

INFLUENCING FACTORS ON RETAIL STORES (A CASE STUDY OF TWIN CITIES IN ANDHRA PRADESH)

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Abstract

Now days, there has been a stiff competition in the modern retailing sector. This has forced the retailers to pay considerable efforts to attract the consumers to their stores, has been increasing the frequency and amount of purchase available. Therefore, the significance of enabling store loyalty and developing innovative strategies towards this have been highlighted. In this study it is aimed to determine the effect of the satisfaction, trust-value perception and store image variables on the consumers' retail store loyalty in Twin cities of Andhra Pradesh. Our results show that the store image variables have effect on value and trust perception. Value-trust perceptions have effect on satisfaction and store loyalty of the customers.

Keywords: Value Perception, Store's loyalty factors, Retail store Image, Consumer Behavior.

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I. Introduction

Retailing plays significant roles to determine the consumption forms, manipulate the preferences to contribute to social life increasing the life standards involved. Today, the power balance is inclined towards the retailing rather than the producer. Increase in the number of the competitor brands in the market has led the firms to concern of being able to obtain more shares from the retail market. This situation has made the retailers highly advantageous. In addition to this, the fact that these retailers create their own brands and offer them to the market with less cost in comparison to the nation-wide brands have strengthened their position in the market. This advantageous position of the sector has attracted new investors and increased competition in retail sector. Today, due to increasing competition in modern retailing sector, retailers making considerable efforts to commit more consumers to their stores, and have made increase the frequency and amount of purchase available. Therefore, the importance of strengthening store loyalty and developing new strategies towards this have been highlighted. In this study we aimed to determine the effect of the satisfaction, trust, value perception and store image variables (service quality, store atmosphere, comparative price perception, discount perception, retail store opportunities, post purchase applications, product quality perception and retail store location) on the consumers' retail store loyalty in twin cities of Andhra Pradesh. The study consists of two parts. In the first part, theoretical information about the store loyalty and the variables determining this loyalty were given. In the second part, the variables that affect consumers' retail store loyalty were attempted to determine. Firstly it is determined whether the store image variables are effective on value-trust perceptions. Later the effect of trust-value perception on satisfaction and store loyalty are investigated.

II. Review of Literature

Today, attracting new customers has become so important in modern retailing in addition to loyal to them and efforts have been paying in that perspective as known, the cost of keeping consumers present is less than the cost of gaining new customers (Solomon, 2007). Moreover, it is argued that the success of any firm, in long term, is dependent upon the number of regular consumers rather than the number of the consumers who only purchase its products (Carpenter, 2003). Therefore, consumer loyalty has the key role for the success of a firm in the market.

Loyalty is generally defined as the dependence of a customer on a certain brand and the strong attitude that leads him or her to sustain this relationship with this brand (Uncles, et al., 2003). As for brand loyalty, however, there are some strong beliefs and attitudes that encourage these repetitive purchases (Solomon, 2007). Through these definitions, loyalty is defined as the tendency to buy the product and service again or becoming a patronage of it (Oliver, 1999). In repetitive purchases towards more advantageous options, the direction of the purchase can change. Considering these two features, the comprehensive definition of brand loyalty is given as follows: the consumer's having positive feeling toward the brand, buying the brand involved more frequently in comparison with other brands, going on buying it, and using it in longer term (Odabasi and Baris, 2002). There are close relationships between brand loyalty and store loyalty. In case the consumers' brand loyalty toward a certain brand is strong, and that the store offers to sale this brand affects the store preference. Likewise, when the customer does not have enough information about the product or if it is risky, then the customer firstly decides about the brand and later determines the store where to buy this product. Sometimes, the brand of the retailer is effective on the decision of the store (Assael, 1992).

III. Factors Affecting Store's Loyalty

Store loyalty means the stability of repurchase of a certain brand, and to become patronage of a certain retailer or service supplier (Jones and Reynolds, 2006). Dick and Basu (1994) define loyalty as the relationship between the positive attitudes toward a product, brand, service, store, seller and patronage behavior. Store loyalty is summarized as the dependence, which is developed by the consumer, upon the stores that contain many brands. This loyalty includes the place in which shopping is done rather than brands or product loyalty.

