



A STUDY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS WITH REFERENCE TO ABU DHABI

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ABSTRACT :

This study explores the key factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty at Malabar Gold & Diamonds, a leading luxury jewellery retailer in the United Arab Emirates. In the high-value jewellery sector, purchasing decisions are shaped not only by product quality but also by the level of service, emotional connection, and trust customers place in the brand. Understanding these elements is essential for sustaining success in a competitive and culturally diverse market like Abu Dhabi.

The research was conducted across four branches in Abu Dhabi, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 175 customers over a period of three months (January to March 2025). The study examined how demographics (such as age, gender, and nationality), in-store experience, and perceptions of product and service quality impact overall satisfaction and repeat purchase behaviour.

To validate the relationships between these variables, statistical hypothesis testing was performed using Pearson correlation analysis. The results revealed a weak but statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.29$) between product quality and overall satisfaction, and a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.52$) between staff behaviour and repeat purchase intention. These findings suggest that while high product quality is expected and appreciated, human interaction and personalized service are more influential in driving long-term customer loyalty.

The insights derived from this study provide valuable direction for Malabar Gold & Diamonds to enhance its customer engagement strategies. By focusing on service excellence, emotional brand connection, and experience-driven offerings, the company can strengthen its position and customer retention in the luxury retail market.

Introduction

In the fast-growing and competitive world of luxury retail in the UAE, jewellery brands must do more than just offer high-quality products. To truly stand out and succeed, they also need to provide a memorable, personalized shopping experience that connects emotionally with their customers. Simply having beautiful jewellery is no longer enough—what matters just as much is how the customer feels during and after their purchase.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds is one of the most prominent players in this space. With a strong global footprint and deep cultural roots, particularly among Indian and South Asian communities, the brand has earned a trusted reputation in the UAE's multicultural marketplace. Many of Malabar's loyal customers are drawn not only to the brand's wide range of products but also to its cultural familiarity, personalized service, and the trust it has built over decades. This study focuses on evaluating customer satisfaction across four key branches in Abu Dhabi. The main aim is to understand what factors matter most to customers—what makes them feel satisfied, what builds loyalty, and what drives them to return for future purchases.

Some of the elements explored include:

- The quality of the jewellery
- The attitude and professionalism of staff
- The overall atmosphere of the store
- The brand's emotional and cultural connection with customers

By identifying which of these aspects have the most impact, this study seeks to provide actionable insights that Malabar Gold & Diamonds can use to improve its services, retain customers, and strengthen its market position.

Put simply, this research aims to answer a fundamental question: What makes customers happy enough to come back to Malabar Gold & Diamonds again and again? The findings will help the company focus on what truly matters to its audience, ensuring long-term success in the luxury retail market.

Literature Review

Customer satisfaction has long been recognized as a key determinant of brand loyalty, market share, and profitability in service-driven industries. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), customer expectations are shaped by past experiences, word-of-mouth, and marketing communications. In luxury retail, customers expect personalized service, quality assurance, and emotional engagement.

Zeithaml et al. (2018) argue that tangible factors such as product quality and store aesthetics, combined with intangible aspects like staff behaviour and trust, form the foundation of customer satisfaction. Given the emotional and cultural value attached to jewellery, especially in South Asian communities, these aspects become more pronounced.

This research extends existing theories by applying them to the context of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in the UAE, providing real-world insights from current consumer experiences.

Research Methodology

To understand what drives customer satisfaction and loyalty at Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Abu Dhabi, this study adopts a descriptive research design and uses quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. The main aim was to measure how different aspects of the retail experience—such as product quality, staff service, store environment, pricing, and brand perception—affect customer satisfaction and whether these factors contribute to a customer's intention to return and repurchase.

