

Consumer perception and retail store attributes – A Review

*M.Rampier

**Dr.M.Lakshmibala

*Research Scholar, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli.

**Professor & Head, Department of Business Administration, Kunthavai Nachiyar Government Arts College for Women, Thanjavur.

Introduction

In the recent times, India has witnessed transformation in the shopping habits of the consumers. Modern retail outlets have provided Indian consumers with new shopping exposure and constantly evolving choice for shopping with embracing on wide range of products. Modern retail formats are operating in different sizes and shapes. They are quite different in terms of the ownership, the kind of premises (format) used, and the orientation of the product range. This study examines the reviews of various authors and how consumers' perceptions towards stores get affected by attributes of stores.

Thompson & Chen (1998), Retail store image has been shown to play an important role in store patronage, and it is widely accepted that psychological factors have a significant role in store image formation. Past research has often involved the measurement of tangible attributes, or links between store images and consumers' self-images. This study was undertaken to move to the next stage by exploring the link between perceived store image and the personal values which underlie behavioral choices. Fashion retailing was selected as an appropriate research domain because of the well-established associations between clothing choice, personality, self concept, and personal values. Means-end theory and laddering methodology were employed in interviews with 30 female respondents. The hedonic values of "enjoyment and happiness" and "quality of life" were found to be the terminal values most sought by consumers in association with store image. These were linked through the consequence "nice feeling" to the tangible attributes of "price", "quality" and "reputation". The study illustrates an application of means-end methodology in a retail environment, and the results provide a platform for fashion store image and positioning strategies. Suggestions for further research are made.

Erdem & Oumlil & Tuncalp (1999), Retailing business is greatly affected by the patronage behavioral orientations of shoppers. Understanding these orientations can assist retailers in developing appropriate marketing strategies toward meeting the needs and wants of consumers. One important factor explaining consumer behavioral orientations is their values. Another important factor affecting consumer behavioral orientations is the store image, an image shaped by store attributes. This study examines the linkage between consumer values and the importance of some salient store attributes. Marketing management implications are also discussed.

Uusitalo (2001), Grocery retailers are operating in a slow-growth market. The pursuit of market share is one of the main concerns for retail managers. The retail structure is becoming increasingly standardized and homogenous because of concentration of the ownership of stores. Cultural differences remain, however, between different European countries. Cultural factors influence the success of a positioning strategy. This study examined how consumers perceive grocery retail formats and brands in Finland. Data from personal interviews were used in highlighting the consumer perspective. Consumers perceive meaningful differences in various store formats; meanwhile store brands are seen as quite similar. Consumers rely on functional attributes of stores when discussing grocery stores. However, it seems that consumers are unable to recognize the fabricated, often imaginary differences at the brand level. The informant's own, creative symbolic work results in this case to interpreting all grocery retail brands as similar. Managerial implications of the study are presented.

Paulins & Geistfeld (2003), Consumer perceptions of retail store attributes for a set of particular stores were examined to determine their effect on store preference. Respondents rated 13 stores. Four variables were found to affect store preference using forward stepwise logistic regression: type of clothing desired in stock, outside store appearance, shopping

hours, and advertising. Significance of the effect of store attributes on store preference varied by store type. In addition, associations between customer perception of store attributes, education and age were observed. Implications for researchers and practitioners are discussed.

Gehrt & Yan (2004) most research related to consumer choice of retailers emphasizes retailer attributes and/or consumer characteristics. Since many retail formats, including online retailing, have emerged in recent years, knowledge of how consumers select retail formats must be updated. A source of influence that has been examined to a very limited extent for store retailers but not for emerging retail formats is situational influence. From a modern interactionism perspective, this study investigates the influence of situational as well as consumer and retailer factors on preference for online, catalog, and store formats. Key results show that situational factors have significant influence on online and catalog format selection and perceptions of attributes that are crucial to that selection.

Miranda & Kónya (2005), To identify the factors that influence shoppers' satisfaction with their "primary" grocery store, and those that encourage them to continue patronising it despite being presented with a significant inducement to shop elsewhere. A structured questionnaire containing 31 variables relating to shopping behaviour and satisfaction was administered to 934 shoppers leaving a number of grocery stores in an Australian city during a two-week period. Results were used to construct two mathematical models predicting customer satisfaction and store loyalty, from which two research hypotheses were derived. The results of model estimation show that factors with a significant influence on store satisfaction have little in common with others that impel shoppers to remain loyal to one store. Indeed, there was no evidence in this study that shoppers' overall satisfaction was by itself a significant influence on continued patronage. The questionnaire did not ask questions, judged to be intrusive, relating to respondents' income level, education background, employment status or household size – characteristics known to have a bearing on perception of risk associated with switching to an unfamiliar store and hence potentially to inhibit action. It would be instructive in future research to assess the extent to which demographic characteristics mediate perceptions of financial, psychological and social risk, and their influence on satisfaction and loyalty.