Image: I Big Bazaar at Ameerpet in Hyderabad



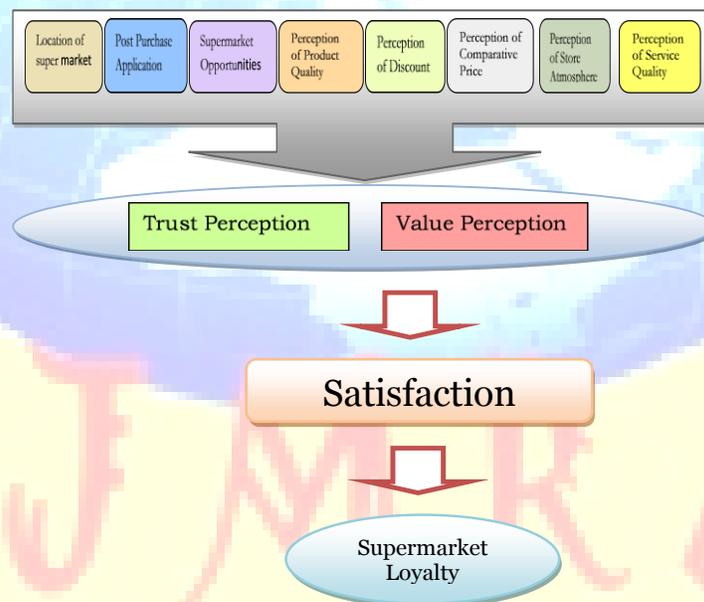
Such a case occurs due to differences that the distribution phase provides rather than the product features. Thus, such a difference can be made by means of the service, price, or the closeness to the consumer (Salls, 2004). Several studies have been conducted to determine customers' reasons for retail store preferences, and store image perceptions and store loyalty in Twin cities of Andhra Pradesh. In Uslu's study (2005) attempting to determine the customers' reasons of preferences for shopping centers, the following results were obtained: the approach of the staff to the customers, contents of products, their packing, hygienic conditions, post purchase services, product variety, product price, location convenience, the availability and diversity of quality brands become prominent effective factors. Similarly, in another study, Yilmaz et al. (2007) found that for customers, the location of the shopping mall, product price and quality, physical appearance and attitudes of the staff were important shopping mall prefer reasons. In Yalcin's study (2005), it was found that the demographic features such as age, occupation, number of children are effective on retail store loyalty.

Image: II Retail Store Internal Atmosphere



Keeping the above studies in mind, the variables which are argued to be most studied and the most effective variables on store prefer and loyalty are the variables of product quality perception, location of the store, price perception, service quality, store atmosphere, image, and in-store design. In the present study, among the factors affecting store loyalty, comparative price perception, service quality perception, inner atmosphere, location of the store, discount perception, market facilities, post purchase applications, product quality perception have been determined as the variables of store image. The effects of the variables of the store image on value perception, trust perception, satisfaction and store loyalty. The model of the research is demonstrated in figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Research Model



The excellence of retailer service generally deals with the general appearance of the staff and enterprise involved the attentiveness, kindness and trust toward customers. Polite and attentive attitudes of the staff, their experiences, safe shopping environment are some of the main features of the service quality (Cronin et al., 2000). The scale of service quality (SERVQUAL) developed by Parasuman-Zeithmal-Berry in 1988 was applied to many sectors. Atan et al. (2006) attempted to determine the retail store customers' service quality perception by using SERVQUAL measure. In another study, Dabholkar et al. (1996) have used the service quality

scale for the retailing sector. Sirohi et al. (1998), Caruana (2002), Wong and Sohal (2003) and Miranda et al. (2005) have determined that service quality has important effects on loyalty.

Store atmosphere is another factor which affects the store loyalty, such as the inner plan, easiness in reaching the shelf, product display, and if there are direction signs. (Sirohi et al., 1998; Koo, 2003). In some studies, the store atmosphere was found to be effective on store loyalty and repurchase behavior (Thang and Tan, 2003; Koo, 2003; Merrilees and Miller, 2001).

Customers consider price comparisons also in selecting the retailers (Zielke, 2006). As well as the products' real prices, these perceived prices also affect customers' store preference. Moore and Carpenter (2006), found that price perception affects the patronage behavior. Smith and Sinha (2000) determined that price level has a considerable effect on store choice. In another study, Gilbert and Jackaria (2002) found that discounts significantly affect customers' purchase behaviors.

