A Study on Store Image Attributes Influencing Consumer Perception towards Shoppers Stop, Bengaluru

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Abstract: **Consumers are at the center of a company's success and hence their perception forms an integral part of strategizing and planning in order to achieve longevity of a business. Therefore, the way customers see a brand or feel about it makes a huge difference. This is where store image attributes come into the picture. In the current scenario, stores make a very lasting impact on its customers, the reason being that it is where the brand has the opportunity to showcase its physical presence to them. So, it is obvious that this is a focal point of direct impact to the brand's business. This study attempts to find the various store image attributes which influences the consumer's perception towards of the most recognizable Indian brands, Shoppers Stop. Shoppers Stop has been in the fashion retail industry for a long time in the country and has a significant presence in the market. Their success story is the result of a variety of strategies over the years and so this study lays emphasis on one the most important part of their business model, their stores. In order to collect data for the purpose of this study the use of questionnaires were made through the method of convenience sampling on a total of 100 respondents in three different Shoppers Stop stores around the city of Bengaluru and it included both male and female respondents. According to the findings of the study, there is in fact an influence of store image attributes on consumer's perception towards the brand Shoppers Stop. The several store image attributes relating to various categories which influences the consumers the most include Product Quality, Approachability of Sales Staff, Speed of Service at Checkout, Trial Room Facility and Easy Access to Products.**

Keywords: **Brand, Consumer, Consumer Perception, Shoppers Stop, Store Image Attributes**

1. Introduction

In today's competitive environment retail brands are expanding across the country in a lightning speed. With tremendous competition rising every day, these brands are experiencing mixed performances throughout the year.

This has made way for retailers to open up huge extravagant stores and spend enormous sums on the interiors and the look of physical stores. In the past decade, the importance of 'Store Attributes' has magnormously increased with the shift of consumer preferences and economic state of the working class in India. Retailers like Shoppers Stop, Lifestyle, Pantaloons and Westside have created a similar niche consumer base who prefer to spend a 'little more' for the quality and the look of the products. But such a perception of product quality is not just derived from the product itself, but also from other factors like brand image, store look, customer service etc. This phenomenon led to the start of this study.

There exists an essential factor in India market that determine consumers' shopping behavior in the retail industry. One of the objectives of funding stores and its interiors is to raise profits by promoting repeated purchase with higher product loyalty. And for high product loyalty, certain inbuilt expectations exist, such as frequent purchase, big amount of purchase, cost reduction, and favorable word of mouth. It is very important for these brands to keep their customers stick to them by any means possible be it product quality, pricing, discounts or even physical attributes. Store loyalty has been argued as one of the important factors for these brands to grow themselves in the long run as customers loyal to the store bring more profits for several years as well as cost them much less than making new customers.

If retailers can identify major variables influencing store loyalty of their stores, they can design and practice more effective retailing strategy for more sales and profits.

Over the year, markets and choices of consumers have changed rapidly and hence this change in market environment can lead to a change in store loyalty. Thus, it is necessary to figure out the factors affecting store loyalty to understand such a change. It can be recognized that store image as one of the most important factors of store loyalty and store attributes consisting store image determine store loyalty. It can be determined to a certain extent that if store image attributes affect store loyalty, then its knowledge can be a base for designing, managing and practicing strategies for such retailers to obtain long term competitive advantages.

2. Review of literature

Arons (1961) explains store image as a mix of attributes or factors of a retail store and structures which helps combine them to act. With this a consumer can differentiate one store from the others.

Lindquist (1974) proposes that the image of a store consists of a set of both functional (or tangible) and psychological (or

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intangible) attributes which a consumer perceives to find in a retail store.

According to (Valey, 2005) store image is used by consumers as a criteria of evaluation for making a decision regarding the choice of retail outlet. It includes various store related components and dimensions such as physical facilities, merchandise, services, store atmosphere and so on. There is a link between the store image and loyalty and patronage decision (Assael, 1992; Wong and Yu, 2003).

As per the study of James, Durand and Dreves (1976) it was revealed that consumer's perception and attitudes are influenced by image attributes and also it is directly associated with sales profit.

Schiffman, Dash and Dillion (1977) did a research on store image attributes existing among competitive retailers and it was revealed that store image attributes has a major role in choosing the type of store.

According to Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1990) within the process of comparing evaluation standards with perceived image attributes consumers differentiate acceptable stores from unacceptable stores. Consumers are dependent on store image as a variable in their selection of store.

