

Impact Of Store Attributes and Store Brand Loyalty on Customer Satisfaction; A Mediation Role

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Abstract

The interplay between store attributes and store brand loyalty significantly influences customer satisfaction, creating a dynamic and complex relationship within the realm of retail. Store attributes encompass a wide range of factors, including product quality, pricing, store layout, customer service, and ambiance. When these attributes align with customer expectations and preferences, they contribute to a positive shopping experience. Moreover, consistent and exceptional store attributes can foster a sense of trust and reliability, enhancing customer loyalty to the store brand. Store brand loyalty, on the other hand, refers to the customer's inclination to repeatedly choose a particular store brand over competitors. This loyalty can be influenced by various factors, including past experiences, perceived value, and emotional connection to the brand. Customers who are loyal to a store brand are more likely to overlook minor shortcomings, as their positive history with the brand mitigates negative aspects. This loyalty can lead to repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and increased customer retention. The relationship between store attributes and store brand loyalty operates in a cyclical manner. Exceptional store attributes cultivate positive experiences, which in turn can strengthen brand loyalty. Conversely, loyal customers are more forgiving of occasional lapses in store attributes, allowing brands some leeway in maintaining consistent excellence. In conclusion, the intricate interplay between store attributes and store brand loyalty is a cornerstone of customer satisfaction

in the retail landscape. Retailers that recognize and invest in maintaining high-quality attributes while fostering strong brand loyalty are better positioned to create lasting positive impressions on their customers, thereby cultivating a loyal and satisfied customer base.

Keywords: Store attributes, Store brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, Personalization and pricing strategy.

Introduction

The retail sector in India is especially indicative of India's status as a growing economy with characteristics of a market that is not yet saturated. Existing retail chains expanding into non-metropolitan locations in India, the rise of homegrown brands, and the vast opportunities available to retailers provide both formidable hurdles and exciting new opportunities. This new phenomenon is giving retailers greater clout in the value chain and shifting the balance of power away from manufacturers. As a result of this trend, stores are beginning to focus more on marketing efforts, such as making their store names become easily identifiable brands, rather than just merchandise. To keep consumers interested, stores need to consistently test new approaches. Indian consumers are becoming more prone to make frivolous purchases with their disposable income as a result of the improving economic situation. Nevertheless, merchants face a significant obstacle in the form of increased access to information, resulting in Indian customers being more knowledgeable and discerning when making purchases at brick-and-mortar retail establishments. Therefore, it is essential for merchants to not assume that client loyalty is guaranteed, especially in the face of increasing competition from other physical retail establishments. Furthermore, the menace posed by e-commerce platforms is reaching a disconcerting magnitude. The difficulty therefore resides in not just assuring customer happiness but also surpassing expectations by delighting consumers. This will result in an elevated perception of the business's brand and increased customer loyalty, eventually contributing to the establishment of store equity.

Background of the study

It is essential for managers overseeing malls and businesses to recognize that customer happiness and loyalty are direct consequences of effectively meeting the demands and desires of their clientele[2] In order to fulfil these demands and desires, it is important for managers to possess an understanding of the aspects that customers deem significant in their selection of shops to patronize[13].An understanding of these elements may empower managers to implement strategies and allocate resources towards areas that are expected to influence satisfaction and loyalty. It is important for managers to recognize the significance of evaluating the success of their respective shops based on elements that hold importance to consumers[9].However, it is crucial for managers to first ascertain the characteristics that shoppers deem to be significant. This research is a valuable contribution to the existing body of information, shedding light on the need of managers giving particular consideration to the behaviour of store workers towards consumers[6].The results indicate that consumer's priorities encountering employees that have a strong sense of preparedness and eagerness to assist them, treating them with kindness and providing individualized attention. Customers also place importance on sales staff that possess extensive knowledge about the goods and services available, and who exhibit proficiency in addressing client inquiries and demands[2] Managers has the ability to oversee the recruitment of personnel who possess commendable interpersonal skills, as well as the provision of continuous training pertaining to the delivery of exemplary customer service. It is essential for store managers and personnel in township malls to acknowledge that serving clients from lower income categories does not justify a decline in service standards [3]. The concept of "the customer is king" should be adopted, regardless of the socioeconomic status of the clients. In terms of product availability, it is well recognized that athletic retailers located inside shopping malls tend to have a wide range of branded merchandise. It is important for managers overseeing businesses in townships to recognize that clients who frequent their establishments possess comparable expectations to those residing

in high socioeconomic districts in terms of desired merchandise [12]. The results of this research indicate that buyers had certain expectations about the presence of diverse brands, including special items that is not readily available elsewhere, inside sportswear shops located in township malls. Considering the presence of many clients residing in the adjacent areas with lower socioeconomic status, an effective strategy for these establishments to attract and retain customers is by implementing price discounts. The results of this research indicate that the respondents regarded the presence of gift certificates, discounted pricing, and special promotions as significant factors influencing their choice of sportswear retailers for purchase [16]. Although the mean of store atmospherics was lower compared to the other characteristics tested, it is essential for managers to consider this aspect when attempting to attract consumers. The calculated mean value indicates that consumers consider the ambiance and overall aesthetic appeal of retail establishments to be a significant determinant [3].

