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Perception of Women-Only Cafés in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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Perception of Women-Only Cafés in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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Abstract

Café restaurants are important pleasure places for the society, especially in the stressful lifetime. Besides, having a separated café or pleasure places only for women might be a good opportunity to support their activity and to increase their socialization in the society. The aim of the study in this respect is to investigate the perception of women about having a women-only café in Sulaymaniyah. It has been observed that not only the religious women but also the ones from various life styles were willing to visit women-only café. It was seen that 61% of the women population thought it was a good idea to open a women-only café. Further results of the segmentation have been shown in the findings and conclusions parts.

Keywords: Women-only café, market segmentation, segmentation in service sector, service

Introduction

Café restaurants are exciting places that provide some small refreshments for people to spend pleasure time with their families or friends (Torlak et al., 2019). Besides, café restaurants are some of the important public places that give opportunities for socialization. In developing countries, people prefer to visit café restaurants to reduce their stress level and to have some fun with their peers (Kibler, 2015). According to Oliver, "The café is not just a nice place to have a glass of tea, but a place of freedom for most women who are destined to remain within the family sphere in their daily lives" (Piecha, 2017). Opening a café for women is beneficial for the economy because it is a good business opportunity. Basically, it increases job opportunities especially for women in which they can get paid and increase experience via working in the café. Secondly, that kind of businesses would be pioneer ventures that encourage other entrepreneurs (Budur, 2018b) to serve any certain part of the market. Additionally, these kinds of investments promote the competitiveness in the market to find new opportunities (Budur et al., 2018; Mohammed et al., 2020).

In this respect, café restaurants are accepted as a free environment for people to boost the meaning of the *free time* with others (Torlak et al., 2019). So far, sitting in café does not mean wasting time. There are many activities that people can do in the cafés. People can hang out with their friends and drink a cup of coffee and have a nice conversation. In spite of social media's negative impact on social natural connections these places provide a natural environment for the society (Khan & Yildiz, 2020). Therefore, the café can bring those people to one table for a nice conversation. Besides, people can finish their work and tasks in the cafés while enjoying their meals or coffee. Further, the healthy and friendly atmosphere brought out with different interior designs would provide a delightful reading possibility.

Finally, these places could provide a good opportunity to hold business meetings due to their nice and quiet environment.

Kasraoui (2019) noted that there are some women-only cafés in developed countries where women can come together to organize social activities such as reading books, sharing ideas or celebrating special days. In this regard, women can socialize and establish small communities in those places. There are some special activities that women can do in cafés: they can have open discussions to express their feelings and work for social issues such as freedom. Also, women can remove their hijab in the café in Muslim countries since it is only for women as Kasraoui (2019) puts forward: "Women with hijabs can also remove their headscarves if they feel comfortable in those places".

The importance of café for women is that they can get out of their homes and engage in social places. Besides, these cafés raise awareness of the women related issues, and they can create associations to support other women who are still forbidden from going to social places. People tend to respect each other and enjoy their time. Women have all the rights to go to public places just like men, so going to a café designed for women is one step towards freedom. This way women get used to come out the family sphere where they have always been inside their homes. Besides that, men cannot stop them doing so as it is only a private café for ladies.

Consequently, some of the disadvantages of women-only cafés may be summarized as follows: (a) current negative perception of the community and the family might resist the idea of a women-only café; (b) the income of the café might not be as good as the regular cafés; (c) the competitors in the market might bring issues. On the other hand, the advantages might be: (a) women will be more engaged in the social responsibilities as they can share their knowledge and intelligence; (b) they can also form groups to raise women's voice for freedom like some other women; (c) women also have the right to have such a place since there are many cafés for men; (d) the café idea may lead the way to bringing about freedom for women in European standards.

Furthermore, people in Sulaymaniyah like to visit cafés to have fun, to study their subjects, and to hold business meetings. At the moment, Sulaymaniyah has 4 high level cafés in the city center. According to our observation, the majority of the cafés in Sulaymaniyah are established only for men. The reason behind this might be cultural values (Budur & Poturak, 2020) that some families are not ready to allow their daughters or family members to spend time in those places. Because of this, it is proposed to search some other reasons why women do not visit cafés. Accordingly, the current study aims to investigate the attractive points for women to visit cafés in Sulaymaniyah.

