

DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF STORE PATRONAGE

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Abstract

In today's hypercompetitive marketplace where customers are spoilt for choice, retailers seek customer loyalty. As customer loyalty is manifested in store patronage behavior, studying patronage behavior and trying to find out the reasons for consumers' behavior becomes pertinent. This paper studies the literature of store patronage theory and its models in order to identify the common constructs that find a mention in extant studies. These four identified constructs are customer attributes, customer psychographics, store attributes, and store patronage. The paper further attempts to propose a conceptual model based on literature with an addition of a construct 'repatronage' (meaning future patronage intention) separate from the construct 'patronage.' The need for this is that patronage of customers is not static but dynamic and high patronage need not necessarily mean high repatronage intention. The proposed model signals retailers to study repatronage and patronage together to identify if there lies a difference between the two and try to investigate reasons for the same with respect to the evaluation of store attributes and changing customer psychographics. The model doesn't include the construct of 'customer satisfaction' as it is assumed, based on literature, that high patronage and repatronage intention, hints at customer satisfaction, whereas high patronage and low repatronage intention at customer dissatisfaction if the extraneous variables of relocation to a new place and availability of the store at the new place are controlled. After empirical testing of the patronage model in the context of different product classes and retail formats, it might serve as an input to retailers for obtaining customer insight. Based on this intelligence, retailers might identify the key customer segments to whom retailers might tailor the marketing mix.

Keywords: Store patronage, attributes, customer psychographics, repatronage intentions

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Introduction

Marketers have been trying to seek customer loyalty even as customers' loyalty continues to decline due to a plethora of choices (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2005). Loyalty is defined as commitment and a feeling of devoted attachment and affection (Beatty & Kahle, 1988; Hawkes, 1994). In Marketing context, loyalty is customers' faith in a particular brand that results in customer adherence to the brand (Rundle-Thiele, 2005). Marketers strive for customer loyalty as loyal customers are less price-elastic, provide repeat business, and spread a positive word of mouth about their brand (Reichheld, F., 1993; Wright & Sparks, 1999; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). Store loyalty is manifested in high patronage by customers of the store (Thiruvankada, Hari, & Panchanatham, Model of store patronage behaviour using sem approach, 2014). Store patronage is defined as consumers' purchase pattern over a series of purchase tasks (Spiggle & Sewall, 1987). Thus, marketers need to build high store patronage with a view of achieving customer loyalty.

Retailers can only achieve high store patronage by due study of the patronage behavior of customers. They need to understand the process by which consumers choose a particular outlet. A comprehensive knowledge of patronage behavior of consumers might provide diagnostic information regarding why a particular store is highly popular among consumers and why a particular store is deserted by consumers. This might enable the retailers to understand the attributes (of the store) that need to be changed to get the consumers highly patronize the store. They might also be able to predict how consumers will behave by changing the different attributes of the store.

Literature Review

Retail patronage behavior has been studied with retail competitive structures (image, positioning), store attributes, product class, consumers' characteristics, and general economic outlook since 1920s (Sheth J. N., 1981). An integrative theory of patronage behavior enumerated the determinants of patronage behavior as demand side (consumer and product factors), and supply side (market and company factors); these determinants shape the shopping predisposition

which further influence patronage behavior through the moderating effect of ‘unexpected events’ (Sheth J. , 1983).

Relevant empirical and conceptual patronage models from literature have been explained in this section to study the evolution of the patronage models. In 1975, Monroe and Gultinan empirically tested the sequential effect of the four constructs on store patronage. These four constructs are namely, 1) shopper characteristics, 2) importance of store attributes, 3) store perceptions, and 4) general activities and opinions concerning shopping, strategies for planning and budgeting. Out of the four constructs, general activities and opinions concerning shopping, strategies for planning and budgeting, perception of stores played a deciding role in store patronage or store choice. The study found that the importance of store attributes was a weak determinant of store patronage (Monroe & Gultinan, 1975). The next prominent study in patronage behavior was in 1980 by Darden et. al. (Darden, Darden, Howell, & Miller, 1980). The authors proposed a model that refined the previous model by adding the construct of ‘shopping orientations’ for replacing ‘general opinions and activities concerning shopping and strategies for planning and budgeting.’ The study conceptually stated that shopping orientations are influenced by consumer socialization. The determinants of socialization are consumer demographics, socio-economic class, and lifestyle.

Another patronage model, developed in 1982 by Bellenger and Moschis, took in to account cognitive shopping orientation and socialization process as determinants of patronage behavior **Invalid source specified..** The authors showed that social class, gender, and family size have direct effects on cognitive and behavioral outcomes of store patronage or they have indirect effects by influencing socialization processes. To conclude, the constructs that can be used to develop a retail patronage model are consumer demographics, shopping orientations, and store attributes. Thus, store patronage is a result of many interplaying factors (Abdulla, 2008). The four common constructs of retail patronage model are explicitly illustrated using literature below.