The Influence of Store Characteristics on the Perceived Value of Brands

The features of a store play a crucial role in enhancing client happiness and fostering customer loyalty. Finn (2004) [5] identified eight distinct shop features that play a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions towards a retail marketing approach. This study investigates the fundamental elements of retail attributes, including shop ambiance, store reputation, parking availability, consumer lifestyle, merchandise assortment, ease of access, and geographical placement. The store's characteristics are influenced by several elements of the retail marketing mix, such as its location, display features, parking facilities, and the cleanliness and spaciousness of its environment. In their study, Jacoby (1971)[10] demonstrated that store image, a crucial element of store attributes, has a direct and indirect impact on customers' brand loyalty. This influence is mediated by the customers' perception of value, which in turn leads to repeated shopping visits in a particular store and marketplace (Hartman & Spiro, 2005)[9].

Consumer Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction is often defined as the manner in which consumers respond to an evaluation procedure. The capacity of merchants to meet or beyond client expectations contributes to the attainment of customer satisfaction. Hence, contentment may be seen as the result of assessing the customer value derived from the purchasing experience.[6] Contentment may be defined as the result of a subjective assessment in which the selected option is deemed to meet or surpass expectations. The achievement of success in the marketplace has been often attributed to a firm's capacity to effectively meet the needs and desires of its current customer base. There has been ongoing debate among researchers over the pivotal role of contented customers in the achievement of corporate success.[1] Therefore, it is essential for organisations to priorities the provision of value via the development of creative goods in order to meet the needs and desires of customers. It is anticipated that contented customers would contribute to the success of a company by consistently engaging in repeat purchases and actively promoting the brand. [9]. Therefore, the topic of customer happiness has garnered attention from both scholars and professionals in the field.

Review of Literature

Beneke (2013)[15] provided a definition of store loyalty as the consistent and deliberate behavioural response of a decision-making unit towards a specific store within a group of stores. This loyalty is developed over time and is influenced by psychological processes such as decision making and evaluation, ultimately leading to a strong commitment to the brand. Odin, et al. (2001), [14] the concept of shop loyalty pertains to a consumer's inclination to often patronize a certain business. Consumer propensity refers to the attitude of consumers towards a retail shop or their intents to visit the business under suitable conditions. Those who demonstrate short-term loyalty are more likely to move to other brands compared to those who display long-term devotion. The phenomenon of word of mouth has a significant role in fostering short-term customer loyalty. It is recommended to adopt a perspective on customer loyalty that goes beyond a

binary categorization of purchase vs no buy. Instead, loyalty should be understood in relation to the level of intensity and consistency of consumer purchases.

Problem statement

The research problem addressed in this study focuses on understanding the intertwined relationship between store attributes, store brand loyalty, and their collective impact on customer satisfaction within the context of the retail industry.[3] This problem seeks to delve into the intricate dynamics of how specific store attributes, such as product quality, pricing, store layout, customer service, and ambiance, interact to shape customer perceptions and experiences. Additionally, the study aims to explore how these attributes influence the development of store brand loyalty, encompassing factors like repeat purchases, emotional connection, and customer advocacy. By investigating these connections, the research aims to shed light on whether and how store brand loyalty mediates the relationship between store attributes and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the problem extends to examine how these factors collectively drive consumer behavior, such as purchasing patterns and response to marketing efforts. [9]The study also considers demographic and contextual influences, providing insights into the varying effects across different customer segments. Ultimately, the research problem seeks to offer actionable insights that can guide retailers in crafting effective strategies to enhance customer satisfaction by strategically managing store attributes and fostering store brand loyalty [7].

Research Objectives

The aims of the paper are as follows.

1. To evaluate the satisfaction towards Store brand loyalty among respondents
2. To investigate the factors that influence Store Attributes
3. To understand the influence of store characteristics on the perceived value of brands

Measurement Scale and Stimuli

The measures used in the present investigation have been modified subsequent to conducting a comprehensive assessment of the relevant literature. The scales have undergone empirical testing and have been used by previous studies. The researcher used on the 5-point scales were "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree". The measures used for measuring shop loyalty were adopted from Chen (2010) [17]. Similarly, the scales employed for assessing consumer satisfaction with stores were derived from the research. The use of retailer scale goods in this study draws from the previous research conducted [13]. The questionnaire also included questions related to demographics, such as age and gender. [7].A little modification was made to enhance understanding. The research on Store brand loyalty on customer satisfaction was conducted with a sample size of 200 respondents, who were recruited using a convenience sampling approach. The data obtained from the chosen sample participants was gathered using Google forms.

