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EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STORE IMAGE AND STORE LOYALTY OF AN ORGANIZED GROCERY RETAIL

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ABSTRACT

The Indian retail sector has seen a boom from past few years. The rise in the disposal income, urbanization and increasing FDI has helped the industry grow. India is ranked 6th largest country in terms of food and grocery. The food and grocery sector is the largest category within the retail sector India. In order to survive in the market competition to have loyal customers is a very important for the organizations. A deeper understanding of what engenders store loyalty would be beneficial to retailers in developing appropriate strategies to satisfy loyal customers and to maintain a competitive advantage. The objective of the study will be to analyze the store loyalty of grocery retail. The data will be collected from the customers who will be shopping at these selected stores. The total of 300 customers from selected city will be sampled using mall intercept survey. This research consists of three variables, store image, store satisfaction and store loyalty. The independent variable is store image and it was divided into eight variables. Store satisfaction will be introduced as mediator variable between store image and store loyalty. Store loyalty is the dependent variable for this study. The Results of the study showed that there exists a mediating relation between Store image and Store loyalty through Store Satisfaction. Moreover the study also reveals the direct effect of some variables of store image with store loyalty.

KEYWORDS

retailing, grocery, loyalty, store image, satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

India is the most attractive retail industry in the world now; it tells the fact that the growing number of retailers in India is not going to stop or slow down in near future. The most 'benefited' cities from this rapid growth will be the metro cities like Mumbai, New Delhi and Hyderabad etc. The factors responsible for rapid growth in retail are Urbanization, rise in income, increase in working women and allowing FDI. Kearney's 2015 annual Global Retail Development Index has ranked India as the 5th largest retail destination globally. The Indian retail industry has experienced growth of 15% between 2010 and 2015 and is expected to increase to USD 1000 billion by 2020 with its share going up from 8% to 15-20%. Of the proposed investment (\$25 billion), 60-70% would go in setting up the supply chain for food and groceries (Kalhan, 2007).

Food and Grocery is the largest category within the retail sector with 69 per cent share followed by Apparel and Mobile segment. The food retailing industry has annual sales of about \$176 billion, a little over half of total retail sales of \$ 330 billion. Over the past few years, the industry had grown at about 10% a year, exceeding the GDP growth rate. Food retail outlets account for one third of all retail outlets and 63% of total retail sales.

As more retail stores are opening up, more difficult it would be for them to retain customers. Sensing this issue some retailers have started spending marketing efforts for gaining customer loyalty for them. The need of the hour is to attract the footfalls, convert them into customers and try to retain them as long as possible. So having the store loyal customers gives a competitive advantage to the retailers. Almost all the retail stores irrespective of big or small do loyalty programs like profit club, payback cards and loyalty points to attract and retain the customers.

The concept of store loyalty is derived originally from the brand loyalty concept which refers to the tendency to repeat purchase the same brand. Osman in his paper concludes that at the store level, it refers to the tendency to repeat purchase at the same store, for similar or other products. Though much work has been done on brand loyalty but there is still no clear conceptualization of what store loyalty means. It has been construed as related to attitudes (brand loyalty is an attitude which may result in a purchase behavior" (Tidwell and Horgan, 1992). The concern for increasing customer loyalty has spread to the grocery retailing industry. The importance of store loyalty in grocery retailing, was however, acknowledged by Tate already in 1961. In the article The Supermarket Battle for Store Loyalty, he argued for store loyalty as an important success factor in the increasingly competitive field of grocery retailing.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Loyalty has been defined and measured in many different ways. Dick and Basu (1994) conceptualized loyalty as the relative attitude toward an entity (brand/service/store/vendor) and repeat buying and visiting to that entity. Positive evaluations of image have additionally been linked to the development of store loyalty. For example, Lessig (1973) found a definite relationship between store image and store loyalty. Sirgy and Samli (1985) suggest that image of a shopping area may influence store loyalty. They indicated that if individual have a favorable image of the store, they are likely to develop a certain degree of loyalty commensurate to the favorableness of the image. Osman (1993) found that customer patronage behavior towards a particular store is dependent on the image of that particular store, the more favorable the store image, the higher the valence of the store to the customer. Koo (2003) examined whether various store image components have a direct bearing on store satisfaction and store loyalty in the discount retail environment. It is found that location, after sales service and merchandising have a direct impact on store loyalty. Chang and Tu (2005) findings suggest that store image is significantly associated with customer's loyalty in the hypermarket industry. In their study, the four image dimension (facilities, store services, store activities and convenience) can effectively predict customer loyalty. However, Mitchell and Kiral (1998), in a review of a number of store image studies, concluded that they had not identified a link between the store attributes and store loyalty. One such study by Garton (1995), for instance, discovered that perceptions of quality and service provided by the store contributed relatively little to the customer's intention to return to the store. Bloemer and Ruyter (1998) were also unable to find direct effect of store image on store loyalty. Based on these mixed results, this research investigates whether various image dimension have a direct bearing on store loyalty.