Carpenter & Moore (2006), to provide a general understanding of grocery consumers' retail format choice in the US marketplace. A random sample of US grocery consumers (N=454) was surveyed using a self-administered questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques (regression, ANOVA) were used to evaluate the data. Identifies demographic groups who frequent specific formats (specialty grocers, traditional supermarkets, supercenters, warehouse clubs, and internet grocers) and examines store attributes (e.g. price competitiveness, product selection, and atmosphere) as drivers of format choice. The results included in this research were gathered and reported on an individual format basis. In order to capture consumer choices across a range of grocery retail formats, forcing respondents to compare formats was not initiated. In addition, data pertaining to whether consumers had access to each and every type of format in the study were not collected. Examination of how dimensions of consumer access limit or expand retail patronage behavior could also be highly beneficial to grocery retailers. **Korgaonkar & Silverblatt (2006)**, To investigate if consumer online patronage is influenced by product category and online store type. Building on the prior work in this area by the authors and other researchers the study collected data in two phases to investigate the study hypotheses. The study results suggest that consumers' online patronage is differed based on product type. Interaction effects of the online stores and product type were significant too. Additionally, the rank order of importance of the Internet attribute varied among the three types of online retailers. The study results should be replicated in other markets. Future studies may also include a variety of different types of online outlets to improve the conclusiveness of the findings reported in this study. The results should be of interest to the online retailers in choosing the types of merchandise and services to emphasis in the retailers marketing program. The paper should be of interest to academicians as well as practitioners as it contributes to the small but growing literature in the area of online retailing. It adds to the literature on the product classification paradigm as well as offers practical guidelines for managers.

Yun & Good (2007), the purpose of this paper is to investigate e-tail store attributes that develop customers' positive perceptions of e-tail store image, and determines whether or not they develop a sense of loyalty to an e-tailer. Acknowledging the importance of customer retention, this paper is designed to examine e-customer loyalty intentions toward the e-tailer. To understand the concept of loyalty toward an e-tailer, this study focuses on the importance of the final stage of the customer decision-making process: post-purchase evaluation. This paper develops a model that describes the extent to which e-tail store image (derived from a set of e-tail store attributes) indicates patronage intentions and finally predicts customer loyalty. We use the structural equation modeling to test the model and hypotheses. Results in this paper indicate that e-tail store image is derived from e-merchandise, e-service, and e-shopping atmosphere attributes, all of which support the way consumers shop. A favorable e-tail store image positively influences e-patronage intentions, which thus leads to e-loyalty. The research in this paper provides a conceptual model that will help e-retailers better articulate how and why consumers may be e-loyal shoppers. Second, the research identifies attributes, unique to online shopping that serve as the basis for conceptualizing e-tail image as a second order factor.

Da Silva & Syed Alwi (2008), The purpose of this paper is to look into the relationship between the physical aspect of a retail store, product-related attributes, personal interaction with customers and perceived reliability and corporate brand image in an offline or bricks and mortar context. The study is based on 511 interviews conducted in various bookstores and uses structural equation modelling as a statistical tool for concluding the above. The paper argues that physical aspect of a retail store, product-related attributes and personal interaction with customers will have a significant and positive direct effect on the offline corporate brand image whilst there was no significant connection between reliability and corporate brand image. The research has been conducted in one organisation, albeit a number of bookstores were scrutinized. The paper's managerial contribution lies in its lessons for practitioners who want to understand what are the key drivers of corporate brand image in an offline context. It also provides a background for further studies which can extrapolate the current thinking into other sectors in order to validate or refute the results presented here. The paper scrutinizes the impact of: physical aspects; product related information; reliability; and personal interaction in the corporate brand image of a retail organisation.

Brengman & Willems (2009), The purpose of this paper is to identify the main determinants of fashion store personality, as perceived by the shopper. It aims to discover factors that are responsible for specific store personality trait perceptions in order to understand how these humanlike personality traits are induced in a retailing context. With this end in mind, a qualitative exploratory study was undertaken. A total of 70 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a convenience sample of Belgian adult respondents to systematically assess the connotations of the 34 different store personality trait descriptors put forward by d'Astous and Lévesque. Respondents were asked which fashion stores they considered to embody these specific personality traits and they were probed for the sources of inference they used. The findings reveal that the store environment and store design particularly is an important factor in determining the personality of fashion stores. Also, other factors such as corporate social responsibility, reputation, service level, the salespeople, the merchandise sold, price/quality perceptions and the consumer base determine perceptions of "genuineness", "solidity", "sophistication", "enthusiasm" and "unpleasantness". A better understanding of the determinants of fashion store personality is essential for retail managers who wish to (re)position their stores. Retailers and store designers should be aware of the important role of "atmospherics" in this regard. Apart from conceptual work; no empirical research has yet systematically investigated determinants of each of the main store personality dimensions.