Patronage

Store patronage has been studied with two variables - store choice, and frequency of visits (Zinkhan & Pan, 2006). Monroe and Gultinan have used product and brand choice in a store to

determine the patronage in addition to store choice (Monroe & Guiltinan, 1975). Hu has studied store patronage with three dimensions – 1) Shopping intention, 2) Patronage frequency, 3) Total expenditure (Hu, 2011). Sudhir & Talukdar explain the importance of shopping frequency in determining store patronage, as more frequent visits indicate a greater share of household wallet at the store than low search costs and greater price sensitivity (Sudhir & Talukdar, 2004). To conclude, two constructs can be sufficiently used for studying patronage – 1) Frequency of shopping from a store, 2) Expenditure in the selected store as a percentage of total expenditure for that particular shopping category.

Consumer demographics and store patronage

A considerable body of empirical research on shopping behavior suggests that demographic variables may be related to retail store patronage (Crask & Reynolds, 1978; Rich, 1963). Consumer-related attributes of age, gender, income, household size, education were studied with store patronage. Large proportion of discount shoppers are between the ages of 25-59 years (Rachman & Kemp, 1963). Older shoppers tend to be more store-loyal than younger age groups (Lipke, 2000). Women discount store shoppers outnumber men counterparts by almost double (Myers, 1963-64; Bearden, Teel, & Durand, 1978). Income and household size are significant predictors of store patronage (Sudhir & Talukdar, 2004). Income and education have an impact store patronage frequency (Cunningham & Cunningham, 1973).

Shopping orientations and store patronage

Shopping orientations are a part of consumer psychographics that involve attitude, motivation, values, personality, perception, learning, influences of reference groups or subjects of outside environment (Schiffman & Kanuk, Consumer Behavior, 2010). Shopping orientation is general predisposition towards shopping. It is shopping style covering shopping activities, interests, and opinions (Visser & Du Preez, 2001). Shopping is not just an economic activity, but also a psychological and social activity. Many shopping orientations exist in shoppers including economic, convenience, experiential, leisure, self-fulfillment (Hassan, Nik Muhammad, & Bakar, 2010), even a motive of diversion from routine life (Tauber, 1972). However, five main shopping orientations are highlighted in literature. They are economic, hedonic, apathetic, brand/store loyalist, and social-relational (Darden & Reynolds; Laaksonen, 1993; Childers, Carr,

Peck, & Carson, 2001; Williams, Painter, & Nicholas, 1978). The shoppers who have economic orientation look for best value for their money; they are budget-optimizing consumers (Gable, Fiorito, & Topol, 2008). Hedonic shoppers seek entertainment and fun while shopping' (Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008; Dagger & O'Brien, 2010). An apathetic shopper is disinterested in shopping and wants to minimize efforts taken while shopping (Kwong, Soman, & Ho, 2011). The brand / store loyal shoppers stick to certain favorite brands or stores to minimize uncertainty and risk. These shoppers exhibit a habitual or inertial behavior while choosing brands / stores (Dawson, Bloch, & Ridgway, 1990). The social-relational shoppers consider interpersonal relationships very important with a brand or a store (Lacey, 2009; Morrison & Huppertz, 2010).

Consumer demographics and Shopping Orientations

Men don't regard social relations and personal contacts as important while shopping and are more utilitarian shoppers as compared to women (Steenkamp, Hofstede, & Wedel, 1999). Hence, men might be more economic shoppers, while women might be hedonic, leisure, social-relational shoppers. Men have a more store-loyal shopping orientation while buying groceries from supermarkets than women (Polegato & Zaichkowsky, 1994).

Store attributes and Store Patronage

Store attributes have been classified in to product attributes and market attributes (Zinkhan & Pan, 2006). Product attributes are more related to the merchandize, while market attributes are more related to store service and ambience. Different product attributes studied with respect to store patronage are quality, availability, one-stop-shop, range, price. Product availability is an important predictor of store image and customer satisfaction (Koul & Mishra, 2013). Product quality is positively related to store patronage (Koelemeijer & Oppewal, 1999; Baltas & Papastathopoulou, 2003). Product range is the most influential variable influencing retail format choice (Hansen & Solgaard, 2004; Carpenter & Moore, 2006). One-stop-shop adds to shopper convenience by facilitating easy and quick possession of the desired products in one place (Seiders, Berry, & Gresham, 2000). While few customers prefer low prices (Theodoridis & Chatzipanagiotou, 2009), other prefer high prices as an indicator of quality (Rao & Monroe, 1989).

