2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

We don’t ask customers what they want. They don’t know. Instead we apply our brain power to what they need and will want and make sure we’re there, ready.

Akio Morita

2.1 Introduction
The literature review that was undertaken served to provide a theoretical base in order to develop and justify the research initiative. The following objectives were addressed through the review...

- To understand the role of shoppers buying behaviour in shoppers decision-making.
- To describe the various dimensions of store image and the role store image plays in shaping shoppers’ satisfaction and store loyalty.
- To investigate the role and significance of satisfaction and how it influences store loyalty.

An overview of literature highlighting the importance of store image in consumer behaviour that was studied to address these objectives follows. A review of the dimensions of store image is done to better understand the concept. The relationship between store image and shoppers’ satisfaction level and the store loyalty is discussed. The influence of shopper satisfaction on store loyalty is studied in the final section.

2.2 Shoppers Buying Behaviour
People’s motives for shopping are a function of numerous variables, many of which are unrelated to the actual buying of products. Shopping experience is a utilitarian effort aimed at obtaining needed goods and services as well as hedonic rewards. Literature in marketing and related behavioural sciences suggests a breadth of consumer motives for shopping. The idea that consumers are motivated by more than simply the utilitarian motive to obtain desired items has been acknowledged at least as far back as the 1960s by Howard and Sheth (1969). Their consumer behaviour model, in addition to considering traditional explanatory variables such as needs, brand attitudes, and the impact of shopping behaviour on promotions, also examined less explicitly utilitarian consumer motives such as arousal seeking and symbolic communication. Skinner (1969) identified the basic consumer motives in selecting a supermarket for the retail food industry. His study revealed that six variables: friendliness, selection/assortment, cleanliness, parking,
fast checkout service, and ease of shopping to increase the probability of the shopping trip being pleasant.

Tauber (1972) advanced the idea that shoppers were often motivated by a number of personal and social factors unrelated to the actual need to buy products. He proposed that people shop not just to purchase goods, but to learn about new trends, to make themselves feel better, to gain acceptance with their peers, and simply to divert themselves from life’s daily routine. He identified 11 hidden motives that drive people to the stores and often lead to ‘impulse buys’ among consumers who initially were not planning on buying anything at all.

This included social interaction which consists of a variety of social motives, such as, social interaction, reference group affiliation and communicating with others having similar interests. The information-seeking motive, as proposed by Tauber, included information seeking, comparison, and accessing in a retail context. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) suggested that a traditional emphasis on information processing related to specific product attributes, and resultant focus on what may be termed utilitarian shopping considerations, does not completely explain purchase and consumption behavior. Researchers have identified a segment of consumer ‘market mavens’ who are particularly likely to provide other people with information on obtaining the best values for particular purchases. Individuals scoring highest on the maven scale were found not only to engage in more information search and provide others with more information, but also to enjoy shopping more (Feick and Price, 1987; Slama and Williams, 1990; Belch et al., 2005).

Thompson et al. (1990) similarly observed hedonic and utilitarian shopping motives coexisting among consumers, although one mode tended to dominate some consumers. Schindler (1989) suggested that while some consumers may be strongly influenced by the utilitarian benefits of obtaining a valued product at a good price, ‘ego-expressive’ desires to bolster one’s self-concept as a smart shopper may be a stronger motivator. He did not formally test this hypothesis. Numerous researchers (e.g., Feick and Price, 1987; Lichtenstein et al., 1990; Schindler, 1989; Slama and Williams, 1990) have focused on the feelings of mastery experienced by consumers who feel responsible for being able to obtain good deals. It is evident that consumers often experience an involvement in the shopping process which far exceeds a detached effort to obtain desired products in an
efficient and cost-effective manner. This experience may be primarily recreational in nature, or may be motivated more in terms of ego-involvement in one’s shopping skills. In the retail shopping experience, a recreational shopper is seen to be one who enjoys shopping and appreciates the process and enjoyment of shopping. From the work of Tauber (1972), Rohm and Swaminathan (2004) identified two concepts of retail shopping motives. On one hand, retail shopping experience refers to the enjoyment of shopping as a leisure-based activity and second, it taps into aspects of the enjoyment of shopping for its own sake.