Dholakia & Zhao (2010), The purpose of this paper is to identify website characteristics that affect customer evaluations and satisfaction with online stores at two interaction points – when the order is placed and after the order has been fulfilled. Using data collected by bizrate.com, data collected from customers of thousands of online stores, the analysis focuses on the changes in the relationships between website characteristics and customer ratings. Data for two-time periods, 15 months apart, are used to determine the stability in

the observed relationships. Order fulfillment variables, particularly on-time delivery, dominate the effects on overall customer evaluations and satisfaction. The statistical significance of other online store attributes, however, changes as differences are observed between 2003 and 2004. The online environment is dynamic and the paper captures some of the changes in the relationships between website attributes and customer satisfaction. This requires continuous monitoring of the online environment. Since the paper relies on secondary data collected by bizrate.com, the research is limited by specific website attributes and measures of customer satisfaction adopted by a commercial enterprise. Online retailers must be strategic about fulfillment variables. When online stores compete with each other, it is easier to copy certain attributes like “shipping options” than other attributes such as “on-time delivery.” This suggests that the most creative, interactive, and vivid online site will not compensate for weak fulfillment and customer support capabilities. No other paper has looked at these data, collected from real customers making purchases at actual merchant sites, over two time periods. The results provide insights regarding stability of findings.

Saraswat & Mammen & Aagja et al (2010), The opening up of the Indian retail sector has seen a proliferation of the corporate players through different retail formats and stores – the majority being in the food and groceries. This necessitates creating, building, and managing differentiated retail store brands, and image differentiation, to attract and retain shoppers. This research paper attempts to understand whether the Indian consumers differentiate the various store brands and images based on their experiences. The study was conducted in two stages – list of parameters of evaluation of retail store image (developed from the literature), discussed with middle-level managers from the retail sector to finalize parameters relevant for store image measurement in the Indian context and a questionnaire evolved for primary data collection, administered to 326 SEC A and B respondents (shoppers of food and grocery from modern retail stores). To assess the store image dimensions perceived by these shoppers, factor analysis was employed and for understanding various store image attributes used for differentiation of store brands one-way analysis of variance was employed. Results reflect that Indian shoppers have started identifying the dimensions of retail store image and are differentiating the various stores on the basis of functional attributes. Eventually, the stores would have to create differentiation based on psychological attributes.

Wang & Ha (2011), Built on De Wulf et al.'s relationship exchange model, the present study aims to examine store attributes as a signal for the process of customer-retailer relationship building in the context of department store operation in the USA. A sample of college students at a US university participated in an online self-administered survey. Exploratory factor analysis identified store attribute factors pertaining to department stores and structural equation modeling tested hypotheses. Six store attributes relevant to department store environments were found: post-transaction service, direct mail, interpersonal communication, merchandise, preferential treatment, and store atmosphere. Four store attributes (direct mail, interpersonal communication, merchandise, and preferential treatment) involve perceived relationship investment, while one store attribute dimension (store atmosphere) directly contributes to perceived relationship quality. Perceived relationship investment positively influences perceived relationship quality, which in turn influences behavioural and attitudinal loyalty intentions. The mediating effects of perceived relationship quality on the perceived relationship investment-loyalty intention links were confirmed.

Bala (2012), The purpose of this paper is to develop a forecasting model for retailers based on customer segmentation, to improve performance of inventory. The research makes an attempt to capture the knowledge of segmenting the customers based on various attributes as an input to the demand forecasting in a retail store. The paper suggests a data mining model which has been used for forecasting of demand. The proposed model has been applied for forecasting demands of eight SKUs for grocery items in a supermarket. Based on the proposed forecasting model, the inventory performance has been studied with simulation. The proposed forecasting model with the inventory replenishment system results in the reduction of inventory level and increase in customer service level. Hence, the proposed model in the paper results in improved performance of inventory. Retailers can

make use of the proposed model for demand forecasting of various items to improve the inventory performance and profitability of operations. With the advent of data mining systems which have given rise to the use of business intelligence in various domains, the current paper addresses one of the most pressing issues in retail management, as demand forecasting with minimum error is the key to success in inventory and supply chain management. The proposed forecasting model with the inventory replenishment system results in the reduction of inventory level and increase in customer service level. The proposed model outperforms other widely used existing models.

Conclusion

The above reviews discussed clearly shows that, the customer perception is influenced by store attributes. So the companies have to give more concentration to store attributes for developing marketing strategy.

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