Hedrick et al (2005) According to the study a consumer's expectation on a retail salesperson can be influenced by store atmosphere and store environment. A study was conducted on sales staff and store atmosphere and it was identified that the important drivers of customer satisfaction were the consumer's perception of a sales person's attributes and relationship building behaviour. In the retail sector, the intentions of consumer is generally found based on their willingness to repurchase, stay in store, make a higher purchase in the future, recommend to others.

Visser et al (2006) with the help of eight focus groups made a study on the importance of store image attributes of the apparel sector according to the perception of female consumers. The results showed that the most important dimension perceived was merchandise and clientele, which was followed by service and lastly physical facilities.

3. Objectives of the study

- To identify the store image attributes influencing consumer perception towards Shoppers Stop.
- To identify the demographics of the consumers who are influenced by the store image attributes.

4. Research methodology

- Sample

A sample size of 100 respondents has been taken for this research.

- Sampling Technique

To get the required information a study was conducted through questionnaires in three different Shoppers Stop stores in Bengaluru viz., Shoppers Stop at Mantri Mall, Shoppers Stop at Orion Mall and Shoppers Stop at Garuda Mall. A total of 100 questionnaires was received. In selecting the sample no systematic pattern was followed. For this study the technique of convenience sampling based on demographic factors like age, gender, occupation was adopted.

Method of Data Collection:
- For the purpose of study both primary and secondary sources of data have been acquired to identify and analyze the various store image attributes influencing consumer perception towards selected retail brands.
- Secondary data has been acquired from sources like websites and social media handles.
- The research has been analyzed by using both responses from questionnaire and secondary data.

5. Limitations of the study

Following are a few limitations of the study faced due to time and resource constraint.
- The data was restricted to 100 respondents only and hence the outcome cannot be generalized.
- This study follows convenience sampling, which may lead to bias due to lack funds to use on other sampling methods.
  This study covers the perception of consumers for a limited time period and hence consumer preference of these attributes may not stand for a whole year long.
- The data collected from secondary sources are affected by subjective opinion as they were collected from many websites and thereby may differ from ground reality.
- The use of extensive statistical tools and techniques are eliminated since the study is a consumer perception study.
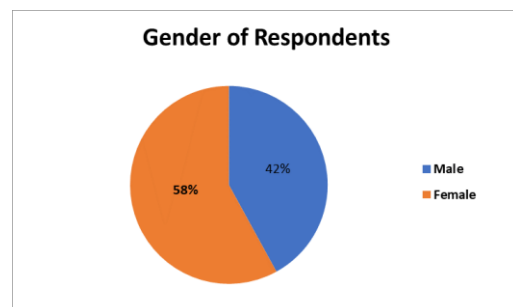
6. Data analysis and discussion

Fig. 1. Gender of Respondents (Source: Survey Data)

Out of 100 respondents, 58% of the respondents were noted to be female while only 42% of them were male.

Among the respondents, 76% fall under the age group of 20-29 years. 11% of the population were the age group of below 20 years who constitute mainly students, whereas 6% of the

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individuals fall under the age group of 40-49 years. 5% of the respondents were in the age group of 30-39 years and the lowest percentage of 2% belongs to respondents who are 50 years and above.
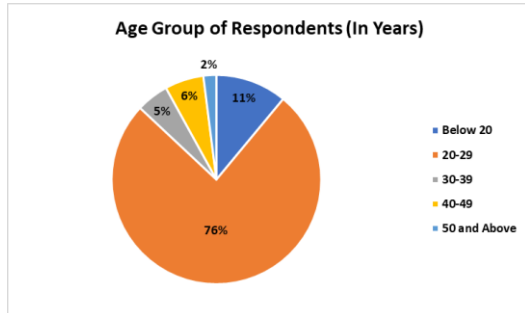

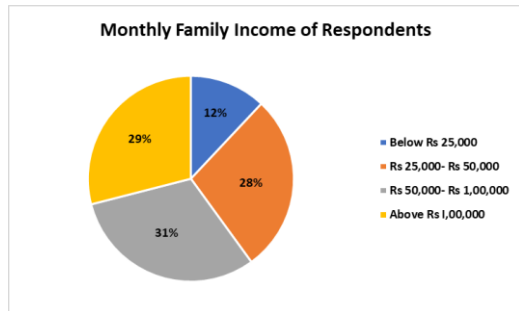Fig. 2. Age Group of Respondents (In Years) (Source: Survey data)

Fig. 3. Monthly Family Income of Respondents (Source: Survey Data)

Among 100 respondents the maximum number of people belonged to the income group of Rs. 50,000- Rs. 1,00,000 i.e. 31%. The next highest number of people are from the income group of Above Rs. 1,00,000 and constitute 29% of the sample. 28% of the respondents are from the income group of Rs. 25,000- Rs. 50,000 while only 12% of them are from the income group of below Rs. 25,000.