It is argued as well that, in many instances, consumers may desire to obtain a higher level of experiential consumption relative to utilitarian consumption (Kim, 2001). Shopping enjoyment is an enduring individual trait that influences enduring shopping style and has previously been associated with transient emotional responses (Dawson et al., 1990; Koufaris et al., 2002). That is the underlying and enduring shopping enjoyment trait impacts transient emotions that may arise during particular shopping episodes.

Positive emotions such as excitement, pleasure, and satisfaction have also been identified as significant determinants of consumer shopping behaviour (patronage, amount of time and money spent in the store). The importance of the emotional element for successful retailing has been evidenced in the emphasis on emotional retailing (Kim et al. 2002). Regarding the emotional responses of consumers to the textile/apparel product offerings at stores, Kim et al. (2002) found that consumers in Shanghai gave higher ratings to utilitarian responses, i.e. efficient, timesaving, convenient (4 on the five-point semantic differential scale) than to hedonic responses, i.e. excited, surprised, interested (3.5). Korean consumers rated utilitarian and hedonic responses approximately equally (3.6 and 3.5 respectively). This result reflects how consumers at discount stores in the two country markets responded to their present textile/apparel offerings at the stores. It was also suggested that satisfying shoppers in the discount store format with utilitarian attributes (quality, price, variety of products) of textile/apparel products is critically important to eliciting positive hedonic emotions (e.g., surprised, interested) as well as utilitarian emotions (e.g., efficient, convenient). Consumers in China who generally believe that shopping is very important to their life rated high in both utilitarian and hedonic responses. Also, Chinese consumers who go shopping for the purpose of getting away from daily routines (i.e. diversion) exhibited stronger utilitarian responses. In other words, shopping
at a discount store is an important leisure activity to the Chinese consumer. However, Korean consumers’ responses to textile/apparel products were not affected by either individual consumers shopping involvement or shopping motives. In China, the shopping excitement consumers experienced at discount stores was positively affected by store ambiance, facility convenience, brand/fashion, consumer shopping involvement, and socialization shopping motives. Haanpa (2005) made a comparison of different motives and shopping styles. Her study revealed that Finnish consumers were very functionally oriented; they valued ease and convenience and very tangible elements of shopping, such as having the possibility to buy alimentary concurrently when going shopping for other purposes than daily consumer goods. The factor dimensions produced with principal component analysis formed two experiential and gratification type factors, labeled as Hedonistic and Recreational motives. The other two factors were named as Economic and Convenience motive. The analysis of variance revealed that there were, to a certain extent, differences among different consumer groups. Consumers that were demanding enjoyable experiences in their shopping trips were typically young females especially when it came to shopping are hedonic and escapist elements. Young consumers looked for interesting shopping experiences that were a mixture of social and emotional needs and wants and related to interaction and communication with other people. Parsons (2002) in a follow-up study reported that many of the hidden motivations uncovered by Tauber 30 years prior are relevant to internet shopping today. His findings revealed that online shoppers are commonly driven by personal motives such as diversion, self-gratification, and learning about new trends; and social motives, including social experiences outside the home, communications with others having a similar interest, peer group attraction, and status and authority.

Eastlick and Feinberg (1999) and Lennon et al. (2003) found that motive scores were often higher among women than among men. Eastlick and Feinberg (1999) found a negative relationship between education and shopping motivations. Additionally, the researchers found that the motive scores were often higher among women than among men shoppers. Research by Lennon et al. (2003) sought to assess consumers’ motivations for shopping from television shopping channels; to determine if motivations differed as a function of clothing purchase frequency when controlling for personal characteristics. Respondents were motivated to shop from television due to convenience, the amount of information available on the shopping channels, and the return policies. Regular apparel shoppers
agreed that they were somewhat motivated by the prices offered on television. Ray and Walker (2004) reported that college students’ motivation to purchase from non-store based retailers was not related to personal characteristics (age, gender, employment, etc.).

The foregoing review illustrates that shopping motives for people vary from being utilitarian to purely hedonic. They are also expected to operate simultaneously in a particular shopping situation.