Literature Review

Service Quality is the assessment of the quality of anything that is served to customers (Budur et al., 2019). Basically, customers tend to evaluate the service or product they get based on the quality that they seek for (Budur, 2018a; Demir, 2019). Service quality is very important since it affects the customer's opinion on the product or service (Ali et al., 2020; Demir et al., 2019). That means the customers decide whether to go to that certain place again or not based on their own evaluation. In general, services consist of two parts: technical and functional (Mohammed & Sahin, 2020; Rashid, 2018; Demir & Mukhlis, 2017). The technical part is what has been offered to the customers while the functional part is how the service has been delivered to the customer (Top et al., 2020). Service quality is a bridge between the customers and producers (Demir et al., 2020).

There are five dimensions that affect service quality: (1) reliability, (2) responsiveness, (3) assurance, (4) empathy, and (5) tangibles (Sahin, 2014). First of all, reliability is the ability to perform a promised service accurately. In our case, the café should perform all the functions they promise well, especially in terms of the menu and quality. Second, responsiveness is the willingness to help the customers and serve them in the best way possible in order to attract more. Third, assurance is the level of trust in the business since the employees must convey trust and confidence (Demir et al., 2015). Fourth, empathy is giving the right attention to the customers so that they would not think they are neglected. Finally, tangibles are the physical things in the café which can be used for customer service and satisfaction that would eventually attract them (Demir et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Strawderman and Koubek (2008) noted “The customer is the only person that can judge service quality”. They have stated that the relationship between the customers and the producers is important, whereas the customers judge the performance of the firm. Besides, they also mentioned that human factors are important ones that positively influence the service quality (i.e. the five factors stated above). Similarly, Demir (2019) noted a gap analysis of a firm that focuses on the five dimensions of service quality demonstrating the customer satisfaction. Further, Demir (2019) noted that the five factors work together in a company to gain customer satisfaction.

Besides, scholars argued that the dimensions of service quality have crucial roles in customers’ favorable comments about the environment and their future revisits respectively (Yildiz & Budur, 2019; Khan & Yildiz, 2020). A café is one of the businesses that calls for high customer satisfaction for creating loyal customers than most of the other businesses (Torlak et al., 2019). Having all the five factors in place will deliver the best service that would increase the number of customers.

Therefore, the concept of women-only café in Kurdistan needs to target at peak performance in order to attract and keep the customers who would attract others and foster the market advantages as well. In this respect, consistent development increases the number of the customers that in turn leverage the profit of the café positively. The success of any other business depends on the management style that emphasize this sequence in which service sectors have to serve customers in order to gain loyalty in the market (Budur & Demir, 2019; Demir & Budur, 2019; Demir & Bulut, 2018; Zaim et al., 2020).

Methodology

The aim of the project is to investigate the conditions and readiness of the residential people about opening a women-only café in Sulaymaniyah. This research introduces the idea of opening a women-only café in Sulaymaniyah, and it renders the advantages of doing it especially in terms of women rights and businesses. Throughout the research, many challenges and disagreements have been faced. In order to overcome the challenges, a set of solutions and explanations are offered in this paper.

One thousand people were interviewed. All of the interviewees were women because of the scope of this research. According to Table 1, 73% of the people were between the ages of 18 to 25. This age range is very important for the research as it forms the highest percentage of people who visit cafés and may provide more insights and ideas to a future project. 17% of the interviewed people were in the age of 26 to 35.

Table 1*Part of survey results*

Age	Education	Visiting a Café	The Idea of Opening a Women-only Café
(18-25) 73%	Master's Degree 8%	Once a Week 57%	Strongly Disagree 15%
(26-35) 17%	Bachelor's Degree 46%	Twice a Week 22%	Disagree 9%
(36-50) 9%	Diploma 10%	More than 3 times 21%	Neutral 15%
(+50) 1%	High School 36%		Agree 14%
			Strongly Agree 47%

They are mostly employees who spend their free time at cafés. Lastly, 9% of the interviewed people were between the ages of 36 to 50. These people want to get some rest at cafés. People with different education levels were interviewed in order to get a variety of answers which can be helpful for the research. 8% of the interviewed people were doing master's while 46% of them were studying bachelor's in universities.

This result showed that people at this age have more freedom and need to spend more time at cafés for numerous reasons such as studying, spending time with friends, and having a rest. 36% of the interviewed people were from high schools and the research definitely needed them. Most of the interviewed people were visiting cafés in general. 57% of them visit cafés at least once a week. It is a high ratio.

Others even spend more time at cafés. The last question in Table 1 shows how people liked the idea of opening a women-only café in Sulaymaniyah. 24% of the people did not like the idea because they already had access to general cafés without any issues. 61% of the people liked the idea of opening a women-only café because of their personal reasons.