Special discounts and promotions increase customers' interest toward the store (Grewal et al., 1998a). These discounts and promotions are considered as a financial sacrifice by the business. This situation results in the perception of discount. Another factor that affects customers' store preference is the quality of the products offered by the retailer. While evaluating the quality of the products that they purchase, customers use some clues. These are divided into two groups such as internal and external. They indicate that internal clues can be exemplified as the taste, color of the product, and the external clues consist of the price of and the brand of the product (Duman and Yagci, 2006).

The opportunities of any retail store generally deal with safe parking, shuttle service, and entertainment facilities for the kids (Davies et al., 2001). Post purchase applications include return of defective products, refund or change of the product. It was found out that compensation of the customer's loss and polite attitudes toward the customer strengthen customer's patronage intention toward the store (Blodgett et al., 1995). The location of the store affects customers' frequency of shopping by the store. This helps occurrence of store loyalty. It was seen that stores easily reached are more preferred (Rhee and Bell, 2002). Moreover, Koo (2003) found that location of store affects loyalty.

Assuming that the store image variables contribute to the development of store value perception and trust perception, the research hypotheses are offered:

Hypothesis 1a. Consumers' service quality perception is effective of trust perception

Hypothesis 1b. Consumers' service quality perception is effective on value perception

Hypothesis 2a. Consumers' store atmosphere perception is effective on trust perception

Hypothesis 2b. Consumers' store atmosphere perception is effective on value perception

Hypothesis 3a. Comparative price perception is effective on trust perception

Hypothesis 3b. Perception of comparative price is effective on value perception

Hypothesis 4a. Consumers' discount perception is effective on trust perception

Hypothesis 4b. Consumers' discount perception is effective on value perception

Hypothesis 5a. Consumers' product quality perception is effective on trust perception

Hypothesis 5b. Consumers' product quality perception is effective value perception

Hypothesis 6a. Retail store opportunities affect trust perception

Hypothesis 6b. Retail store opportunities affect value perception

Hypothesis 7a. Post purchase applications of the retail stores affect trust perception

Hypothesis 7b. Post purchase applications of the retail stores affect value perception

Hypothesis 8a. Retail store location perception affects trust perception

Hypothesis 8b. Retail store location perception affects value perception

Hypothesis 9. Value perception of the customers is effective on satisfaction.

Hypothesis 10. Trust perception of the customers is effective on satisfaction

Hypothesis 11. Satisfaction is effective on store loyalty.

Perception of value is one of the most important indicators that affect thought and intention of purchase (Grace and O’Cass, 2005). Value is the comparison of what customers expect and obtain as a benefit (Grewal et al., 1998b). According to studies, the customers who have high level of value perception toward to the store for their purchases seem to display higher loyalty (Chen and Quester, 2006; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Trust is generally defined as the eagerness to depend on each other (Wulf and Oderken-Schöder, 2003). It refers to the belief that customers have toward the retailer’s dependence and honesty (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Trust is seen to increase relational loyalty and positively affect loyalty (Beatty et al., 1996). Satisfaction refers to the personal evaluation as a result of meeting needs or going beyond the expectations (Bloemer and Ruyter, 1998). Satisfaction has been defined in several ways by different researchers. In these definitions, there are three common important points. First consumer satisfaction is a mental and emotional response. Second this response deals with expectations, product, and consumption experiences etc. Finally this response occurs in different times such post consumption and choice, and being dependent upon experience (Giese and Cote, 2000). Bloemer and Ruyter (1998) and Grønholdt et al. (2000) concluded that store satisfaction affects loyalty.

IV. Methodology and Tools of Analysis

Type of Research: Descriptive research

Population of the study: The population of the study consists of Twin cities of A. P

Sample size: Sample consisted of 400 respondents with their demographic profiles- sex, age, education, profession and marital status.

Sampling and research tool used: Convenient sampling method was adopted to fill the questionnaire by personal interaction to the customers visiting to super markets

Data Analysis and interpretation: Data was analyzed using SPSS13.0 and Lisrel 8.7 statistical package program.

In the present study, we aimed to determine the variables determining retail stores' loyalty of costumers in Hyderabad and Secundrabad in Andhra Pradesh. Six categories of retail stores are considered for the study which is given in table 1. In twin cities, there are modern retail stores (Central, Shoppers Stop, , Big Baazar, Apna Bazaar, Spencers, Reliance Fresh, Trinethra, More. for you, Magna, Food World, Fresh @, Subhiksha etc), shopping centers, and discount stores near to the grocery stores.

