ABSTRACT

Consumer behavior has changed dramatically in the last decade which is diversifying the consumers’ need and choice on their daily necessities. In today’s dynamic and competitive business environment, retailers must thoroughly understand and predict how the consumers behave in purchasing various goods and services for their use. Therefore, to create a competitive position in the marketplace retailers are strategizing themselves to develop a distinct image in the shoppers’ mind towards their store for having a strong impact on their behavior. The retailing practice is going through a radical revolution due to the introduction of new formats for which organized retail is gaining tremendous importance in the recent times. Moreover, with the changing behavioral phenomenon retailers need to concern regarding the lifestyle, preference and demands of consumers which is playing a vital role in the ever changing purchasing perception of consumers. Hence, it becomes important to understand the overall customer perceptions regarding store image that eventually influence customer store choice, purchase intention, store satisfaction and loyalty toward their preferred store. Therefore this study has been conducted to analyze the theoretical framework of store image and its overall impact on consumer behavior. This theoretical study, in addition to its contribution to the marketing literature, has important implications for the retail entrepreneurs, professionals and academicians in terms of adopting strategic marketing decisions by expanding the retail portfolio towards a better understanding regarding the importance of consumer store image perceptions for the overall retail business scenario.

Keyword(s): Store image, store image dimensions, consumer behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades the retail industry is experiencing dynamic changes all over the world through the emergence of supermarkets as the dominant retail form (Jinfeng and Zhilong, 2009; Datta, 2010; Verma and Madan, 2011; Shamsher, Abdullah and Saha, 2012). This is due to the fact that consumers’ behavior and preferences has changed and shifted towards convenience (Tiwari and Abraham, 2010), high quality products, provision for customer care, comfortable shopping environment (Sinha, 2003; Shamsher and Hossain, 2011), greater
emphasis on value for money (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong, Saunders, 2008, p. 9; Shamsher, Abdullah and Saha, 2012), flexible payment methods, sophisticated channels of distribution (Datta, 2010). The retail sector has been witnessing a gradual uprising for the last few decades as the traditional markets have made ways for new retail format with the development of supermarket culture which is creating an excitement and unique shopping experience amongst the retail shoppers all over the world (Shamsher and Hossain, 2011). Studies has shown that eye-catching shopping malls has increased in the different trade areas which is diversifying the shopping behavior, consumer lifestyles and preferences towards organized retailing (Shamsher & Hossain, 2006; Tiwari and Abraham, 2010; Gangal and Kumer, 2013; Jha, 2013). Shopping has now become an experience of pleasure (Shamsher, and Hossain, 2011), enjoyment (Hart et al. 2006) and tension releaser as people are exposed to a large volume of brands under a single roof where preferences are valued and treated with warmth and expertise (Sinha, 2003; Shamsher, and Hossain, 2011). Moreover, the emergence of mobile and online shopping, interaction with the social networking sites and promotions and coupons through mobile and online channels (Retail Industry Outlook Survey, 2013) has altered an ever-evolving revolution in the behavioral pattern of the customers. The use of online transaction has been proved to create greater satisfaction for modern consumers towards convenience and speed (Yu and Wu, 2007), more availability of information, products and services (Katawetawaraks, 2011).

Research outcome on consumer behavior has shown that technological development, globalization, increased working opportunity (Shamsher and Hossain, 2012; Shamsher, Abdullah and Saha, 2012), demographical shift into women empowerment, increased brand awareness (Khidir, 2011), convenient store locations, strong brand image, and eye-catching store tangibles has created significant effect in the changing shopping behavior and store selection of consumers’ (Shamsher and Hossain, 2012; Ahmed, 2007). The field of consumer behavior is the area of behavior that consumers display in searching, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs. Consumer behavior focuses on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on consumption related items (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004, p.23).

On the whole, retailing includes all the activities involved in selling goods or services to final consumers for personal and non-business use (Kotler, 2000, p.397). There are different types of retail organizations like specialty store, department store, super market,
convenience store, discount store, super store, hypermarket and there are newer forms also emerging. These stores are relatively large and operate on low-cost, low-margin, high volume, and self-service to serve multi-dimensional needs of the consumers.