Birtwistle et al. (1999) state that defining market segments through behavioural aspects supply a more concrete foundation for a marketing strategy. By understanding the characteristics of the segments, effective communication can be developed. Du Preez (2001) chose demographics, family life cycle, lifestyle, cultural consciousness, patronage behaviour, shopping orientation, and place of distribution to form clusters of female apparel shoppers. Some variables chosen by other researchers to investigate shopping behaviour were information sources, situational influences, shopping orientation, product-specific variables, media usage, store-specific variables, socio-psychological attributes, clothing involvement, demographics, socio-cultural, clothing store dimensions, clothing orientation, psychographics, personal characteristics and self-concept (Gutman & Mills, 1982, Visser et al., 1996, Shim & Bickle, 1994; Visser & Du Preez, 1996). Three broad groups of variables most often included in store image research, namely demographics, lifestyle and shopping orientation, will be discussed briefly.

2.2.1 Demographics
Demographics include characteristics such as language, educational level, occupation, income, age, geographic location, family structure, ethnic background, marital status and gender (Hawkins et al., 2004; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). Demographics are objective and measurable characteristics and are therefore likely to be used in consumer descriptions. Demographics influence consumer behaviour by directly influencing consumer attributes, for example values and decision-making styles (Hyllegard, Eckman, Descals & Borja, 2005). Furthermore, education influences people’s occupations and their occupations greatly determine their income. Bellenger, Robertson and Greenberg (1977) found that the consumers’ level of education also influences shopping centre patronage factors as it relates to store image.
Consumers’ occupation and education influence preferences in products, media and activities, while income provides the necessary means for consumption behaviour (Choi & Park, 2006; Hawkins et al., 2007; Vakratsas, 1998). Paulins and Geistfeld (2003) focused on identifying attributes that affect store image preference. They found that consumers are more critical of store image attributes when they have a higher education, but that consumers from different income levels tend to perceive store image similarly. The influence of age on store image perception is frequently investigated. Lumpkin (1985) and Visser and Du Preez (1996) studied the needs of elderly or mature consumers and their findings concluded that age groups within the elderly market differed regarding their preference for store image attributes. This, however, was contradicted by Moye and Giddings (2002) and Oates, Shufeldt and Vaugt (1996) who indicated those elderly consumers’ perceptions of store image do not differ significantly. Furthermore, a qualitative study of large-size female apparel consumers by Janse van Noordwyk (2002) indicated that the perceived importance of store attributes differs by age. Therefore it is apparent that age influences customers’ perception of store image. Demographic variables in isolation cannot provide a complete picture of the consumer. Studied in isolation, demographics hamper the segmentation process, while demographical characteristics such as age, income and employment status can be misleading. A person’s biological age is of less consequence than his/her psychological age, according to Joyce and Lambert (1996). Furthermore, even though income can be tied to spending behaviour, it reveals very little about consumer’s personal interest, health or discretionary time (Oates et al., 1996). Consumers’ lifestyle is therefore a necessary variable when attempting to understand consumer behaviour.

2.2.2 Lifestyle

The term psychographics is sometimes used interchangeably with lifestyle (Shim & Bickle, 1994). This could be misleading, depending on how researchers prefer to structure their focus. Psychographics is ‘…closely aligned with psychological research, especially personality and attitude measurement’, according to Schiffman and Kanuk (2007, p. 60). Psychographic measurement is a composite of a person’s interests, activities and opinions, while lifestyle entails this and more, according to Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) and Hawkins et al. (2004). ‘Lifestyle tends to focus on broad cultural trends in society or on needs and values thought to be associated with
consumer behaviour (culture, social class, reference group, social performance, family and household life cycle and time utilisation)’ (Kleinhans, 2003, p.14). Visser et al. (1996) state that psychographics and demographics alone are unable to sufficiently explore consumers’ characteristics, and are therefore inadequate to typify consumers when applied in isolation; thus lifestyle should be included. Lifestyle focuses on actions within a social context. Fox (1989) states that lifestyle is a combination of perceptible (activities, interests, demographics, social class and family orientation) and non-perceptible (needs and motives, values, personality, attitude and opinion) variables. Huddleston, Ford and Mahoney (1990) define lifestyle as a way of living shaped by values and experiences. Lifestyle is a large part of self-image. Crask and Reynolds (1978) included lifestyle in their study on self-image and store image congruency. Self-image therefore indirectly affects store image preference (Mills, 1985). Osman (1993) confirmed this in stating that customers’ perception of store image dimensions depends on their lifestyle. According to Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006), consumers’ lifestyle influence their needs and attitudes, thus it simultaneously affects purchase behaviour. Through understanding lifestyle, retailers can also understand consumer preferences (Kleinhans, 2003).