STORE IMAGE, STORE SATISFACTION AND STORE LOYALTY

Bloemer and Ruyter (1998) studies suggest that the store image has an indirect impact on store loyalty. They found that the relationship between store image and store loyalty is mediated by store satisfaction. Chang and Tu (2005) found out that the customer satisfaction acted an intermediation role between store image and customer loyalty. Therefore, there is both evidence for a direct relationship and an indirect relationship for store image and store loyalty whereby store satisfaction acts as a mediator. So, it is worthwhile to explore the relationship between store image and store loyalty via store satisfaction in this research.

GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

- The majority of the studies have been done on products, brand, customers and on services or channel intermediaries. The research on the relationship between store, customers, and situational factors along with store image, satisfaction and store loyalty has remained limited.
- There are some evidences that store loyalty may be determined by store image Bloemer and Ruyter (1998). However, it has remained unclear what's the exact relationship Between image, satisfaction and loyalty in retail settings therefore the focus of the research is to investigate relationship between store image and store loyalty taking into consideration the mediating effect of store satisfaction. A model adapted from Bloemer and Ruyter (1998) will be used for this research

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the Store loyalty of Grocery Specialty Stores
- To examine the effect of store satisfaction on store image, and store loyalty.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The retail sector in India is growing at a very high speed thus in turn increasing the competition in the market. So in order to survive in the market competition to have loyal customers is a very important for the organizations. A deeper understanding of what engenders store loyalty would be beneficial to retailers in developing appropriate strategies to satisfy loyal customers and to maintain a competitive advantage. Therefore, this research intends to explore the relationship between store image, store satisfaction, trust, commitment and store loyalty.

METHODOLOGY: RESEARCH DESIGN

This study aims to examine the interrelationship between store image, store satisfaction, trust commitment and store loyalty. The research will be conducted in Metro Politan city i.e. Hyderabad, of India. Top three stores of groceries store like Reliance Fresh, Big Bazaar, More, will be selected based on Revenue generated and number of stores in these cities for this study. Both primary and secondary data will be taken for the study.

TABLE 1: TOP FIVE GROCERY STORES IN INDIA

Grocery stores	Ownership	Number of stores	Revenue of stores
Reliance industries	Reliance Fresh	886	17640
Future Group	Big Bazaar	530	11557
Aditya Birla Group	More	655	2,510

POPULATION

The population of this research consists of all the customers who visit the retail specialty stores and buy Grocery products in India. As it is impossible to include all the consumers and all the retailers into the study so sampling method will be adopted in order to choose the sample which is represents the whole Population.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The individual customers who visit the grocery specialty stores will be considered as a unit of sample into the study.

SIZE OF SAMPLE

There are different views of authors on criteria for determining sample size and that depends on the nature and data requirement of the study. As the aim of our study is to examine the direct and indirect relation among the constructs so the technique like Structural equation modeling is required to analyze the data. So in order to analyze this data analysis technique there should be more than 200 sample required (snoj, Korda,Mumel 2004), also the number of units in the sample and in the variable included in analysis should be at a ratio of 8:1 or more (bentler and chou, 1987; kelloway 1998). So the total of 300 customers from city will be sampled using mall intercept survey. More ever According to Roscoe (1975), sample size larger than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research (as cited in Sekaran, 2000)

TABLE 2: TARGET SAMPLE SIZE

Retailer	Reliance Fresh	Food Bazaar	More	Total
Hyderabad	100	100	100	300

VARIABLES

This research consists of three variables, store image, store satisfaction and store loyalty. The independent variable is store image and it was divided into eight variables i.e. Advertising by the Store, Physical Characteristics of the Store, Convenience of Reaching the Store, Availability of parking facility, Merchandize Selection, Store Personnel, Prices Charged by the Store, Dependability of the Store. Store satisfaction will be introduced as mediator variable between store image and store loyalty. Store loyalty is the dependent variable for this research.

VARIABLE MEASURES

All of the items indicating the store image, store satisfaction, and store loyalties were drawn from previous literature. Five-point Likert scales will be adopted to measure the concepts.