According to Shamsher, and Hossain, (2006) by providing quality products, affordable prices, improved service quality (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1990; Ahmed, 2007) convenient shopping location, comfortable shopping environments (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Ahmed, 2007), and well trained and skilled sales personnel retailers are strategizing to create a competitive position in the marketplace (Kotler, 2010). In today’s dynamic and competitive business environment, retailers need to differentiate themselves and must have comprehensive knowledge concerning the image of any particular store that influences the customers’ store choice, purchase intention, and loyalty toward their preferred stores (Sirohi, Mclaughlin, and Wittink, 1998; Thang and Tan, 2003; Pan and Zinkhan, 2006). Moreover, with the changing behavioral phenomenon, it is very crucial for the retailers to develop a clear image in the shoppers’ mind towards their store for having a strong impact on their behavior. Different academicians’ and practitioners have given considerable attention on store image in many different parts of the world (Martineau, 1958; Doyle and Fenwick, 1975; Bearden 1977; Ghosh, 1990; Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou, 2009; Silva and Giraldi, 2010; Biswal and Sreekumar, 2011; Kumar and Manjunath, 2012; Lin and Liao, 2012). Therefore, the motivation of this current study is to examine the theoretical framework of store image and its impact on consumer behavior.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

a. To understand the gradual background of the concepts of store image and consumer behavior.

b. To understand the dimensions of store image.

c. To explore the influence of store image on consumer behavior.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used for this study was secondary literature survey. The study was based on compiling studies conducted so far on store image and consumer behavior. In reviewing the literature, both theoretical and empirical studies were taken into consideration. This analysis clearly falls in to the category of Qualitative Research as it aims to get a deeper understanding of the gradual background of the concepts of store image and consumer behavior and how different dimensions of store image influenced consumer behavior. Secondary data were collected through content analysis from various published sources including books,
online journals, newspapers, magazines, and reports. All the secondary data were collected during the 1st and 2nd week of September 2015.

**FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH**

**Objective 1: Gradual background of the concepts of store image and consumer behavior**

**Store image**

Store image is the overall perception that consumers have of a particular store and of the experience of shopping there. In today’s competitive and emerging retail market retailers need to understand what image consumers have of the retailer’s store, and how this image compares to an ideal image and to competitors images. Developing a powerful image provides the retailer an opportunity towards differentiation by creating a distinct image (Lockshin and kahrimanis, 1998). Studies on store image literature strongly suggested that a favorable store image helped the retailer to develop and manage their market position (Nevin and Houston 1980; Samli 1989a; Sannapu and Singh, 2012) by creating a competitive advantage in terms of products, price or service differentiation (Wortzel, 1987; Day and Wesley, 1988) which would not easily be duplicated by other retailers (Rosenbloom 1983). However, store image along with a clear positioning message toward the target market found to have influenced on store loyalty (Giraldi, Spinelli and Merlo, 2003; Gundala, 2010) by increasing transaction benefit for the retailers (Ellis and Kelly, 1992).

Over five and half decade ago Martineau (1958) described store image as the personality of the store through which a shopper defined a store on his/her mind. On two categories he designated the concept of store image viz. functional attributes and psychological attributes. Location, assortment of products, store convenience, store layout combined the former category and psychological attributes represented the shoppers’ feelings stimulated by the functional attributes of the store. Nonetheless, explaining the concept of store image is not easy (Sewell, 1974) as researchers has defined it with a number of different store attributes to acknowledge conjointly creating the image of a store (Hirschman et al., 1978; Keaveney and Hunt, 1992; Gundala, 2010). As such, after the effort of Martineau (1958), over the years different academician have described store image in terms of different store attributes or characteristics that are part of the overall image toward a store. (Fisk, 1961; Kunkel and Berry, 1968; Lindquist, 1974; Doyle and Fenwick, 1974; Bearden, 1977; Greenberg et al., 1983; Ghosh, 1990; Hasty and Reardon, 1997; Solgaard and Hansen, 2003). Dichter (1985) stressed that store image is the overall image of any particular store that the customers’ possess in their mind which is considered as one of the important marketing
assets for retail success (Amirani and Gates, 1993). The image is the overall expression by the retail customers as how they perceived the store (Zimmer and Golden, 1988).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholars</th>
<th>Definition of store image</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kunkel and Berry (1968)</td>
<td>Store image is totality of the experience and conceptualization that intensify consumers purchase decision and recommendation to others about a specific store.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lindquist (1974)</td>
<td>Store image is composited with tangible or functional factors and intangible or psychological factors that are professed by the consumers to be seen in the store.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kasulis and Lasch (1981)</td>
<td>Store image is the combination of objective attributes such as location, size, store hours and subjective attributes including attractiveness of store décor, friendliness of employees, that level of store service formed form the perception of consumers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dichter (1985)</td>
<td>Store image is the overall image of any particular store that the customers’ possess in their mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grewal et al., (2004)</td>
<td>Store image has build up as combined evaluation regarding the store and the brand that influenced customers’ store choice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jinfeng and Zhilong (2009)</td>
<td>Store image can be signified with different store attributes or characteristics, that focus on the marketing activities of a store for influencing customer perceptions of store choice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chang &amp; Luan (2010)</td>
<td>Store image is the combination of consumer’s perceptions and previous experience towards the store’s different attributes</td>
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More recently, Gundala (2010) has described the meaning of store image as the salient attributes of a particular store that consumers measured and compared according to the importance of each attributes. Apparently, in contemporary times numerous researchers has given substantial emphasis and emerged on store image to understand its importance in the present retail business context (Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou, 2009; Silva and Giraldi, 2010; Biswal and Sreekumar, 2011; Kumar and Manjunath, 2012; Lin and Liao, 2012; Imran & Rehman, 2013).
Consumer Behavior