Fig. 4. Preferred Shoppers Stop Store (Source: Survey Data)

Among the 100 respondents, 35% equally preferred to visit/ purchase from the Shoppers Stop store at Mantri mall as well as Shoppers Stop store at Orion mall while 30% of them preferred Shoppers Stop store at Garuda mall.

Among the respondents the maximum number of people, i.e. 48% make purchases at the selected Shoppers Stop store on a monthly basis. 23% respondents purchase on a weekly basis,
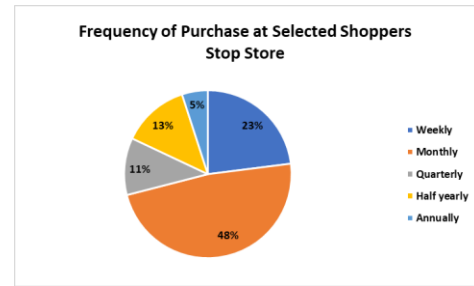
while 13% purchase on a half yearly basis.

Fig. 5. Frequency of Purchase at Selected Shoppers Stop Store
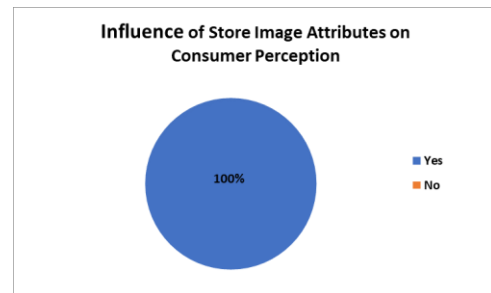(Source: Survey data)

Fig. 6. Influence of Store Image Attributes on Consumer Perception
(Source: Survey data)

As per the study, 100% of the respondent's perception towards Shoppers Stop gets influenced by the image attributes of their stores.
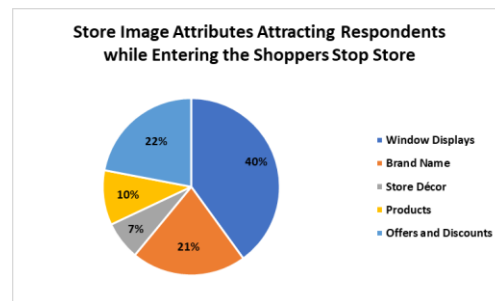

Fig. 7. Store Image Attributes Attracting Respondents while Entering the Shoppers Stop Store (Source: Survey data)

As per the study, 40% of the respondents are attracted by window displays while entering the chosen Shoppers Stop store, while 22% are attracted by offers and discounts. 21% of the respondents are attracted by the brand name, while 10% are attracted by their products and only 7% are attracted by the store décor while entering the Shoppers Stop store.

As per the survey conducted, from among the various store image attributes relating to merchandise and brand the attribute that the highest number of people, i.e. 49% get influenced by is Product quality followed by product price relative to other stores which constitute 32% of respondents. 8% of people get influenced by the variety of products available at the store while 5% of respondents get influenced by the collection of products at the store. Only a handful of people get influenced by the

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availability of different brands and the brand name who constitute 4% and 2% respectively.

Fig. 8. Store Image Attributes relating to Merchandise and Brand of Shoppers Stop stores (Source: Survey Data)
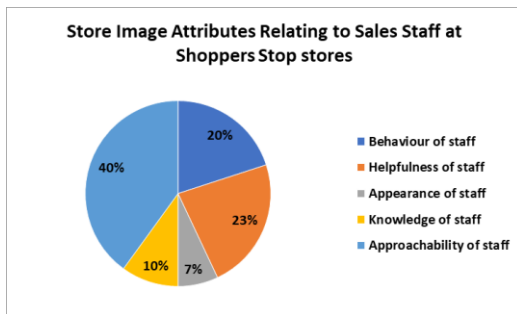

Fig. 9. Store Image Attributes Relating to Sales Staff at Shoppers Stop stores (Source: Survey Data)

As per the survey conducted, from among the various store image attributes relating to sales staff at the Shoppers Stop stores the attribute that the highest number of people, i.e. 40% get influenced by is approachability of staff followed by the helpfulness of staff which constitute 23% of respondents. 20% of people get influenced by the behaviour of sales staff at these stores while 10% of respondents get influenced by the knowledge of the staff. Only 7% of the people get influenced by the appearance of the staff at these Shoppers Stop stores.