Analysis, findings and Discussion

Observations and findings

- i) *Satisfaction towards Store Brand Loyalty*

Effective retailers priorities the comprehension of their target demographic, consistently enhancing their shop characteristics, and fostering brand loyalty in order to establish a favourable and long-lasting consumer rapport. Therefore, the analysis of respondents' satisfaction towards Store Brand Loyalty is

conducted based on the components. The connection between the variable under study and the age group of the respondents is also examined. The outcome is presented herein.

Table 1: Satisfaction and age group of the respondents

Satisfaction	Age group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Consistent Quality	Young	63	4.17	1.040	0.860	0.425
	Middle	86	4.26	1.160		
	Old	51	4.98	1.407		
	Total	200	4.16	1.192		
Personalization	Young	63	3.91	0.687	0.383	0.682
	Middle	86	3.67	0.789		
	Old	51	3.57	1.044		
	Total	200	3.66	0.830		
Loyalty Programs	Young	63	3.33	0.842	1.970	0.142
	Middle	86	3.81	0.780		
	Old	51	3.43	0.781		
	Total	200	3.29	0.804		
Emotional Appeal	Young	63	3.21	1.124	6.331	0.002*
	Middle	86	3.76	1.051		
	Old	51	3.39	1.097		
	Total	200	3.06	1.115		
Pricing Strategy	Young	63	3.82	1.346	10.386	0.000*
	Middle	86	2.36	1.363		
	Old	51	3.27	1.328		
	Total	200	2.86	1.411		

Overall, young people are more satisfied (4.16) with the Consistent Quality of Store Brand Loyalty than any other factor. Emotional appeal (3.76) and loyalty programmes (3.81) get very positive reviews from respondents in the middle age range. Older people are most satisfied with Consistent Quality (4.98), according to the survey. Personalization (3.91) and Pricing Strategy (3.82) with young respondents. Enhancing the performance of a retail establishment requires a comprehensive comprehension of the factors that influence client loyalty and their practical significance. Given their reduced sensitivity to pricing and their willingness to advocate for the brand, loyal consumers play a crucial role in the expansion of the customer base. Consequently, this contributes to the development of retail shop equity. Customer satisfaction is a result that arises from the assessment and contentment associated with the acquisition and use of goods or services. Customer satisfaction is contingent upon receiving optimal value for their time and enhanced services from a retail establishment. Moreover, when customers provide a favourable assessment of items, it may foster a favourable emotional attachment to the retail business, so encouraging them to prolong their visit to the retail establishment.[6] This behaviour has a direct favourable impact on customer purchase intention, hence enhancing store equity. The level of pleasure experienced by a consumer while shopping at a certain store contributes to the development of an emotional connection with the store, thus enhancing the overall value and perception of the business. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed. Store loyalty is a crucial determinant of the success of retail establishments, since it plays a significant role in driving corporate profitability.[11].

ii) Factors Influencing Store Attributes

There are factors influencing Store Attributes of the respondents may prefer. In this perspective, the reasons for preferring the Store Attributes are ranked with the help of Friedman ranking technique.

Table 2: Factors Influencing Store Attributes

Benefits	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
Store Design and Layout	3.27	1.159	5.43
Visual Merchandising	3.50	1.315	6.00
Technology Integration	3.46	1.168	5.95
Customer Service	3.31	1.104	5.58
Pricing Strategy	2.92	1.185	4.54
Store Atmosphere	2.98	1.447	4.99
In-Store Events and Promotions	3.06	1.161	4.88
Location	3.26	1.116	5.35
Product Variety and Availability	3.57	1.132	6.21
Cleanliness and Ambiance	3.53	1.256	6.08

The following table displays the preferences of the respondents about the different Factors Influencing Store Attributes. The outcome indicates that respondents favour. The first-placed “Product Variety and Availability” (3.57), Cleanliness and Ambiance (3.53), followed closely by Visual Merchandising (3.50). Ranking results are shown below.

Table 3: Friedman Test

N	200
Chi-Square	83.693
Df	9
Sig.	0.000

According to the Friedman ranking analysis, the Chi-Square value of 83.693, with 9 degrees of freedom, demonstrates statistical significance at a 1% level of significance ($p < 0.001$). It may be inferred that the data shown in the Store Attributes section exerts a greater appeal on individuals.