The root of consumer behavior prior has been associated with the field of marketing discipline (Kernan 1995). In the late 1950s the growth and importance of studying consumer behavior has focused by different academicians’ and practitioners to gain an overall knowledge from its theoretical perspectives (Dahl, Haire, and Laz-arsfeld 1959; Gordon and Howell 1959). Since then the previous emphasis of marketing from a managerial perspective were shifted towards consumer behavioral perception by understanding how and why consumers behaved according to their own need and priorities (Kernan 1995; Wilkie and Moore, 2003). According to Blackwell et al., (2006) consumer behavior is the combination of consumer acquisition, consumption and dispose of products and services. Kotler (2010) has defined consumer behavior as the combination of mental, emotional and physical activities through which people select, purchase, use and dispose of products and services that satisfy their needs and desires. Consumer behaviors reflects the totality of consumers’ decisions making process and physical activity that an individual’s engage in when evaluating, acquiring, using, or disposing of goods and services (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004, p.23)

Since the emergence of consumer behavior has shown a changing paradigm , the importance of better understanding about consumer needs, perceptions, attitudes and purchase intentions became necessary for the successful strategic implementation of the marketer. This change took place dramatically in the past decade which is diversifying the consumers’ needs and choices on their daily necessities. In today’s dynamic and competitive business environment, retailers must thoroughly understand and predict how the consumers behave in purchasing various goods and services for their use. Considerable amount of literatures were found to describe how the changing retail scenario influenced the behavior of the consumers (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Ahmed, 2007; Nair and Pillai, 2007; Hirekchanagoudar, 2008; Alhemoud, 2008; Shamsher and Hossain, 2012; Shamsher, Abdullah and Saha, 2012; Sharma and Lal, 2012; Shukla and Shukla, 2013)

Seemingly, some recent studies has given considerable attention to describe store environmental influence on consumer behavior (McGoldrick and Pieros, 1998; Hunter and Mukharji, 2011; Chen and Hsieh, 2011; Bohl, 2012), merchandising and display effect on consumer behavior (Miremadi and khoei, 2013; Kaur, 2013) influence of background music on consumer behavior (YalchandSpangenberg, 2000; Morrison, 2002; Gueguen, at el, 2007). Studies has also discovered significance on store Choice Behavior (Kaul, 2006; Mittal and