Fig. 10. Store Image Attributes relating to the Services provided at Shoppers Stop stores (Source: Survey Data)

As per the study, from among the various store image attributes relating to services provided at Shoppers Stop stores the attribute that the highest number of people, i.e. 48% get influenced by is speed of service at checkout followed by easy product returns/exchange which constitute 25% of respondents. 11% of people get influenced by the availability of alteration facility at the store while 9% of respondents get influenced by

the store events organized by Shoppers Stop at their stores. Only 7% of the respondents are affected by the gift card facility which is provided by Shoppers Stop at their stores.
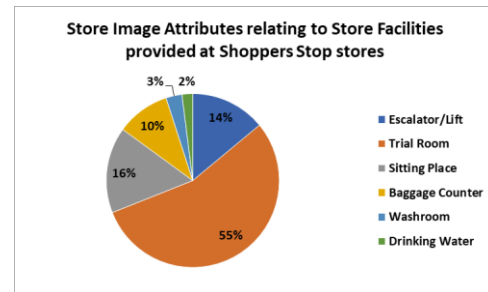

Fig. 11. Store Image Attributes relating to Store Facilities provided at Shoppers Stop stores (Source: Survey Data)

As per the study out of the 100 respondents, the highest number of people that, i.e. 55% get influenced by the availability of a trial rooms at Shoppers Stop stores while 16% get influenced by availability of sitting place. 14% of the people are affected by the availability of escalators/lift while 10% are influenced by availability of baggage counter. Only a few respondents are influenced by the availability of washroom and drinking water who constitute 3% and 2% respectively.
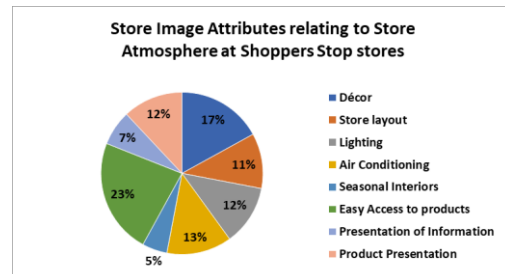

Fig. 12. Store Image Attributes relating to Store Atmosphere at Shoppers Stop stores (Source: Survey Data)

As per the study, from among the various store image attributes relating to store atmosphere at the various Shoppers Stop stores the highest number of people, i.e. 23% get influenced by the attribute of easy access to products followed by the decor of the stores which constitute 17% of the respondents. 13% of the respondents are influenced by the store image attribute of air conditioning at the store while 12% people are influenced by both product presentation and lighting respectively. 11% of people get influenced by the attribute of store layout while 7% of respondents get influenced by the presentation of product information at the store. Only 5% of the people are influenced by the attribute of seasonal interiors.

According to the study, 57% of the respondents have rated the brand "Good," based on the perception formed due to the store image attributes while 40% have rated the brand "Outstanding". Only a minority of 2% and 1 % have rated the brand as "Average" and "Not Good" respectively.

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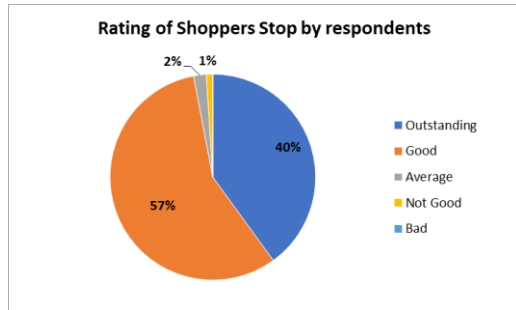**www.ijresm.com | ISSN (Online): 2581-5792**

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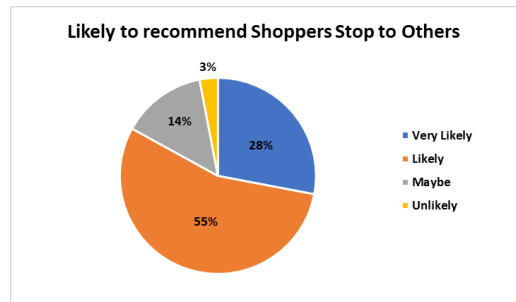Fig. 13. Rating of Shoppers Stop stores by respondents (Source: Survey Data)

Fig. 14. Likely to recommend Shoppers Stop to Others (Source: Survey Data)

As per the study, 55% of the respondents are likely to recommend the chosen Shoppers Stop store to others while 28% of the respondents are very likely to recommend the store to others. 14% of the individuals may be recommending the stores to others while 3% of the respondents are unlikely to recommend the store to others.