2.2.3 Shopping Orientation
Shim and Kotsiopulos (1992, p. 50) define shopping orientation as, ‘...a shopping-specific lifestyle, which encompasses shopping activities, interests, and opinions, [regarding clothing] and reflects a view of shopping as a complex social, recreational, economic phenomenon’. Another study to research shopping orientation was conducted by Gutman and Mills (1982), who felt that it best leads to understanding consumers. Personal characteristics, namely social class, lifestyle and family life cycle, play an important role in predicting shopping orientation (Shim & Kotsiopulos, 1992). Shopping orientation is viewed as a good indicator of consumers’ choice of store (Shim & Bickle, 1994). Osman (1993) considered shopping orientation groups according to those identified by Stone (1954) (economic shoppers, personalizing shoppers, the ethical shopper and apathetic shoppers), and found the differences according to shopping orientation crucial to store image preference. Moye and Giddings (2002) also identified three groups according to shopping orientation and concluded that shopping orientation not only influences preference, but also the importance placed on store image attributes. Furthermore, Moye and Kincade (2002) confirmed previous studies and
reported that, according to their study, all the clusters placed more importance on lay-out than on aesthetic dimensions. Moye and Giddings (2002) found an indirect relationship between store image and demographics, finding shopping orientation to be the mediator. Shim and Kotsiopulos (1992) tested a patronage model that included both the variables shopping orientation and store image; the results of their study once again indicated the crucial role that shopping orientation plays in predicting the importance of store image attributes. Therefore it can be concluded that shopping orientation is an important variable in store image research.

2.3 The significance of store image for business

_Few retail stores can be all things to all people…_ (James et al., 1976, p. 25)

As early as the fifties, Martineau (1958, p. 50) stressed the importance of competitive advantage in retailing. He emphasized the development of a ‘… sharp character’ for a store and noted that, in the absence thereof, the store/retailer will not be the consumers’ first choice, and will end up being a mere alternative choice. Corporations build a sharp character by defining themselves in the minds of consumers and differentiating themselves from the competition. This goal is achieved through strong image building, with a corporate image/identity, brand image and brand positioning, as well as market segmentation. Corporate identity is part of the wider aspect of corporate branding. A corporate brand is formed through interplay between corporate strategy, corporate culture and corporate identity (Visser et al., 2006). Corporate strategy comprises the core values of the brand, philosophy and mission, which are driven by top management. Corporate culture manifests through the meanings and values that the employees of the organization hold and use (Stuart, 1999). Corporate image results from the corporate strategy and culture that are communicated to the stakeholders. The corporate communication mix projects the corporate identity; through this the corporate image is created. The perception of this image of the corporation by different stakeholders is what defines it (Janse van Noordwyk, in press). Van Riel and Balmer (1997, p. 340) explain that the identity is made public through ‘…_behaviour, communications, as well as symbolism to the internal and external audiences_’, which incorporate the identity mix.
Corporate identity is a mix of characteristics that organizations possess as an entity (Gylling & Lindberg-Repo, 2005). Corporate image is the presentation of this identity and is intentionally constructed to elicit certain specific responses and reactions. Morin (2006, p. 8) stated that ‘Executives recognize the importance and value of defining their business position and corporate identity to reinforce their strategic goals that build and maintain their brands and guide their businesses in today’s global marketplace’. A critical finding is that managing corporate identity is the key to a company’s success (Gylling & Lindberg-Repo, 2005). Corporate image must provide a sense of coherence and support various parts of the organization with the strength of the entire organization’s distinguishing attributes. Consistency and congruency between the different vehicles that communicate the unique organization’s image is crucial to the successful communication of a corporate image (Abratt, 1989; Bernstein, 1984; Olins, 1978). This ensures clear differentiation from the competition. The various vehicles of outward communication of the corporate identity is therefore of particular importance (Markwick & Fill, 1997; Stuart, 1999).