**Objective 2: Dimension of store image**

Academic and experimental evidence has suggested that the concept of store image was first introduced by Martineau (1958). After the effort of Martineau, over the years different researchers have focused on the dimensions of store image through different store attributes or characteristics that are part of the overall image toward a store. As such, the six important store attributes as identified by Fisk (1961) were location accessibility, merchandise suitability, value for price, sales efforts and store service. Kunkel and Berry (1968) proposed twelve store features which included price of merchandise, quality, assortment, fashion of merchandises, sales personnel, sales promotion, advertising, store atmosphere, locational accessibility, service, reputation on adjustments and other accessibility factors. After that a succeeding study conducted by Berry (1969) acknowledging three primary broad factors for influencing consumer's store choice behavior namely, quality and variety of merchandise, sales staff, and store atmosphere.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholars</th>
<th>Dimensions of store image</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fisk (1961)</td>
<td>Location accessibility, merchandise suitability, value for price, sales efforts and store service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunkel and Berry (1968)</td>
<td>Price of merchandise, quality, assortment, fashion of merchandises, sales personnel, sales promotion, advertising, store atmosphere, locational accessibility, service, reputation on adjustments and other accessibility factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry (1969)</td>
<td>Quality and variety of merchandise, sales staff, and store atmosphere.</td>
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<tr>
<td>James et al. (1976)</td>
<td>Assortment, personnel, atmosphere, service, quality</td>
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Lindquist (1974) research came out as one of the illustrious work on store image which prolonged Martineau's components. The study was conducted by reviewing 19 research articles and combined into a set of nine groups: merchandise, service, clientele, physical facilities, promotion, accessibility, store atmosphere, institutional and post-transaction satisfaction. Corresponding year Doyle and Fenwick (1974) proposed five store image attributes including product, price, assortment, styling and location. Subsequently, another study conducted by James et al. (1976) resulting six dimensions from their study, namely assortment, personnel, atmosphere, service, quality and price. On the other hand, Bearden (1977) suggested seven dimensions of store image as important for store patronage behavior including price, quality of merchandise, assortment, atmosphere, location, parking facilities, and friendly personnel. Greenberg et al. (1983) research outcome on US fashion market revealed that product choice, promotion and the store atmosphere found to be the most important factors influencing consumer decision making. However, Ghosh (1990) introduced nine store image elements such as location, merchandise, store atmosphere, customer service, price, advertising, personal selling, and sales incentive programs.

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<tr>
<td>Bearden (1977)</td>
<td>Price, quality of merchandise, assortment, atmosphere, location, parking facilities, and friendly personnel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenberg et al. (1983)</td>
<td>Product choice, promotion and the store atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghosh (1990)</td>
<td>Location, merchandise, store atmosphere, customer service, price, advertising, personal selling, and sales incentive programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visser and Noordwyk (2006)</td>
<td>Merchandise, service, clientele, physical facilities, convenience, promotion, store atmosphere, institutional factors and post-transaction satisfaction. (Adapted from Lindquist’s (1974) study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinfeng and Zhilong (2009)</td>
<td>Convenience, perceived price, physical facilities, employee service, and institutional factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virvilaite and Dailydene (2012)</td>
<td>Services, convenience, quality, product variety, product price and atmosphere</td>
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Some recent studies have focused on the importance of store image attributes on the highly competitive and dynamic retail market (Visser, Preez & Noordwyk, 2006; Vyver, 2008; Verma & Madan, 2011). Visser and Noordwyk (2006) conducted a study to identify the apparel store image attributes for the selected group of female consumers. A total of nine store image attributes were identified for this study that were adapted from Lindquist’s proposed (1974-1975) store image dimensions. These were merchandise, service, clientele, physical facilities, convenience, promotion, store atmosphere, institutional factors and post-transaction satisfaction. The research outcome revealed that merchandise and clientele were deemed to be the most important store image dimensions, followed by service whereas, the least important dimension considered was physical facilities by the shoppers. The findings further suggested that insignificant difference engendered between the store image dimensions of this study and Lindquist’s (1974-1975) proposed dimensions.

In another study by Jinfeng and Zhilong (2009) stressed the importance of positive effect of store image dimensions such as convenience, perceived price, physical facilities, employee service, and institutional factors on retailer equity dimensions as antecedents of retailer equity. Seemingly, Verma & Madan (2011) identified 28 key factors that were perceived important to Indian consumers to discover the importance of apparel store image attributes from female customers’ perceptions. The five identified factors through Factor analysis were Store’s Product and Operational Quality, Store’s Overall Visual Appeal, Customer Convenience, Perceived Price and Past Satisfaction and Store’s Promotional Effectiveness where Store’s Product and Operational Quality found as the most important factor for determining overall image of the store.