Discussion

All of the hypotheses put out in the present investigation were found to be justified. It is important for retailers to acknowledge the substantial impact of shop image on influencing customers' store loyalty-related behaviour.[6] Insufficient attention has been devoted to this behaviour in previous studies. It is important for retailers to acknowledge the manner in which customers view the overall image of the retail shop, as well as their own self-perception as consumers.[11] The reason for this phenomenon might be attributed to customers' inclination to patronize retail establishments that align with their self-perception. When there is a discrepancy between the personality of a business and that of its customers, it becomes necessary to modify the symbolic store image by using various advertising strategies [8]. The present research also provided support for the hypothesis positing a positive and statistically significant relationship between customer happiness and shop loyalty. Previous research has shown that contentment is a precursor of loyalty.[13] In order to cultivate shop loyalty, businesses must priorities the augmentation of consumer happiness, hence fostering a higher frequency of repeat purchases inside the establishment. Retail managers must exercise caution in recognizing that contentment cannot serve as a substitute for loyalty, and conversely, loyalty cannot serve as a substitute for satisfaction.[1] The key to sustaining long-term client loyalty for a given brand and determining the future sustainability of a firm is satisfaction. Satisfaction and

loyalty are distinct phases in the consumer's reaction to a company's products or services. Satisfaction represents the first stage, while loyalty represents the subsequent stage. Furthermore, the pleasure of customers has been shown to result in an increased likelihood of consumers making further purchases from the same establishment, displaying greater acceptance of price increases, and engaging in good word-of-mouth communication with the merchant. [9]. The enhancement of customer satisfaction contributes to the augmentation of a retail store's capacity to negotiate, therefore maintaining the stability of consumer demand, enhancing profitability. This perspective is further supported by our research, as our results demonstrate a favourable, explicit, and substantial influence of customer happiness and store loyalty on the overall value of a retail establishment [6]. Additionally, our research reveals a favourable correlation between retail image and store loyalty. The distinct visual representation of a retail establishment plays a crucial role in facilitating customers' ability to distinguish and assess various establishments, hence aiding them in the process of selecting a retail store. The perception of a shop's image by consumers has a significant impact on the overall brand image of the business. The concept of a store image refers to the comprehensive view that customers have of a business and their complete shopping experience.[2]. Therefore, within the context of a fiercely competitive Indian market, it becomes imperative for retailers to ascertain the views held by customers about their shops. Subsequently, retailers must strive to maintain or enhance this image in order to secure a competitive edge.

Conclusion, Implications and Limitation

The present research has successfully achieved its aims both in terms of theoretical and empirical aspects. The present study investigated the impact of shop features on consumers' perceived value in order to enhance brand loyalty among customers. The results of the current study suggest that there exists a noteworthy correlation between the characteristics of a shop and the perception of value by consumers. This perception of value, in turn, has both a direct and indirect influence on the loyalty of consumers towards a particular brand. Furthermore, the study included empirical findings that demonstrate the substantial impact of store attributes on augmenting consumers' perception of value. The research posits that consumers are able to assess the functional worth of a product via shop features, which may also contribute to its symbolic value. The correlation between shop features and perceived value may be comprehended by considering the knowledge had by loyal clients of a certain hypermarket about the aspects that have significance. In essence, consumer satisfaction is significantly influenced by the availability of diverse product offerings and the provision of excellent service, leading to favourable assessments of both the brand and the retail establishment. Customers develop a sense of assurance in their expectation of a satisfactory shopping experience with each visit to the hypermarket outlet. This is due to the hypermarket's commitment to delivering high-quality products, a diverse range of offerings, excellent customer service, and a pleasant shopping atmosphere. It is widely accepted that consumers evaluate their views of value based on the features of a shop, including both practical and symbolic worth. This research provides empirical evidence that highlights the significance of perceived value in shaping consumer loyalty towards a brand. Emphasizing the use of a multidimensional strategy is of utmost significance in this research. The present research acknowledges that both perceived functional values and perceived symbolic value serve as significant determinants of client brand loyalty. Moreover, the present results contribute to the advancement of current information about customer-perceived value in the context of purchasing at a specific hypermarket, via the comparative analysis of diverse value perceptions. In contrast to prior research that primarily considers value for money in terms of functional benefits that impact customer loyalty, the present study's results indicate that symbolic value, encompassing the enhancement of one's self-image and the enjoyment derived from an attractive and reputable store, plays a significant role in shaping customers' perception of value. This symbolic value extends beyond functional attributes and proves to be a crucial factor in predicting customer brand loyalty. Although significant efforts have been undertaken to enhance the inclusivity of contemporary research, it is crucial to acknowledge the existence of specific limits that need careful attention. One of the primary constraints associated with the sampling methodology. The use of non-probability sampling methods has raised concerns over the generalizability of the findings to other

situations. Significantly, the data was obtained only from a specific subset of hypermarket consumers, hence posing potential concerns about the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the findings. For the purpose of generalizing the findings, it is recommended that future studies use probability sampling techniques with larger population sizes.

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