In communicating its corporate identity, an organization must be positioned in the mind of the consumer market as the retailer that fulfils consumer needs unlike other retailers. Design, branding and identity are the expressions of an effective positioning strategy (Abratt, 1989; Morin, 2006). Newman and Patel (2004) report that poor levels of performance could result from ineffective positioning and indicate failure with regard to the positioning strategy. To maintain the positioning strategy, the communication strategy has to be controlled by management. This allows the organization to define how it wants to be perceived by the stakeholders. It encompasses distinguishing characteristics and unifying attributes (Morin, 2006). There are two main positioning concerns. The first is consumer positioning, which concentrates on portraying how the product fulfils the consumers’ needs and values. The second is competitive positioning; this is the way in which the company differentiates its corporate image from that of the competition (Assael, 1992). Thus, a retailer seeks to position itself as a separate entity from the other retailers, but also to fulfill the specific needs of customers. Retailers should strive to achieve both simultaneously.

Corporate image is a result of all the combined exposure that people have to a company, including experiences, beliefs, feelings, knowledge and impressions (Stern et
The corporate image is therefore a sum of all the corporation’s cues by which people recognize and differentiate it from the competition (Abratt, 1989; Bernstein, 1984). Schladermundt (1960) noted that all the elements of an identity should be instantly recognizable. Recognition needs to be assured by consistency of cues, which should support each other (Abratt, 1989). Recognition brings familiarity, and familiarity breeds favourability, according to Bernstein (1984). Favourability is the disposition that an organization strives to attain among stakeholders. All variables affecting stakeholders’ experience of the corporate identity act as a potential vehicle to portray image and affect the stakeholders’ view of the organization (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). The subtle interplay of the integrated communication and corporate culture is one way to create a strong corporate image that establishes a unique position among other retailers. Only if the identity permeates the whole organization, can communication conveying corporate identity is successful (Schlegelmilch & Pollach, 2005). This is achieved by taking a holistic approach through the integration of what is internal to the organization (strategy and culture) and an external focus on the needs of the market. Communication strategies should attempt to create a favourable attitude towards an organization from its various stakeholders. Corporate communication strategies therefore serve as a way to steer stakeholders, but specifically consumer buying behaviour. In order to fulfill consumer needs and steer consumers’ behaviour, a company has to understand its market. According to Birtwistle, Clarke and Freathy, (1999, p. 246) ‘It is believed that the understanding of group characteristics is essential for marketing communication’. Market segmentation is the process of dividing the market into subsets with common characteristics. These groups show similar needs and homogenous consumer preferences that create individuals’ world-view and form their motivations (Green & Krieger, 1991; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007; Wright, 1996). The Market is divided into smaller portions with similar characteristics and needs and this is a market segment (Hawkins et al., 2004). The most prevalent consumer variables used to divide the market into significant segments are demographics, psychographics, lifestyle, shopping orientation, economic characteristics and personality. Thus, by segmenting the market, a homogeneous target market can be the focus when communicating the corporate image. The basic premise is that the more marketers understand about their target market, the more effectively they can communicate to them and serve them (Kucukemiroglu, 1997).
Bearden (1977) mentioned the influence of store image as 'consumers choose stores they feel close to their self image,' and he tried to find out store attributes that affect store choice and loyalty for downtown and suburban shopping centers. Hansen and Deutscher (1978) showed that the store image and its attributes make an important role in their choice of retail stores in his study on image attributes. In their model of the process of store choice, Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1990) claimed that purchasers' distinguished acceptable stores from unacceptable stores in the process of comparing their evaluation standards with perceived image attributes, and that 'store image is a variable that consumers depend on in their choice of stores.' James, Durand and Dreves (1976) found that image attributes influence consumers' perception and attitudes and they are directly related to sales profits. Schiffman, Dash and Dillion (1977) focused on description of image existing in the competing types of retailers and explained that store image attributes made an important role in the choice of the store type.

Hildebrandt (1988) said, ‘major success factor in retail industry is store image and measurement model of store image that conceptualize the perception of store image attributes such as price level is used to forecast marketing performance as a business success measure.’ And he analyzed the relation between store image and store image attributes using casual relationship model and found again that store image was a cause variable of store performance. Explaining the store image emphasizing design part, Levy and Weitz (1996) claimed, ‘Store tell customers with all visible outside factors and real set-up structure of facilities make most of purchase possible.’ Their claim means that purchases are resulted from the stimulus of store image to customers. From above, we can say that store image attributes can be an important explanatory variable in choice of store.