Biswal, Sreekumar and Panda (2011) stressed out the important factors that influenced the store image of the Indian customers. Among the thirty two attributes results of the study revealed that cleanliness and tidiness of the store was found to be the most important factor intended for gaining consideration pro holding a positive image about the store by the Indian customers. Followed by next important factor as décor and layout of the store, store atmosphere, good quality product and fashionable merchandise. Conservative image of the store was found to have the least essential factor. More recent times Virvilaite and Dailydiene (2012) showed the influence of store image on private brand image. The authors determined six store image factors viz. services, convenience, quality, product variety, product price and atmosphere and originated that convenience and store atmosphere were found to have the largest positive influence on
the private brand image. Although the study confirmed that product variety and price also used to form positive private brand image.

**Objective 3: Influence of store image on consumer behavior**

**Store image and Store choice**

Studies has given considerable attention to the influence of store image attributes in the consumers store choice decision (Belk, 1975; Acto and Anderson, 1979; Hirschman, 1981; Bodkin & Lord, 1997; Mas-Ruiz, 1999).

Studies showed that store choice influenced by different situational factors like location and presence of physical and social surroundings such as decor, noise, aromas, lighting intensity and physical layout (Belk, 1975). Markin et al. (1976) investigated how favorable store environments influenced shoppers store choice behavior. On the other hand Acto and Anderson (1979) showed how a distinct image with superior store attributes influenced the comparative store choice behavior between recent shoppers and non recent shoppers. Similar views shared by by Hirschman (1981). However, concern for the retail achievement by Kirkup & Rafiq (1999) argued that a retailer’s success depends on shoppers’ attraction toward the store. Whereas, Warnaby and Yip (2005), suggested that rather than necessity attraction to stay and spending time in a particular store somehow influenced to select a store which ultimately helped to increase sales revenue (Gudonaviciene and Alijosiene, 2013).

Arnold et al. (1983) found that store choice decision were dominated by location and price. Subsequently, Tigert (1983) established that location and convenience were significantly influence store choice behavior followed by price and courteous service. Jantan and Kamaruddin (1999) examined the important store image attributes influential in the departmental stores selection behavior of the Malaysian shoppers. Among the seven store image attributes the most important attributes in the store choice behavior was location followed by service, merchandise and promotion and advertising.

For selecting grocery store Koksal (2007) found product, pricing, payment method, personnel and store convenience as the most important factors. A study by Yoo-Kyoung Seock (2009) examined how apparel retail store environmental cues and demographic characteristics influence the Hispanic consumers’ apparel store choice behavior across various retail store formats like department stores, specialty stores, and mass merchant stores. However, in a study by Hassan, Mohammad & Bakar (2010) showed store choice dependent on reasonable price, merchandize variety and personalized services offered by the store.
Store image components like available Fresh and original goods, cheaper prices, convenient store locations, strong brand image, and eye-catching store tangibles have significant effect in making shopping choice between modernized shopping centers and traditional shopping centers (Ahmed, 2007). Another study conducted by Shamsher & Hossain (2012) found clear distinction in store choice and behavioral patterns of consumers towards traditional retail stores and large-scale retail stores.

In more recent times, Gudonaviciene and Alijosiene (2013) research outcome revealed that merchandizing was found as the most important image attributes followed by macro accessibility, entertainment, micro accessibility and atmosphere for selecting a store. Similar results were found by Yilmaz (2004) where features of merchandise and geographic location were given the highest preference in choosing shopping center by the Turkish customers.

In the corresponding time, Jaravaza and Chitando (2013) revealed that store location features, namely travelling time, location convenience, proximity to complimentary outlets and store visibility were found to be the important factors which implies the significance for store location in selecting a store. In another study, Dhurup, Mafini and Mathaba (2013) conducted a study on South African Sports apparel market to discover how the store image factors influenced the store selection choice. Six store image factors were identified which were sales assistance, store atmospherics, store appeal, in-store induced appeals, promotion/brand availability and store accessibility. Results of the study showed that among the store image factors sales assistance deemed to be the highest importance and store atmospherics found to have the least importance for the sportswear shoppers in determining their store choice behavior. The study further concluded no significant difference between males and female sportswear shoppers for choosing a particular. Consistent finding also showed that gender does not significantly create any influence in the store choice behavior (Birtwistle and Shearer, 2001; Gundala, 2010). Nonetheless, contradictory findings revealed that male shoppers selected different store image attributes compared to female shoppers for purchasing apparel products (Torres, Summers & Belleau, 2001; McGrath, 2001).

