories are (1) representative praying room facilities, (2) halal food and restaurants, (3) halal products, and (4) others. The fourth category was to identify other possibilities expected by visitors, but this category was not made a priority in this study. Hence, the study made no list of questions to answer in the next level.

3.2. Qualitative

This method was carried out as an advanced stage to identify the most representative place in the provision of worship facilities and their reasons. Another goal is to look at respondents' responses to the management's decision to provide a means of worship for them and determine if it is beneficial management and tenants/outlets in the shopping centre. Retrieval of data is specific to respondents in Kabupaten Karawang, and interviews are replaced by Google Forms with open answers distributed via WhatsApp and e-mails. This was done online due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation which limited face-to-face interaction. The observation of worship facilities was carried out with the protocol rules set by the shopping centre management. Case studies were carried out on seven sizable shopping centres in the Kabupaten Karawang area.

The management of the shopping centre was not involved in this study because it focused on customers and the names of the shopping centres were coded to respect the management.

4. Result and Discussion

The first data retrieval is questionnaire distribution. Respondents were selected randomly from the WhatsApp group with no specific criteria for the type of work and age of the respondents. However, this study limited the age to the lower limit of the age of 13 years in class 1 (13 -18) because respondents of this age are considered psychologically feasible to answer questions and are capable of understanding the questions. In this class, researchers collected data from the student level with a range of 17-18. The classification of the ages and job descriptions is listed in Table – 1. The data available in Figure - 1 illustrate the importance of the shopping centres in ensuring comfort

for the respondents. A total of 75 respondents consisting of 36 men and 39 women answered the questionnaires and this study found that representative worship facilities to provide comfort for Muslim visitors are received the highest response compared to other categories.

TABLE 1: Age and Background of Respondents

No.	Respondents' occupation	Respondent	No.	Age, years	Respondent
1	Employee	35	1	13 - 18	5
2	Entrepreneur	5	2	19 - 25	31
3	Student	29	3	26 -31	10
4	Housewife	26	4	>31	29

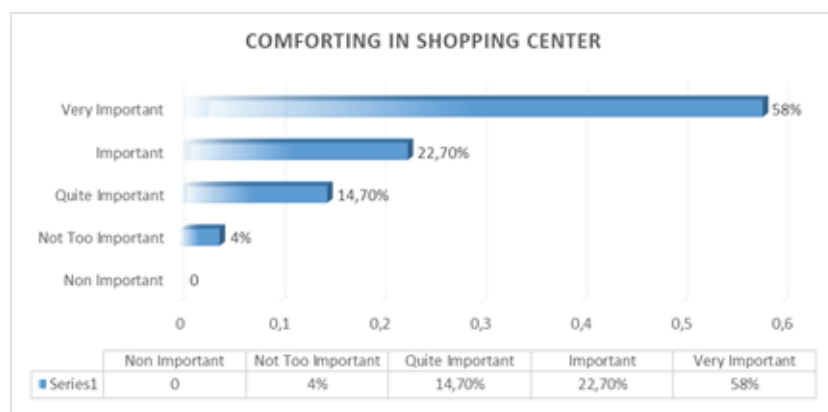


Figure 1: The importance of comfort in shopping centres

The categories provided by the researchers consisted of three clear categories and one biased category. The categories consist of: (1) Representative praying room facilities; (2) Halal food and restaurants; (3) Other halal products; (4) Others. Respondents were given the freedom to choose according to their opinion and the results showed that category (1) Representative praying room facilities received the highest agreement despite several respondents had selected more than one category. The results of the answers are available in Table - 2 below. Table – 2 shows that 64 respondents chose the category (1) and from the 64 respondents, 3 chosen categories (1) and (3), and 21 chosen the categories (1), (2), (3), while 7 chose all categories. A total of 11 respondents were distributed in which 1 respondent chose category (2), 6 respondents chose category (3), and 4 respondents chose category (4). Figure -2 illustrates a pie chart that depicts the result according to the percentage.

The selection of category (4) in this study was intentionally carried out to observe the possibility of respondents choosing what the researchers did not think about but

TABLE 2: The categories chosen by 75 respondents

All Categories	Cat. (1), (2) (3)	Cat. (1), (3)	Cat. (1)	Cat. (2)	Cat. (3)	Cat. (4)
7	21	3	33	1	6	4

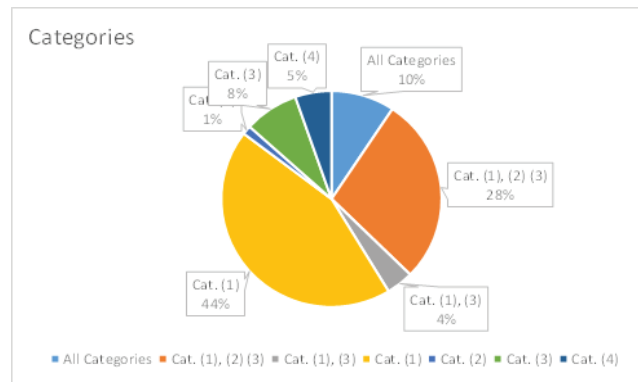


Figure 2: The Categories

might be understood by respondents. This category of bias was chosen as part of the respondents' understanding but was not used as a follow-up question in this study.