Table: 1.Types of Retail stores

S.No	Type of the Retail Store	Area Square Meters	Cash Register Number	Other Features
1	Hypermarket	Larger than 2500	Larger than 8	Self service, Parking land,ATM
2	Big Supermarket	1000-2499	Larger than 2	Self service
3	Supermarket	400-999	Larger than 2	Self service
4	Small Supermarket	100-399	2	Self service
5	Middle market	50-99	1	On the main or side street
6	Grocery store	Less than 50	1	Self service

Calculations

In the present study, the variables of the store image, value perception, trust perception, satisfaction and store loyalty factors measured using 5 point Likert-type scale (5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree).

V. Findings

Participants' demographic characteristics are shown in table 2: As seen in Table 2, 60% of the participants are male, 40% is female, 73% is between 18-41 years old and most of them (75%) seem married. Moreover, 35% of the participants graduated from high school, 38% of them are official and 32% have five and more than five members in their families.

Table: 2 Demographic profiles of selected customers

Demographical Features	Frequency	Percentage	Demographical Features	Frequency	Percentage		
<u>Sex</u>	Male	233	60.5	Official	149	38.7	
	Female	152	39.5	Worker	61	15.8	
<u>Age</u>	18-25	84	21.8	Tradesman	21	5.5	
	26-33	111	28.8	Private sector employee	49	12.7	
	34-41	92	23.9	<u>Profession</u>	Retired	27	7.0
	42-49	57	14.8		Housewife	44	11.4
	50-+	41	10.6		Unemployed	16	4.2
<u>Education</u>	Primary	85	22.1	Liberal profession	18	4.7	
	High school	137	35.6	<u>Marital status</u>	Married	291	75.6
	Vocational school	48	12.5		Single	94	24.4
	University	87	22.6				
Graduate	28	7.3					

The traditional cultural values and patriarchal structure are dominant both in Hyderabad and Secundrabad cities. This situation shows that male population is stronger to determine the needs, give decision, and buy (Odabasi and Baris, 2002; Solomon, 2007; Koc, 2007). Moreover, according to the data of 2006 family member labor force provided by Turkish Statistical Institute, 71% of the working population is male and 29% of them is female (TSI, 2006). These numbers display that male members financially support family. Though spouses generally go shopping together, the male are more effective than the female about decision making.

Therefore, that the number of the male participants is higher than the female ones matches the socio-cultural structure of the region. In literature, considering the some local based studies, it is seen that in retail store shopping the number of male customers are higher than female customers (Cati, 2007; Akpinar, 2006). The store loyalty and store image factors' descriptive statistics are given in table 3.

Table: 3 Calculations of store loyalty and store image variables

Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Alpha	Number of Variable
1. Service quality (SQ)	3.85	.674	0.909	11
2. Supermarket atmosphere (SA)	3.85	.690	0.842	7
3. Location of the supermarket (SL)	3.49	.827	0.748	4
4. Opportunities of the supermarket (SO)	3.13	.680	0.811	3
5. Post purchase applications (PPA)	3.52	.881	0.812	3
6. Comparative price perception (CPP)	2.73	.954	0.872	4
7. Discount perception (DP)	3.55	.900	0.841	4
8. Value perception (VP)	3.76	.715	0.914	4
9. Product quality perception (PQP)	3.77	.747	0.837	12
10. Trust perception (TP)	3.73	.884	0.871	4
11. Satisfaction (SAT)	3.81	.832	0.871	3
12. Supermarket loyalty (SLOY)	3.71	.812	0.924	9

N= 385

For testing scales reliability it is looked items' Cronbach's alphas. Acceptable minimum Cronbach alpha level was considered 0.70 (Hair, et al., 1998). Eliminating from scales 4 variables (3 from retail store opportunities and 1 from loyalty) totally 68 variables were taken into account. Later for determining variables affecting value and trust perception of consumers the theoretical model was tested with the structural equation model. And it is found that retail store opportunities, post purchase applications, retail store location, comparative price perception, discount perception have no effect on both trust and value perception. The factors showing no statistically significant at the modeling stage and the reason for their being taken out from the model. After eliminating these factors research model retested with the path model. At the end of the proposed modifications, index values of the scale became within acceptable values. (Andreassen, 1995; Suh and Han; 2002; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003; Sharma et al., 2005). The store image and loyalty factors' t , R^2 , standard coefficients, error variances, research model factors' standard coefficients and t value were calculated.