1.1 Research Design

This is a descriptive study, meaning it focuses on describing the current status of customer satisfaction based on actual feedback. It does not manipulate variables but instead observes and analyses patterns within customer opinions. The quantitative approach allows for statistical measurement of responses, making it possible to identify trends and relationships between key variables.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate customer satisfaction with product quality, pricing, and service at Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Abu Dhabi.
- To identify key factors influencing customer loyalty and repeat purchase decisions.
- To recommend actionable strategies to improve customer experience and engagement at the Abu Dhabi branches.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

This study uses hypothesis testing to examine whether two key service dimensions—product quality and staff behaviour—have a measurable impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

General Hypotheses:

- H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no statistically significant relationship between customer satisfaction and the independent variables—namely product quality, pricing, store ambience, staff service, and brand loyalty—at Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Abu Dhabi.
- H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a statistically significant relationship between customer satisfaction and the independent variables—namely product quality, pricing, store ambience, staff service, and brand loyalty—at Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Abu Dhabi.

Focused Hypotheses:

To go deeper into specific aspects, the study also tested two individual hypotheses using Pearson correlation analysis:

Hypothesis 1:

- H_0 : There is no significant relationship between product quality and overall customer satisfaction.
- H_1 : There is a significant relationship between product quality and overall customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2:

- H_0 : There is no significant relationship between staff behaviour and repeat purchase intention.
- H_1 : There is a significant relationship between staff behaviour and repeat purchase intention.

These hypotheses were evaluated to determine whether better product design and craftsmanship lead to higher satisfaction, and whether warm, courteous service leads to stronger customer loyalty.

1.4 Data Collection Methodology

To ensure accurate and relevant findings, primary data was collected directly from customers who had visited one of four Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets in Abu Dhabi. The research involved distributing structured, self-administered questionnaires containing both demographic questions and satisfaction-based metrics.

Details of the data collection process:

- Branches Covered:
 - Hamdan Street Branch 1
 - Hamdan Street Branch 2
 - Al Wahda Mall Branch
 - Madinat Zayed Branch
- Data Collection Period: January to March 2025
- Sampling Technique: Random sampling was used to ensure fair representation across customer age groups, genders, and nationalities. This method allows each customer an equal chance of selection, making the findings more reliable.
- Sample Size: A total of 175 customers participated in the survey, providing a robust dataset to analyse behavioural trends and satisfaction indicators.
- Response Rate: The survey achieved a high response rate of 87.5%, reflecting the willingness of customers to share their experiences and thoughts.
- Data Collection Tool: A structured questionnaire with multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions was used. The questions focused on:
 - Product quality
 - Pricing
 - Staff behaviour
 - Store environment
 - Purchase purpose
 - Future purchase intention
 - Overall satisfaction

1.5 Data Analysis Tools

Once collected, the data was organized and analysed using Microsoft Excel. The following tools and techniques were applied:

- Microsoft Excel
- Percentage analysis
- Descriptive statistics
- Pearson Correlation Analysis

The results of these tests helped confirm or reject the proposed hypotheses and are discussed in detail in Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to the Abu Dhabi branches of Malabar Gold & Diamonds and reflects the views of walk-in customers during a three-month research period. It provides valuable insight into:

- How different customer groups perceive the brand
- Which service factors most affect satisfaction
- What influences repeat purchases and loyalty

While the findings may not represent the brand's entire global operations, they offer focused and actionable guidance for improving performance in a key regional market.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter presents and interprets the data collected from 175 customers who visited four selected branches of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Abu Dhabi during the period from January to March 2025. The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate customer satisfaction levels across key service areas and to test the relationship between customer experience variables and satisfaction or loyalty outcomes.

1.7 Demographic Profile of Respondents

To better understand the background of the customers surveyed, the study analysed several demographic variables. These variables help identify who the typical customer is, what they value, and how they interact with the brand.