The second data collection is specific to respondents who live in Kabupaten Karawang who have visited the nearby shopping centres. Seven shopping centres were represented by the code SC (Shopping Centre) which were coded from SC1 to SC7. Shopping centres which have been investigated, are not provided in this study to respect the management. The data collection of respondents was only carried out on 18-19 July 2020, with 40 respondents from 50 using code RSC (Respondent Shopping Centre) starting from RSC1 to RSC40. Several prospective respondents' information revealed that they could not be good respondents because they have not visited the shopping centres due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Therefore, they are unable to identify the possibility of changes in the managerial system of the selected shopping centres, so they did not give the answer.

The observations in the field inferred that many changes have occurred in several SCs. For example, in SC1, the prayer hall in the form of a mosque separated by SC underwent many renovations. Based on information from the Masjid keeper assigned there, the development was based on the decision of the building manager or SC's managerial system. Knowing that the management of this specific SC often measures visitors' satisfaction, this SC strives to make improvements according to the needs of visitors, including Muslim visitors and workers in the SC. The prayer place is made comfortable with the provision of air conditioning and toilets as well as ablution (wudu') areas for women and men. Also, the entrance of the Masjid has separate doors both for women and men. The capacity of this Masjid is more than 200 people. As for SC2, until

observations were made, no changes and the place was inadequate to accommodate visitors and workers in the SC. The separation of places between women and men was only done using plywood dividers that left the ablution place open. This leaves no privacy for Muslim women to perform ablution which might contribute to discomfort. Also, the place of prayer is in the basement under the car park towards the upper parking. SC4 until SC7 is still less representative than the others.

TABLE 3: The Shopping Centres chosen by the respondent

Shopping Centre (SC)	SC3	SC1	SC2	SC5	SC6	SC7	SC4
Number of Respondents	18	10	5	3	2	2	0

Based on the results, SC3 was identified as the most convenient shopping centre and has a better praying room compared to the other six shopping centres with the 36 respondent chosen. Some respondents provided the following responses:

“Cleaner, far from crowded places and also strategies (RSC5)”.

“Places of worship far from crowds, worship equipment and area very clean (RSC35)”.

“Spacious, clean and clean water (RSC11)”.

“Clean, comfortable, spacious, and easy to find (RSC13)”.

“Cleaner and neat. Far from the noise that comes from parking lots (RSC19)”.

The responses from the some respondents on the importance of praying rooms:

“Because everything must be based on worship. Indonesian people, especially in Kabupaten Karawang, are predominantly Muslim, so there must be many places where the worship facilities are comfortable (RSC24)”.

“Because the majority Indonesian especially the Kabupaten Karawang are Muslims. Many of them prioritise prayer, so many visitors are looking for SC which has a praying room (RSC1)”.

“With the existence of places of worship, it makes it easy for Muslim visitors to pray at the right time (RSC3)”.

“Because Muslims are obligated to worship wherever they are and the time has been determined (RSC 11) ”.

“Because Muslims in Indonesia are the majority, so the presence of representative worship facilities will make visitors more comfortable spending time in the shopping centre (RSC35)”.

“Because places of worship are very important and must be prioritized (RSC 40)”.

Researchers also inquired to the respondents about the benefits of having worship facilities for the management and tenants. All respondents (100%) said it could benefit

the management and tenants. Respondents answered that when a place of worship is comfortably provided, it is likely that visitors will feel at home, returning to the place if they want to shop, visitors will feel at home and linger in the shopping centre and it is possible to make repeated or increase purchases. This concludes that the provision of praying rooms provides a fairly good contribution to the economic development of shopping centres and praying rooms are identified to be critical.

5. Conclusion

This discussion identified that the category of praying rooms is the most important for Muslim visitors and the most representative place in providing religious facilities is SC3. This is because it is cleaner, more comfortable, more spacious and far from the disruption of motorised vehicles. According to the respondents, the management's decision to provide worship facilities is very beneficial for management and tenants, because with this strategy, visitors will linger and the possibility to come back and repeat the purchases made in the shopping centre. Their previously positive shopping experience can trigger repeat visits and encourage the economic development of the working community at the shopping centre. A study mentioned that shopping centres could promote individual and societal well-being by offering shoppers restorative servicescapes (Compeau et al., 2016). So, it can also be concluded that, indirectly, the provision of prayer rooms is important for management and tenant.

6. Limitation of the Study

A limitation of this study is that the praying room strategy was not confirmed to the management. Hence, it is unknown whether the provision of religious facilities is their strategy attracts many visitors or not. But, the conclusion from the analysis confirmed that the facilities are a strategy from the management to attract the consumers besides providing convenience. Therefore, it is necessary to research the management sides to strengthen the argument.

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