The literature review provided strength and depth to the research as well as more insight and ideas. Developing the research, some questionnaires have been offered to random people in Sulaymaniyah about the idea of opening a café shop.

In order to have a variety of answers and gain more ideas, we went to different places such as Jan Café, United Science College, Tishk International University, Sulaymaniyah University, City Center, Tche Tche Café, Barbera Café, Nali Café, Moka More Café, Family Mall Café, Dario Café, and University of Human Development.

A questionnaire and a set of interview questions were used in these places to get data on the topic. Then, the data were analyzed to understand the perception of the idea and the level of possible support from the society.

For this research, both qualitative and quantitative resources were used. The research used the data from the sampling method in order to develop an outcome. All the data were recorded in an MS Excel sheet and used as a support file for the analysis and discussion.

The data consisted of 1001 samples, providing more meaning into the analysis. Moreover, both primary and secondary resources were used as well in the research.

Research Findings

Table 2

Analyzing the responses to: "It would be good idea to open a women-only café"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Absolutely No	149	14.9	14.9	14.9
	Not Sure	92	9.2	9.2	24.1
	Not Sure	149	14.9	14.9	39.0
	Yes	145	14.5	14.5	53.4
	Absolutely Yes	466	46.6	46.6	100.0
	Total	1001	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows how people think about the new investment on the women-only café business. We have observed that approximately 60% of the population thinks that women-only café is a good idea and might be a good business investment. Besides, 24% of the society thinks that women-only café is actually not a good idea to invest. Lastly, we observed that 15% of the society seems neutral whether that kind of investment is a good idea or not.

Table 3

Analyzing the responses to: "I would visit if women-only café were opened"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Absolutely No	150	15.0	15.0	15.0
	Not Sure	107	10.7	10.7	25.7
	Not Sure	193	19.3	19.3	45.0
	Yes	163	16.3	16.3	61.2
	Absolutely Yes	388	38.8	38.8	100.0
	Total	1001	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 shows whether the participants would go to a women-only café if it were opened. Based on the results we can say that positive responses have slightly decreased compared to the opinions stating that the women-only café was a good idea. That is, we can say that 60% of the respondents thought that a women-only café was a good idea to invest.

Moreover, it decreased down to 55% when we asked them if they would go to a women-only café. We can conclude that 55% of the population thinks that they would go and visit a women-only café if it were opened. 26% of the respondents think negatively about going to a women-only café. Lastly, approximately 20% of the people are neutral in going to a women-only café or not.

Table 4

Analyzing the responses to: "I would love to visit women café". Cross tabulation based on the life style willingness to visit*

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Conservative	30	20	22	20	46	138
Atheist	10	3	12	12	8	45
Humanist	26	18	37	30	74	185
Feminist	15	8	30	19	36	108
Social	50	34	69	51	160	364
Strong Religious	17	19	19	27	61	143

Christian	1	5	3	4	1	14
Other	1	0	1	0	2	4
Total	150	107	193	163	388	1001

Table 4 represents the cross tabulation between the lifestyle of the people and their opinion whether they would go to women-only café or not.

Based on the results, it has been observed that most of the respondents feel that they are social people (social, humanist, feminist, other). This represents 67% of the sample population.

However, 60% of social people are willing to go to a women-only café. Secondly, we have seen that strong religious people also think that they would go to a women-only café. It has been observed that out of 143 strong religious people, 88 of them thought that they would go to a women-only café.

When other types of people are also considered, more or less the same ratio of people would go to the women-only café. We can conclude that there is 50% up to 60% of people who want to go to such a café in Sulaymaniyah.

Table 5

*Analyzing the responses to: "I would love to visit women café". Cross tabulation based on age*willingness to visit*

		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Age	18-25	120	71	130	103	309	733
	26-35	17	20	39	41	48	165
	36-50	11	16	18	17	28	90
	50+	2	0	6	2	3	13
Total		150	107	193	163	388	1001

Table 5 represents the age categories and their willingness to go to the women-only café. We have observed that most of the sampled population was between 18 and 25 years old. More than 400 of this population wanted to go to the women-only café.

Secondly, 165 of the sample population was between 26 and 35 years old. Furthermore, 89 people of that population wanted to go to a women-only café in case this business is actualized. It was seen that 90 of the whole sample to population was between 36 and 50 years old. Finally, only 13 of the sample population was about 50 years old.

When the people who want to go to a women-only café is investigated based on the age, it was revealed that mostly age categories between 18 and 25 or more willing to go to women-only cafés than the other age categories. Therefore, we can conclude that the young generation is the main target population (or age segment) and that the investor may pay attention to this fact while producing marketing strategies.