- **Age Group:** The majority of respondents (38%) fell into the 31–40 years age bracket. This age group typically includes working professionals and family decision-makers, suggesting they are the most active and influential buyers in the luxury jewellery segment.
- **Gender:** Male customers accounted for 62% of the sample, a notable insight that challenges traditional assumptions that jewellery retail is female-dominated. In Abu
- **Dhabi,** men play a significant role in making jewellery purchases—often for weddings, religious events, or gifting purposes.
- **Nationality:** A significant majority—67% of the respondents—were of Indian origin, reinforcing Malabar's strong cultural connection with the Indian and South Asian expatriate community in the UAE.
- **Occupation:** 54% of respondents were working professionals, which supports the idea that stable income earners are a key target group for high-value purchases like gold and diamond jewellery.
- **Income Level:** The largest share of respondents (42%) reported a monthly income of AED 5000–8000, positioning them in the mid-income bracket with moderate to high spending capacity.

These findings collectively paint a picture of Malabar's core customer base in Abu Dhabi: mid-aged, working, Indian professionals with a steady income, who are likely to make meaningful, occasion-driven purchases.

1.8 Customer Satisfaction Metrics

Customers were asked to rate various aspects of their shopping experience, including product quality, pricing, service, and the store environment. The responses have revealed several important trends:

- **Product Quality:** A strong 79% of respondents rated the product quality as either "Excellent" or "Good", demonstrating trust in the brand's craftsmanship and authenticity. This reflects positively on Malabar's commitment to quality and design.
- **Pricing:** While 75% of customers were satisfied with pricing, nearly 25% expressed neutral or dissatisfied opinions. This suggests a potential gap in how pricing is perceived and communicated. Customers may need better clarity on making charges, gold rates, or value-added benefits—pointing to a need for more transparent or flexible pricing models.
- **Store Ambience:** Most customers found the store environment pleasant; however, 26% rated it average or poor, particularly in terms of layout, waiting areas, and lighting. This indicates that enhancing store ambience—especially in high-traffic locations—could improve overall customer satisfaction.
- **Staff Behaviour:** One of the most positively received aspects was staff professionalism and helpfulness. Customers appreciated being treated with courtesy and receiving informed guidance, proving that well-trained staff can significantly elevate the in-store experience.
- **Brand Loyalty:** An impressive 80.6% of customers indicated a willingness to make repeat purchases, and 81% said they would recommend the brand to others. This highlights Malabar's success in building trust and long-term relationships.
- **Marketing Effectiveness:** Social media platforms, particularly Instagram and Facebook, were found to be the most impactful in reaching and influencing customers. Their visual appeal, along with the brand's strong digital presence, plays a key role in attracting and engaging a modern audience.

1.9 Hypothesis Testing and Interpretation

To further validate the findings, Pearson correlation tests were conducted to assess whether a statistical relationship exists between key service variables and customer outcomes. Two core hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis	Variables Tested	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	Interpretation
H1	Product Quality vs. Overall Satisfaction	0.29	Weak but positive correlation – supports the hypothesis
H2	Staff Behaviour vs. Repeat Purchase Intention	0.52	Moderate positive correlation – confirms strong relationship

Hypothesis 1: Product Quality and Customer Satisfaction

2. Result: The Pearson correlation value was $r = 0.29$, indicating a weak but positive correlation between product quality and overall satisfaction.
3. Interpretation: While customers appreciate good quality, this alone does not guarantee high satisfaction. In today's competitive environment, quality is expected, and satisfaction is shaped by a broader experience, including service, pricing, and emotional connection. Thus, although the hypothesis is supported, it also points to the importance of other influencing factors.

Hypothesis 2: Staff Behaviour and Repeat Purchase Intention

- Result: The correlation test showed a moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.52$) between staff behaviour and the intention to repurchase.
- Interpretation: This is a significant finding. It suggests that how customers are treated by staff—in terms of friendliness, product knowledge, and personalized service—has a direct impact on their willingness to return. This supports the idea that exceptional customer service is a key driver of brand loyalty in luxury retail.

Overall Interpretation

These results confirm that while high-quality products form the foundation of satisfaction, they are not enough on their own. Customers are more likely to return when they feel valued, understood, and emotionally connected to the brand. In this context, staff behaviour emerges as a critical loyalty driver, with the power to convert one-time visitors into long-term customers.