In their study on supermarket customers, Stanley and Sewall (1976) used MCI model that added image distance calculated from multidimensional analytical tool to Huff model and got the result that stores with favourable images could attract remote customers and that such images lessened location uneasiness. Nevin and Houston (1980) used Huff’s stochastic model in their study on the importance of store image as a factor of attracting customers in competitive shopping areas. They showed the development and management of favourable store image was one of the most important abilities of retailers in the market position. In addition, they emphasized the role of store image since store
image was considered important in the development of marketing strategies to determine shopping areas. In their study on the segmentation of retail markets based on store image, Steenkamp and Wedel (1991) mentioned that the consideration of store image made an important role in the development of marketing strategies of both individual and chain stores development of marketing strategies of both individual and chain stores and shopping centers. Mason, Mayor, and Ezell (1991) argued that store image was important to determine to buy whether in downtown shops or in a shopping center after consumers decided to purchase. And they added that it was important for marketers to know how the consumers felt retail stores to develop marketing strategies of retailing to attract them.

Consumers can choose from an enormous amount of outlets with similar products in the retail environment. Quality products and services are easily copied or seen as a given, therefore other methods should be identified to differentiate them from the competition and gain supremacy in the mind of the consumer. The particular image that a store conveys might therefore be the key determining factor when a consumer chooses a store (Varley, 2005). Differentiation should be established through focusing resources and attention on establishing retailer brands, and by aligning all the activities of the company with the values of a specific market (Lewis & Hawksley, 1990; Varley, 2005). Differentiation has become the main approach to brand positioning due to strong competition and a saturated market. The various factors leading to the development of differentiation strategies based on image and identity are described by Markwick and Fill (1995, p. 396) as:

- Need differentiation because of increased activity and rivalry
- Shortening of product life-cycles
- (De)merger and diversification/consolidation activities
- High rates of media cost inflation
- Redefinition of marketing in terms of developing/ maintaining relationships
- Increasing recognition of the value of integrated marketing communications
- Finer approaches to segmentation
- Increased incidence of crisis situations impacting on organizations.

James et al. (1976) found that different segments of the consumer market behave differently toward the same store image dimension. This was confirmed in a study
by Turley and Milliman (2000). It is therefore important that a specific market segment be kept in mind when developing a store image. However, with the growth in speciality retailing, researchers suggest that retailers need to fully understand the role of store image to satisfy a homogenous market and create a differential advantage (Simpson & Thorpe, 1995). ‘Competitive brands will generally not be bought by notably different kinds of consumers...’ (Hammond, Ehrenberg & Goodhardt, 1996, p. 40). No strong evidence of market segmentation between competitive brands exist, implying that consumers of one brand are likely to buy the same product type in a different brand (Hammond et al., 1996; Wright, 1996). Sullivan, Savitt, Zheng and Cui (2002) found that matters were complicated further by similar consumers shopping at different retail store formats. A company should therefore not only know its market but differentiate its image to be able to sell successfully to the same target market as its competition (Wright, 1996). Kucukemiroglu (1997, p.472) notes that ‘The success of a marketing model inherently lies in researchers’ ability to come up with variables that really distinguish [retailers’] performance in the marketplace’. Consumers’ store choice is based on their attitude toward the marketing mix, as well as their internal motivations, needs and values (Kim & Jin, 2001). Birtwistle and Shearer (2001) state that store image is retailers’ most important communication tool when communicating the corporate image. This is supported by Burt and Carralero-Encinas (2000), who argued that many retailers find their competitive advantage in developing a strong store image. Store image, a combination of dimensions and their attributes found to be important to consumers, should be matched internally to the corporate identity and externally to the target market to achieve satisfaction (Kim & Jin, 2001). The store image imitates and enforces the positioning and branding of a company, as decided in the market strategy, and is often the key to gaining market share (Burt & Carralero-Encinas, 2000). Store image therefore is a vital part of marketing communication and corporate identity representation. In this section, the role of store image within the communication of the corporate identity was looked at according to objective one. It was evident that store image is a vital communication tool in building the corporate image and differentiating retailers from competition. The target market is affected by consumer variables which affect store image and store image, in turn, affects consumer buying behaviour.
Table 2.1. Major Themes of Image Research in Retailing*

