

Food, Faith and Forgiveness: An Exploration of Service Transgression in a Multi-Faith Context

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Abstract

Food is a powerful symbolic representation of life, fertility and sociality that reflects one's spiritual journey and vulnerability. The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of 'service transgression' in the forbidden consumption context where the importance of dietary practices is brought into the customers' consciousness as religious compliance, obligation and identity. To examine customer forgiveness in such transgression events, we employed a scenario-based experimental study involving 300 participants who are working adults aged 18 and above, from the Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism faith. The results underscore the importance of apology as the central approach to conflict resolution in the event of transgression. While compensation strategies can be effective in ordinary service failure context, they need to be carefully employed in event of service transgression of a religious nature. This study offers consumer insights for service providers who serve a diverse customer base from a multi-faith background.

Keywords: *service transgression; customer forgiveness; religion*

Track: Services Marketing