**Store image and Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention signifies consumers’ possibility and willingness to purchase a certain product or service (Wu, Yeh and Hsiao, 2011) which represents an important indicator for assessing the behavior of consumer by influencing consumer purchase possibility (Dodds et al., 1991). According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) higher purchase intention
will increase higher transaction and resulted in increased profitability. Several studies showed that store image attributes like pleasant store environment and atmospheric cues positively influenced the purchase intention of retail shoppers (Donovan et al., 1994; Schlosser et al., 1998; Kumar et al., 2010; Jin at el., 2012). Whereas, Brucks et al. (2007) argued that purchase intention effected by that brand name and Jin at el. (2012) found positive relationship between product variety and purchase intention of Malaysian young adults.

In more recent studies Wu, Yeh and Hsiao (2011) showed how store image dimensions like product variety, product quality, price, value for money and store atmosphere has created a direct and positive effect on the purchase intention. In a subsequent study Lin and Liao (2012), expressed that whenever the consumers are satisfied with the image and environment of a particular store they form purchase intention and come back again to purchase. Whilst, Rizkalla and Suzanawaty (2012) found an insignificant relation between store image and purchase intention for the Indonesian shoppers.

**Store image and Store Satisfaction**

Substantial research has been carried out to discover the importance of store image for influencing store satisfaction (Bloemer and Ruyter, 1998; Bigne’ et al., 2001; Zins, 2001; Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou, 2009; Silva and Giraldi, 2010; Beneke, Adams, and Solomons, 2011; Kumar and Manjunath, 2012; Dineshkumar, and Vikkraman, 2012).

An empirical study was conducted on a departmental store of Switzerland by Bloemer and Ruyter (1998) emphasizing that store image has an indirect positive effect on store loyalty through store satisfaction. In a subsequent study by Giese & Cote (2000) found that three store image attributes of a service provider has an direct effect on service satisfaction. Mamalis, Ness &Bourlakis (2005) found that intangible store image factors like adaptation to Locality, food and service were more important compared to the tangible store image factors alike quality of food, Facilities and Promotion for the development of customer satisfaction in Greece fast food market. Whilst, Alves and Raposo (2007) showed that image has a direct and significant influence on satisfaction suggesting the idea that if people perceived a positive image it will lead them to be satisfied.

In another study by Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou (2009) relate the store image dimensions with customer satisfaction and revealed that price has the strongest influence on satisfaction and product dimensions was second most important on the degree of
satisfaction. Whereas, Silva and Giraldi (2010) identified the effect of store image on customers’ satisfaction level by employing seven store image factors like assortment, convenience, reputation, price, atmosphere, layout and service. The results showed the factor that mostly affected customer satisfaction in the store studied was service followed by convenience, assortment, reputation and price; whereas atmosphere and layout had no effect in this respect. But in both the studies indicated that the atmosphere dimension had no significant influence on customers’ satisfaction.

In a more contemporary research by Kumar and Manjunath (2012) showed positive influence of store image and product and service dimension on customer satisfaction.

Beneke, Adams, and Solomons (2011) found positive and direct statistically significant relationships between store image and store satisfaction for South African super market shoppers. In a succeeding research Dineshkumar and Vikkraman (2012) showed how customer buying decision has changed from unorganized retail outlet towards organized retailing for having store image attributes alike self service, product price, visual merchandising, home delivery and fast checkout services for influencing customer satisfaction.

Store image and Store Loyalty

The ultimate effect of store image on store loyalty has been given importance in voluminous researches (Kunkel and Berry, 1968; Lessig, 1973; Zimmer and Golden, 1988; Bloemer and Ruyter, 1998; Bloemer and Odekerken-Schröder, 2001; Yoo and Chang, 2005; Orth, Mark T. Green, 2009; Shahroudi and Mohammadi, 2012; Imran, Ghani, & Rehman, 2013).