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<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>SAMPLE STUDIES</th>
<th>FINDINGS</th>
<th>IMPLICATIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. Comparative image analysis</td>
<td>Lessing (1973) Kunkel &amp; Berry (1968)</td>
<td>Consumer store images and store loyalties are related</td>
<td>By comparing our store’s image with those of competitors, we can improve our competitive advantage</td>
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<td>6. Using a store image by different constituents as a diagnostic tool</td>
<td>Samli &amp; Lincoln (1989)</td>
<td>Store image is perceived differently by management and by customers.</td>
<td>Discrepancy between the store customers and store management is a strong diagnostic tool.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Classifying different degrees of incongruence</td>
<td>Samli et al. (1998)</td>
<td>Customer-management images are classified into six key categories of incongruence.</td>
<td>Six categories of incongruence provide a powerful prioritization system for management action.</td>
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*Although a number of studies cut across more than one theme the authors classified them on the basis of their main focus.
(Samli et al., 1998, p. 29)

We can say that store image is an important factor in the choice of the store and it can be a cause in the formation of true loyalty. And it can be a major cause variable for future performance and success that raises purchases of consumers and profits and thus a valuable asset for retail marketing management.
2.4 Store image

Clearly defining the underlying structure of the construct enables the researcher to delineate what is included and excluded from the consequent operationalisation of the store image construct in empirical research’. The store image definition and underlying structure will therefore be discussed in the following sections.

2.4.1 Defining store image

Assael (1992, p. 633) states that ‘... measurement of store image assists retailers in determining their competitive strengths and weaknesses.’ Despite the important role of store image in predicting retailer success, the complex process through which an image is cultivated poses special managerial problems. Numerous attempts have been made to define and measure store image. In order to measure store image, it is necessary to examine the literature to define the construct. Images presented through logos, displays, a presence or even manner can constitute the soul or personality behind a company. ‘We are left wondering whether the term means everything to everybody – that is, nothing to all’, observed Stern et al. (2001, p. 202). The absence of a clear definition of the term image also influences the definition of store image, and hampers the construction of statements or generalizations (Stern et al., 2001). Characteristically ‘image’ has been treated in the literature as an intangible ‘something’, a vague, untouchable, forbidden and virtually immeasurable phenomenon (Berry, 1969). Burns (1992) consequently points out that no universal definition of store image has been accepted. With the abovementioned difficulties, it is understandable that research on store image has sometimes resulted in more questions than answers.

Martineau (1958, p.47) first defined store image as ‘...the way in which the store is defined in the shopper’s mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes’. Lindquist (1974-1975, p.31) concluded that store image is ‘...complex by nature and consists of a combination of tangible or functional factors and intangible or psychological factors that a consumer perceives to be present’. Functional attributes can be seen as tangible elements, such as merchandise selection, price range, and store layout, while psychological qualities determine how a store makes someone feel. James et al. (1976, p.25) simply defined store image as ‘... a set of attitudes based upon evaluation of those store attributes deemed important by
consumers’. The perceptual process is therefore important to store image studies. Minshall (1994) acknowledged that store image constitutes cognitive and affective components. Kunkel and Berry (1968) investigated store image through the perspective of learning theory, which led to the results that the action (shopping behaviour) in a specific environment (store image) can be learned. Most behaviour is learned. The positive learned behaviour for a retail environment could possibly be browsing or purchasing. Store image is therefore the discriminative stimulus that creates an expectation for reinforcement after buying behaviour has been exercised (Kunkel & Berry, 1968). A discriminative stimulus comprises elements that reinforce an action. Berry (1969) further explained that the effect of a specific stimulus is determined by the individual’s personal variables. James et al. (1976) took the aforementioned definitions into consideration and stated that store image is a set of attitudes in evaluation of those store image dimensions that customers view as important. Bearing in mind that attitude is a specific phenomenon created through experience; store image is influenced by purchase experience, friends’ experience, exchange and advertisements (Chang & Tu, 2005; James et al., 1976). Dichter (1985, p.75) argued that ‘[an image]...describes not individual traits or qualities, but the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others’. The view that consumers form impressions about the whole store, therefore gaining an overall impression, was shared by Darley and Lim (1999). The nature of store image viewed as a whole can be explained through Gestalt theory. Gestalt theory explains that certain consumers cannot discriminate between the variables that form the whole. Another aspect is the ‘halo-effect’, which occurs when the perception of one factor influences the evaluation of the whole, which could lead to constant over- or under-evaluation. This is the reason for focusing research on the congruity of communication, which ensures a correct and positive evaluation of the whole (Stern & Schroeder, 1994). Joyce and Lambert (1996, p. 24) reported store image to be ‘...the way the store is defined in the shopper’s mind’. According to Stern et al. (2001), an image is thus more than the sum of its parts. ‘If store image is to be seen as a consumer’s perceptions of store attributes, it will form as a result of experience with the store’ (Klein hans, 2003, p. 42). Over the years, different authors have agreed that store image does, however, comprise of distinct dimensions (Lindquist, 1974/75; Martineau, 1958; Moye & Giddings, 2002; Thang & Tan, 2003; Visser et al., 2006). These dimensions include both tangible/functional and intangible/psychological factors perceived in store image (Lindquist, 1974-1975). It
was further indicated that these dimensions can be sub-divided into attributes. It is imperative to take cognizance of these findings to enhance the accuracy and comprehension of the store image construct and to clarify it for operational purposes. A few of the major definition of store image are presented in table 2.2.