Store image was divided into eight variables Advertising by the Store, Physical Characteristics of the Store, Convenience of Reaching the Store, Availability of parking facility, Merchandize Selection, Store Personnel, Prices Charged by the Store, Dependability of the Store by Mueller, Wallace and Price, 1992; Patchel, 1965; Stephenson, P. Ronald, 1969. The Store satisfaction scale used in this study was adopted from Bettencourt (1997), Bitner et al. (1997), and Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt (2000). Specifically, Store satisfaction with a specialty store is measured by satisfaction with price, product quality, product assortment, and service. Loyalty will be measured by the dimensions' conative loyalty. Conative loyalty describes people's willingness or intention to be loyal Six conative loyalty measures were adopted from Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics test showed that 61% of the respondents were female, and 39% were twenties and 35% were thirties in their age. 60% were married. Validity and reliability of the scales SPSS 21.0 was adopted for the exploratory factor analyses and structural equation model for the confirmatory factor analyses to verify the validity of the scales and structural relationships among exogenous and latent concepts. Two-stage analysis was utilized (Hair et. al., 1995, p. 635). The exploratory factor analyses and structural equation model for the confirmatory factor analyses to verify the validity of the scales and structural relationships among exogenous and latent concepts, the result were partially supported. The results show that store images have a positive impact on store satisfaction. Store atmosphere (coefficient= 0.176, t =3.282), value (coefficient=.273, t=2.883) have significant influence on satisfaction. But images including location, convenient facilities, employee service, after sales service and merchandising are not statistically significant. The results suggest that store atmosphere and value should be carefully bolstered in order to promote the level of satisfaction experienced by customers in discount retail stores. The results confirm those derived by Bloemer & Ruyter (1998), Sirgy & Samli (1985), Kumar & Karande (2000), Thang & Tan (2003), all of who stipulate that store images have a direct impact on satisfaction. It is may be because atmosphere and value are easy to realize or to evaluate good and/or valuable, compared to other images. Three image dimensions have a direct impact on store loyalty. It is revealed that location (coefficient= 0.268, t=4.736), after sales service (coefficient=.142, t=2.990), merchandising (coefficient=.197, t=2.841) are statistically significant in affecting store loyalty. This result is contradictory to that by Bleomer & Ruyter (1998), who proved that store image has no direct effect on loyalty, but an indirect impact on store loyalty through satisfaction. This contradictory result may lie in difference in conceptualization. While Bleomer & Ruyter (1998) conceptualize store image as a single dimension, this study conceptualized store mages as multi-attribute factors. But the result shows that satisfaction has an insignificant positive effect on retail store loyalty (coefficient=0.087, t =1.333). This result is parallel to that by Cronin & Taylor (1992), but

does not coincide with most previous studies from services industry by Ruyter et al. (1997); Spreng & Mackoy (1996) and from retail businesses by Bitner (1990), Bloemer & Ruyter (1998), Rust & Zahorik (1993), Cronin & Taylor (1994), Parasuraman et al. (1994), Macintosh & Lockshin (1997). Bloemer & Ruyter (1998) and Caruana (2002), for example, stipulate clearly that store image or service quality has an indirect effect on store loyalty mediated through store satisfaction (p. 509). But this study shows that there exists no direct relationship between store satisfaction and store loyalty. This may imply that satisfaction is to be treated as a resulting variable (Keller, 1993; Na et. al., 1999), rather than a determinant of, store loyalty (Bloemer & Ruyter, 1998). In addition, this may be because the effects of store images on loyalty are too strong. This is observed in the revised structural model. When there are no paths from store image dimensions to loyalty, the effect of satisfaction to loyalty is statistically significant (coefficient= 0.184, $t=3.116$). But the paths from images to loyalty are added, the effect becomes non-significant. This situation is mainly due to many stores recently entering the market. Newly entering retail stores give many attractive deals including coupons, reduced prices, etc. Customers in this environment may be busy trying to visit many different stores, or may it be too early for customers to evaluate many different stores. This means customers do not have sufficient experiences to distinguish diverse stores and to fully form psychological responses, i.e. satisfaction

CONCLUSION

The study explored the relation between store image, store satisfaction and store loyalty. The results were partially Supported to earlier findings. As store image has an impact on store satisfaction and store image has a direct impact on store loyalty. This study further explains that there is no direct relationship between store satisfaction and store loyalty. In addition, this may be because the effects of store images on loyalty are too strong. This is observed in the revised structural model. When there are no paths from store image dimensions to loyalty, the effect of satisfaction to loyalty is statistically significant. But the paths from images to loyalty are added, the effect becomes non-significant. For the future researches it would be interesting to determine how the identified factors influence the degree of selection of certain product categories, particularly in research that considers the frequency of purchase as well.

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