It is seen that location of retail store, post purchase applications and opportunities of the retail store did not affect the retail store loyalty. The fact that retail store location didn't affect retail store loyalty might be because retail stores were located in city centre so that they were easily accessible. The reason why post purchase applications were not significant might be attributed to the fact that consumers consider these services essential but not an extra care. From the diagram, satisfaction and value perception have direct effects and trust perception and product

quality, store atmosphere, service quality, comparative price perception and discount perception have indirect effects on retail store loyalty. Therefore, hypotheses *H1a*, *H2a*, *H2b*, *H5b*, *H9*, *H10* and *H11* have been accepted. Also, it is also seen that discount perception and comparable price perception directly affect retail store satisfaction.

In retailing sector where competition is considerably common, the significance of store image is well known in order to provide competition superiority among retailers. Therefore, in our study, the scale developed to determine store image dimensions and their influences on store image was tested. Our results show that the store image variables and value perception, trust perception and satisfaction have certain effects on store loyalty of the customers in Hyderabad city. In the study, it was assumed that the store variables had some effects on both value perception and trust perception. At the end of the analysis, it is seen that store atmosphere and product quality have certain effects on value perception. Besides, service quality was seen to be effective on trust perception. Comparable price perception and discount perception have no effect on trust and value perception which are two mediate variables. These variables have direct effects on satisfaction. Likewise, value perception has certain direct effects on loyalty. In several research studies, retail store atmosphere and product quality have been found to be the basic determinants of customers' value perception (Sirohi et al., 1998; Duman and Yagci, 2006).

Today, retail store atmosphere seems more important for the customers who particularly find shopping a way of amusement. Inner lightening, shelf design, and settlement plan help customers do shopping in a comfortable way. Considering the provinces having the weather conditions such as in Hyderabad city, store atmosphere becomes much more important. Moreover, the quality of the products in the retail stores is very effective for value perception. In this case, store design, settlement design, product quality and diversity are influent in order that customers receive the return of money, effort, and time that they spend. The elements affecting customers' trust perception are the service quality. Beatty et al. (1996) and Wong and Sohal (2006) reached the similar results. According to the findings, service quality causes the customers to trust the retail store. In other words, for a positive trust perception, clean and neat retail store and personnel, attentiveness of the personnel, manner seems considerably effective. Trust and value perception are meanwhile effective on retail store satisfaction. Koo (2003) and Gronholdt (2000) found the similar results in their studies. The findings in our study support the case. The

fact that customers' trusting and to be pleasure from retail store, they think that they are saving money and time. In addition to this, discount and comparable price perception affect the feeling of satisfaction from the retail store. Those customers are pleased with the discounts and general product price increases the retail store satisfaction. If retail store administrators attach importance to the discounts then, the customers' retail store loyalty can increase. And we can say that for retailers' low pricing strategy is a powerful weapon.

Customer satisfaction and value perception are other effective elements for retail store loyalty. In some studies, similar results have been obtained (Sirohi et al., 1998; Bloemer and Ruyter, 1998; Eskildsen et al., 2004; Chen and Quester, 2006). According to these results, to become loyal to the retail store, customers' receiving the refund and time and becoming satisfied have important roles. Moreover, the value perception toward the retail store directly affects loyalty. Through these results, it is seen that store atmosphere and product quality are the main determinants about value perception of the retail stores, and the service quality is most effective on trust perception. As for providing satisfaction, price and discount perceptions are the effective factors. Therefore, it is seen that low price strategy is a very strong competition tool to create satisfaction and loyalty.

VI. Limitations and Suggestion for Further Research

In the present study, the effects of store image variables, value perception, trust perception and satisfaction on store loyalty were examined. The investigation was conducted in retail stores, Twin cities of Andhra Pradesh.

However, this investigation is suggested to be carried out in different cities and regions where geographical and demographical variable are considered to affect the variables that determine the store loyalty. Therefore in the studies on the shopping malls and the department stores, the variables of store loyalty can show differences. In our study, some effective variables about store loyalty or patronage behavior such as, social expectations, the social responsibility of the store, the cultural structure of customers were not included. For further studies, it is suggested that these variables be taken into consideration.

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