The findings emphasize the need for Malabar Gold & Diamonds to focus on delivering not just superior products, but also a warm, welcoming, and trust-driven shopping experience.

Findings and Conclusions

3.1 Key Findings

Based on the data collected from 175 customers across four branches of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Abu Dhabi, several important insights have emerged about customer preferences, behaviour, and satisfaction levels:

- The dominant buyer group consists of males aged 31–40, who are often the decision-makers for personal and family purchases. Their spending behaviour is guided by cultural traditions, family needs, and special occasions.
- A significant portion of the customer base consists of Indian expatriates, who are deeply familiar with the brand and share a cultural affinity with Malabar's product offerings.
- Purchases are often made for personal use, gifting, and weddings, highlighting both routine buying behaviour and emotion-driven, ceremonial purchases.
- Product quality and staff service consistently ranked as the most important satisfaction drivers, reflecting trust in craftsmanship and appreciation for personalized attention.
- Pricing and store ambiance, although satisfactory, emerged as relatively weaker areas. A portion of customers remained neutral or dissatisfied with these aspects, indicating potential for improvement.
- Digital engagement, especially through Instagram and Facebook, plays a crucial role in influencing brand awareness and drawing in younger, tech-savvy customers.
- From a statistical perspective, product quality had a weak but positive correlation with overall satisfaction ($r = 0.29$). This means while customers appreciate quality, it is not the sole reason they stay loyal.
- Staff behaviour showed a stronger correlation ($r = 0.52$) with repeat purchase intention, emphasizing that human interaction and emotional engagement matter more than product features alone.

- Emotional connection, courtesy, and staff attentiveness have a greater influence on future buying behaviour than previously assumed. Customers return to brands that not only meet their product expectations but also make them feel valued.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Malabar Gold & Diamonds enjoys a strong and loyal customer base in Abu Dhabi, largely due to its consistent product quality, cultural relevance, and personalized customer service. However, in today's luxury retail landscape— especially within the UAE— customers expect more than just excellent products. They seek experiences that are seamless, emotionally rewarding, and personally meaningful. While product quality does positively impact satisfaction, the correlation strength ($r = 0.29$) suggests that it is only one piece of the puzzle. More significantly, staff behaviour has a stronger influence ($r = 0.52$) on customer retention and brand advocacy. This indicates that a warm smile, patient guidance, and attentive service leave a lasting impression and ultimately drive customers to return.

In essence, this research confirms that brands like Malabar must strive for a balance between product excellence and service excellence. A well-trained, customer-focused team, coupled with a culturally tuned shopping environment, can elevate the brand experience, strengthen loyalty, and create lasting value for both the business and its customers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and hypothesis testing, the following key actions are recommended for Malabar Gold & Diamonds to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty in Abu Dhabi:

- **Train Staff with Cultural Sensitivity:** Regular multilingual and etiquette training will improve personalized customer interactions.
- **Improve Store Ambiance:** Upgrading lighting, layout, and seating can create a more premium and comfortable shopping experience.
- **Launch Loyalty Programs:** Reward repeat customers with points, offers, or exclusive benefits to strengthen long-term engagement.
- **Ensure Transparent Pricing:** Clearly explain charges and consider festive or tiered discounts to increase value perception.
- **Boost Social Media Storytelling:** Share real customer stories and festive moments to emotionally connect with audiences.
- **Implement Quick Feedback Tools:** Use digital surveys or kiosks to gather real-time customer insights for service improvement.
- **Offer Personalized Collections:** Tailor designs for the dominant age and nationality groups (e.g., Indian expats aged 31–40).
- **Adopt AR and Virtual Shopping:** Introduce tech features like virtual try-ons and online consultations for convenience and innovation.
- **Promote Ethical and Sustainable Practices:** Highlight eco-friendly packaging and responsible sourcing in brand messaging to attract conscious buyers.

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