7. Interpretation and suggestions

On the basis of the above graphs the following results can be interpreted:

- The research shows that both male and females are influenced in terms of their perception towards the brand due to the store image attributes.
- As per the study, the majority of the respondents were from the age group of 20-29 years, which suggests that Shoppers Stop has a major consumer base of youngsters and these are the people whose perception is most influenced by the store image attributes.
- The study reveals that majorly the respondents are either are full time employed, i.e. 39% or are students who constitute 35% of the people. This indicates that they are the people who visit/purchase the most from Shoppers Stop and hence the brand needs to focus on their perception and requirements to ensure that the brand succeeds.
- As per the study Shoppers Stop store at Mantri Mall and Shoppers Stop store in Orion Mall are equally preferred by the respondents and also the preference for Shoppers Stop at Garuda Mall is not so significantly less, hence it can be interpreted that the respondent's perception towards the brand in all these stores are influenced by

store image attributes.
- Out of the 100 respondents, 100% of them accepted that store image attributes of the chosen Shoppers Stop store do influence their perception towards the brand.
- As per data the majority of people are influenced by window displays while entering the store and hence the brand should make sure that they are made attractive and showcases the new season collection.
- Since the most influencing store image attribute relating to merchandise and brand is Product Quality, Shoppers Stop needs to focus their efforts and investment in the betterment of the quality of products they provide to their customers.
- The attribute that influences the customer's perception towards Shoppers Stop the most related to their sales staff is their approachability. For this Shoppers Stop can provide training to their sales staff and introduce methods to make them more approachable.
- Consumer's perception towards the brand is also influenced by the speed of service at checkout which is related to the services provided by Shoppers Stop. Therefore, the they should make sure they have multiple counters which run at a good speed to make sure consumers do not have wait to while checking out. Also, proper training to employees should be provided to ensure they work efficiently.
- Another store image attribute which influences a consumer's perception towards the brand, Shoppers Stop is the availability Trial Rooms. Since this attribute influences the consumer the store should make sure the availability of trial rooms is met at all times especially during sale season.
- The last attribute relating to store atmosphere of the Shoppers Stop stores which influences the consumer's perception towards the brand is the easy access of products in the store. Therefore, the brand should make sure that its products are easily accessible to the consumers in the stores. Highly saleable products should be given top priority and should be made available in the store at the correct place.
- The frequency of purchase of the majority of the respondents are on a monthly basis, followed by weekly basis, which suggests these store attributes are influencing the consumers in a good way since they are making monthly purchases.
- Based on the data collected, it can be interpreted that 57% and 40% of the respondents have given the brand a rating of "Good" and "Outstanding" respectively, which implies that the store image attributes are providing a positive impact on the brand image of Shoppers Stop.
- Also, due to this positive impact more than half of the respondents, i.e. 55% are very likely to recommend the brand to their friends and family. Therefore, the brand should continue to work on these store image attributes

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which would provide them further benefits in future.

8. Conclusion

Over time the importance of consumers and their perception towards a brand has risen substantially. Brands are no longer depending on just products or services, but also putting emphasis on the overall visual appeal of the brand. This is the reason why brands are putting so much resources behind having store image attributes which attracts their consumer base and creates a long-term affirmation with them. In the upcoming years, more and more such image attributes will become important since the competition will rise exponentially. Also, along with stores, brands will be induced to think about how they can create a relationship with customers via their virtual stores. Newer concepts will be put to test like in-store events and exhibitions which will help brands differentiate themselves from their competitors and stand out. At the end, the emphasis is bound to shift towards creating brand loyalty through means that are more long term and stay important to the customers.

9. Implications of future research

- For the study only Shoppers Stop as a retail store in the fashion and apparel industry is considered.
- The study included three Shoppers Stop stores in Bengaluru viz., Shoppers Stop at Mantri Mall, Shoppers Stop at Orion Mall and Shoppers Stop at Garuda Mall.

- The study was conducted during the end of season sale (Dec-Jan) and hence the responses may vary during other time period.
- This study has left out the level at which store image attributes influence consumer perception towards various fashion and apparel retail stores.

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