Market attributes that are studied in literature of store patronage are service, atmosphere, store layout, fast check out, helpful salespeople, parking facilities, and opening hours. Quality of service enhances the perception of the quality of product (Laroehe & et.al, 2005). Optimum temperature, cleanliness, smell, air cleaning system, and music make the store atmosphere (Theodoros & Chatzipanagiotou, 2009; Berman & Evans, 2007). Better store atmosphere might elevate the shoppers' moods while shopping. Good store layout simplifies consumers' mobility in the store (Ghosh, Tripathi, & Kumar, 2009). Fast checkout is a crucial determinant of consumers' top-of-the-mind store associations that influence his / her choice of the primary store (Thelen & Woodside, 1997). Store personnel influences customer satisfaction and repeat purchase (McGoldrick, 2002). Adequate parking facilities lead to customer delight and retention (Hansen & Deutscher, 1977). Convenient opening hours enhances retail service quality perception (Sam, 2011).

Shopping Orientations and Store Patronage

The influence of shopping motives on store patronage attitude was hypothesized in 1940 (Blankertz, 1949-50). Monroe and Gultinan, 1975, proposed a link between consumers' attitude and store patronage. Fazio, Zanna, and Cooper, 1978 confirmed the relationship between attitude and behavior when respondents have a prior personal experience with attitude object. Korgaonkar, Lund, and Price, 1985, have empirically showed a strong causal relationship of attitude to store patronage and not the reverse. This means that high patronage in terms of frequency of visiting a store does not mean that consumers have a favorable attitude towards the store.

Objective

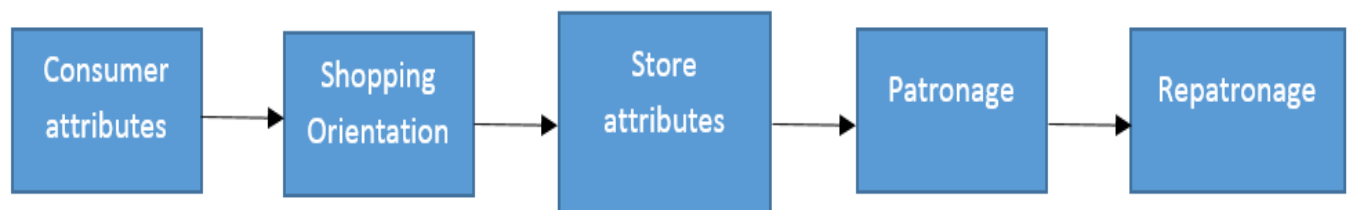
The concept of repatronage is not studied along with patronage in literature. While patronage behavior pertains to current behavior, repatronage refers to future patronage. In today's hypercompetitive scenario, patronage is not static, but dynamic. High patronage doesn't necessarily imply high repatronage. Patronage and repatronage are thus two different behaviors in terms of timings and might have different determinants. These two should be studied as two

separate constructs in the patronage model. The objective of this paper is to propose a new model based on retail patronage theory.

Repatronage

Repatronage is repeat patronage or return patronage intentions (Hu, 2011). This needs to be studied to figure out the future patronage behavior of consumers. Sometimes consumers might have high patronage, but low repatronage; this is a sign of the store losing out on consumers in future. In case the store has low patronage and high repatronage, then the store might be more popular in future. Future behavior of consumers was studied in literature in terms of shopping intentions (Baker, Levy, & Grewal, 1992). If a shopper shows a very high current patronage behavior, there are chances that he might show high repatronage.

The proposed conceptual patronage model is given below.



The underlying hypotheses of the model are that consumer attributes (demographics) impact their shopping orientations, which in turn impact the ratings of store attributes, which in turn impact patronage, and which in turn impact repatronage intentions.

Limitations and directions of future research

Customer satisfaction affects patronage and store attributes affects customer satisfaction (Thiruvankada, Hari, & Panchanatham, 2014). However, the construct of 'customer satisfaction' is not included in the proposed model. If a respondent shows high patronage, then it is assumed that he / she must be satisfied given the retail choices that consumers have today. If a

customer shows high patronage and low repatronage, then it is assumed that he / she might be dissatisfied if the extraneous variable of relocating to a new place is controlled.

This conceptual model needs to be empirically tested for different product classes, different retail formats of the same product classes,

Managerial implications and Conclusion

After testing, the model might serve as an input to retailers for the study of percentage distribution of consumers' shopping orientations for different product classes and different formats for obtaining the insight of shopper trends. Retailers need to study the difference between patronage and repatronage to determine the extent of switching or loyalty to stores for different product categories. Consumer attributes and shopping orientations can be studied with respect to identifying the key customer segments to whom retailers might tailor the marketing mix.

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