In an empirical study conducted on a departmental store of Switzerland by Bloemer and Ruyter (1998) confirmed that store image has an indirect positive effect on store loyalty through store Satisfaction. Another research on Korean retail market by Yoo and Chang (2005) emphasized on how store image attributes influence store loyalty for different retail format i.e. departmental store and discount store. The research outcome revealed that for departmental store, store loyalty was largely influenced by store atmosphere followed by location, shopping convenience and sales personnel service. In the case of discount store, quality of goods found to have highest influence on store loyalty followed by advertisement, store atmosphere and credit policy. A study by Ulrich R. Orth, Mark T. Green (2009) showed differential effects in how store image elements influenced customer loyalty through trust and satisfaction. Verma & Madan (2011) gave importance for a favorable
store image for increasing satisfaction with the store which in turn increases store loyalty. Shamsher and Hossain (2011) revealed that store image components like service quality, store conveniences, product quality, and availability of new products has positive influence on store loyalty among Bangladeshi shoppers. Whilst, Beneke, Adams, and Solomons (2011) found no direct significant relationships between store image and loyalty for South African super market.

A study by Liason et al. found different image attributes like reputation, information and physical environment proved to have significant influence on customer loyalty. Another study conducted in Hongkong fashion retail stores by Chan and Chan (2008) revealed that whenever the shoppers felt the pleasure of shopping and had a great enjoyment and satisfaction through different merchandise displays available inside the store their shopping tendency naturally increases which in turn influences their repurchasing intention and positive store image perception.

Surprisingly, in a more recent study by Shahroudi and Mohammadi (2012) explored that the direct impact of store image on loyalty was low, however its indirect impact on loyalty through considering customer satisfaction found to have a medium impact. Nonetheless, Imran, Ghanim & Rehman (2013) examined the relationship between store image and store loyalty and indicated that there is a strong correlation between store image and store loyalty. According to the authors customers always hold some image or perception regarding the factors or facilities available in the store. If these customers found themselves satisfied regarding what they were expecting from the store they come again and again for purchasing and also referred other people to buy from that particular store which specified their store loyal behavior.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The retailing practice is going through a radical revolution due to the introduction of new formats for which organized retail is gaining tremendous importance in the recent times. Moreover, with the changing behavioral phenomenon retailers need to concern regarding the lifestyle, preference and demands of consumers which is playing a vital role in the ever changing purchasing perception of consumers. Hence, it becomes important to understand the overall customer perceptions regarding store image that eventually influence customer store choice, purchase intention, store satisfaction and loyalty toward their preferred store.

Literatures discussed above revealed that among the various store image attributes store choice behavior strongly influenced by location
(Arnold et al., 1983; Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999; Jaravaza and Chitando, 2013) and convenience (Tigert, 1983), store environments (Belk, 1975; Markin et al., 1976), reasonable price (Hassan, Mohammad & Bakar, 2010), merchandizing (Gudonaviciene and Alijosiene, 2013) and sales assistance (Dhirup, Mafini and Mathaba, 2013). Likewise, studies showed that purchase intention is stimulated by store image attributes like pleasant store environment and atmospheric cues (Donovan et al., 1994; Schlosser et al., 1998; Kumar et al., 2010), product variety and quality, price (Wu, Yeh and Hsiao, 2011). However, a favorable store image makes the customers revisiting the store by enhancing store satisfaction. Numerous studies discussed on positive and direct effect of store image on store satisfaction (Giese & Cote, 2000; Alves and Raposo, 2007; Beneke, Adams, and Solomons, 2011; Kumar and Manjunath, 2012) which eventually influenced store loyalty (Bloemer and Ruyter, 1998; Yoo and Chang, 2005; Orth, Mark T. Green, 2009; Shamsher and Hossain, 2011; Imran & Ghani & Rehman, 2013).

After reviewing the relevant literature, it can be concluded that without a thorough understanding regarding how store image is influencing the behavior of consumers, retailers stand to lose their customer base and competitive advantage to survive in this highly competitive and dynamic retail market (Visser, Preez & Noordwyk, 2006). Keeping this reality in mind, today’s retailers are offering newer service dimensions to create unique shopping experiences for the customers. In the face of the increasing retail competition the marketing approach should assess consumer perception of store image for formulating effective marketing strategies to create and enhance a favorable store image to influence the overall behavioral pattern of the customers’. This theoretical study, in addition to its contribution to the marketing literature, has important implications for the retail entrepreneurs, professionals and academicians in terms of adopting strategic marketing decisions by expanding the retail portfolio towards a better understanding regarding the importance of store image dimensions and its impact on consumer behavior.

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