Table 6 shows the locations that people are willing to go to the women-only café. The results indicated that Tuimalik is the most clustered location. It was observed that 31% of the sampled population lived in Tuimalik. However, 126 of them were willing to go to the women-only café there.

Secondly, 226 people live in Salim Street. However, only 86 of them are willing to go to the women-only café. When we look at the other locations of the city listed in the table, it was observed that is the best location that the investment can be made in order to be closer to the customers.

Table 6

Analyzing the responses to: "I would love to visit women café". Cross tabulation based on location of living* willingness to visit

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Salim Street	42	29	35	34	86	226
Bakhtiyari	24	20	28	34	61	167
Tuimalik	46	29	62	44	126	307
Tasluja	17	11	28	23	48	127
Serchinar	21	18	40	28	67	174
Total	150	107	193	163	388	1001

Table 7

Analyzing the responses to: "I would love to visit women café". Cross tabulation based on the frequency of visiting any café* willingness to visit

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Once a week	82	64	100	85	241	572
Twice a week	32	29	51	42	68	222
More than three times	36	14	42	35	79	206
Other	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	150	107	193	163	388	1001

Table 7 shows how often people visit a café. The results showed that most of the population visits a café once a week. The people who visit a café once a week represents 57 percent of the sample. It was observed that more than 60% of the people who go to a café are willing to go to a women-only café, too.

Secondly, we have observed that approximately 23% of the people in the sample population go to a café twice a week; also, it was observed that 50% of those people are willing to go to a women-only café. Lastly, there are 20% of the people who go to a café more than 3 times a week. 50% of them has also willingness to go to a women-only café. As a result, we have seen that the people who want to go to a women-only café visit existing cafés once or twice a week.

Table 8

Analyzing the responses to: "I would love to visit women café". Cross tabulation based on the spending per visit* willingness to pay

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
\$10-\$15	89	46	84	85	224	528
\$15-\$30	38	38	71	48	111	306
\$30-\$50	15	20	24	17	45	121
\$50+	8	3	14	11	8	44
Total	150	107	193	163	388	1001

Table 8 represents how much people spend in a café during their visits. The results reveal that 53% of the population spend \$10 up to \$15 during their visits.

Among that population, approximately 16% of the participants wanted to go to a women-only café, secondly approximately 31% of the society spent \$15 to \$30 during their visits to a café. Among those 50% who wanted to visit the women-only café, 12% of them spent \$30 up to \$50 to a café per visit. There are approximately 50% of them again who wanted to go to a women-only café.

Finally, there is a group of 4.5% who pays more than \$50 to a café when they make a visit. The results showed that 45% of them would like to visit a women-only café.

Based on these results, it is revealed that 50% of the people who favor visiting a women-only café tend to pay \$10 to \$15 per visit. Secondly, the results show that 29% of the population willing to visit a women-only café may spend 15 to \$30 per visit.

Finally, 15% of the sample population who are willing to go to a women-only café may spend more than \$30 per day visit.

These results revealed that the biggest proportion of the population can be estimated to spend \$10 to \$15 per visit, which means, we can conclude that the prices should not be very high in order not to lose the biggest proportion of their target customers.

Table 9

Analyzing the responses to: "Women-café should have sufficient parking area"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Absolutely No	115	11.5	11.5	11.5
	Not Sure	100	10.0	10.0	21.5
	Not Sure	153	15.3	15.3	36.8
	Yes	193	19.3	19.3	56.2
	Absolutely Yes	438	43.8	43.8	100.0
	Total	999	99.8	100.0	
Missing	System	2	0.2		
Total		1001	100.0		

Table 9 renders the importance the respondents attach to a parking area for the possible women-only café investment. The results show that 21% of the participants indicated that car parking is not a very important aspect of such a café while 63% of them emphasized the importance of parking area for the café. Therefore, we can conclude that when the café location is selected, parking area should be considered.

Table 10

Analyzing the responses to: "Women-café should be close to the city center"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Absolutely No	81	8.1	8.1	8.1
	Not Sure	96	9.6	9.6	17.7
	Not Sure	219	21.9	21.9	39.6
	Yes	204	20.4	20.4	59.9
	Absolutely Yes	401	40.1	40.1	100.0
	Total	1001	100.0	100.0	

Table 10 indicates the participants evaluation of the importance café's being close to the city center. Among the participants, only 17% determined that closeness to city center is not important while 60% of

the women said closeness is important. Therefore, it can be said that the location of the café should be close to the city center.

Table 11

Analyzing the responses to: "Women-café should be away from the mixed (men-women) cafés"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Absolutely No	219	21.9	21.9	21.9
	Not Sure	181	18.1	18.1	40.0
	Not Sure	208	20.8	20.8	60.7
	Yes	151	15.1	15.1	75.8
	Absolutely Yes	242	24.2	24.2	100.0
	Total	1001	100.0	100.0	

Table 11 indicates the importance of café's distance from the mixed (men-women) cafés. Interestingly, 40% of the participants indicated the café should not necessarily be away from the mixed cafés. Only 39% of the participants have emphasized the importance of closeness to the mixed cafés. The result might be because not only religious and conservative people are willing to go to such a café but also the social and humanist people. This situation can be seen as an advantage because the target customer population becomes bigger in this case. The result indicates that women-only café should not be isolated from the society. Therefore, such a location should be selected for the café.

Table 12

Analyzing the responses to: "Women-café should be close to my hometown"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Absolutely No	184	18.4	18.4	18.4
	Not Sure	124	12.4	12.4	30.8
	Not Sure	220	22.0	22.0	52.7
	Yes	185	18.5	18.5	71.2
	Absolutely Yes	288	28.8	28.8	100.0
	Total	1001	100.0	100.0	

Table 12 shows the importance of being close to hometown. 31% of the participants indicated that the café should not be close to hometown. Only 47% of the participants have indicated that the café should be close to the hometown. Therefore, we made a more detailed analysis to see the percentage of the participants who want to visit a café close to their hometown. Table 13 indicates the results.

Table 13 indicates the ideas of participants about the necessity of closeness to hometown. Based on the table, 64% of the participants, who are willing to visit the women-only café, also want the café to be close to their hometown.

Table 6 indicated that more customers were willing to visit café in Tuimelik. Therefore, Tuimelik would be a good location rather than the city center. Since the costs of such an investment is high in the city center, Tuimelik might be considered as an alternative.

Table 13*Analyzing the responses to: "Willing to visit Women Café". Crosstab Results*

		Absolutely No	Not Sure	Not Sure	Yes	Absolutely Yes	Total
Closeness to hometown	Absolutely No	60	19	20	18		184
	Not Sure	13	25	32	26	28	124
	Not Sure	29	23	56	39	73	220
	Yes	18	25	47	44	51	185
	Absolutely Yes	30	15	38	36	169	288
Total		150	107	193	163	388	1001

Conclusion

The results indicated that 55% of the society thought that a women-only café would be a good investment and they would visit the café. As there is no competitor in this field yet, we can suggest that this investment would be financially beneficial.

It was observed that when women go to a café, they spend around \$10-\$15 (see Table 8). In estimation, if 100 people on average visit the café daily, the daily turnover would be between \$1000 and \$2000. The monthly turn over would be between \$30.000 and \$60.000. The estimation should be left to another article as the environment analysis must be performed for further estimation.

Fixed and variable costs (such as rent, internet, electricity, human resources, etc.) should be calculated according to the turnover, and the net estimated profit can be projected by then.

The results indicated that not only religious people were willing to visit the café but also social, humanist, feminist, and atheist people. This shows that there is an interest for this kind of a café from all of the layers of the society. Therefore, the design of the café should address general public, not only a specific layer of the society.

Cafés and restaurants belong to the service sector. People nowadays also use cafés for chilling and hanging out with friends. In Kurdistan, there are many cafés that claim to serve people in the best way to gain customer satisfaction. Women can go to cafés, yet they do not have the adequate amount of freedom there. Women have the right to go to a café on their own for any purpose they have. Therefore, we are suggesting opening a café that will only be for women. The reasons have been rendered in the research. Women should be free enough to go out of their house and there are many activities that women can do in such a café while chilling and having a great time.

Women can work on raising their voice towards the obstacles that stand on their way. Basically, opening a women-only café idea has advantages and disadvantages just like any other business. Such a café provides opportunities for women to enjoy more freedom. The challenge of initiating such business would be the community that may stand in the way. Women-only cafés are now evolving in the world which means it is the community's duty to work on this idea in Kurdistan. In terms of business, the café will bring about job opportunities for many people. Also, it will generate profit to the owners of the café who can work on other projects that can help women. It is time to understand that women are as smart as men in business, and that they can use their minds in improving the society by allowing women to have their freedom.

Further Studies

The next paper can be on the environment analysis and see why young generation go to some type of cafés and not to others. Understanding that, we can estimate the design of such as café before shaping the investment.

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