We found that there are differences of definitions of store image according to scholars. But we can say that store image is an overall attitude of a consumer to the store, its attributes means various things, and each store has a relative location in the consumer’s mind.

**Table 2.2 Definition of Store Image**

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<thead>
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<th>Scholars</th>
<th>Definition of store image</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kunkel &amp; Berry (1968)</td>
<td>Store image is built up through experience and totally conceptualized or expected strengthening that urge consumers to purchase at the specified store.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxenfeldt (1974)</td>
<td>Store image is a complex of attributes that consumers feel about the store and it is more than a simple sum of objective individual attributes since parts of attributes interact in consumers’ minds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimmer &amp; Golden (1988)</td>
<td>Store image means a complex in total dimensions of store attributes that consumer feel and a complex means that store image consists of various attributes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berman &amp; Evans (1995)</td>
<td>Store image consists of functional and emotional attributes, these are organized in the perceptual structures of purchasers, and the structures are expectation on overall policies and executions of retailers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2.4.2 Store image structure**

The dimensions and properties of store image are depending on the purpose and objects of studies. Consumers make store images based on advertisement, commodities, transmission of words, and shopping experience (Assael 1992). Martineau (1958) indicated that store image consists of layout and architecture, symbols and colour, advertising and sales personnel. But all the researchers agree that store image is intrinsically multi-dimensional. Kunkel and Berry (1968) asked open ended questions on the store images to customers of Phoenix department store in Arizona and got 3,737 statements. They derived 43 individual image dimensions and then categorized them as 12 categories. Lindquist (1974-75) reviewed 26 previous studies on store images and
surveyed the opinions of famous scholars. He summarized major constituents of store images from 19 researches’ outputs and concluded that product, convenience, and service are the most important factors. His summary of the literature and through reviewing 19 studies includes…

1. merchandise (including the sub-dimensions of quality, selection or assortment, styling or fashion, guarantees and pricing),
2. service (including the sub-dimensions of service-general, salesclerk service, self-service, ease of return, credit, delivery and phone orders),
3. clientele (including the sub-dimensions of social class appeal, self-image congruency and store personnel),
4. physical facilities (including the sub-dimensions of physical facilities, store layout, shopping ease and architecture),
5. convenience (including the sub-dimensions of convenience, locational convenience and parking),
6. promotion (including the sub-dimensions of sales promotion, advertising or display, advertising, trading stamps and symbols and colours),
7. store atmosphere (including the sub-dimensions of atmosphere or congeniality),
8. institutional (including the sub-dimensions of conservative/modern, reputation and reliability), and
9. post-transaction satisfaction. James et al. (1976) reduced these to only six dimensions, namely, assortment, personnel, atmosphere, service, quality and price.

Hansen and Deutscher (1977-1978) systematically classified components of store images. They collected data of 485 respondents who were customers of department and general stores in order to investigate relative importance of store images for various segmented consumers. They determined 41 image attributes and then ranked them using means of 10 points scales. They used three-level classification scheme; attributes are the narrowly and really defined constructs, components are sets of similar constructs, and dimensions are sets of components. In that way they grouped 41 attributes into 20 components, and then grouped them again into 9 dimensions. Other studies on the store image components include James, Durand and Dreves (1976), Bearden (1977), Nevin and Houston (1980), Jain and Etgar (1983) and Berman and Evans (1995).
Other examples of dimensions that have been used in previous research are: convenience, service, advertising, private store brands, sales personnel, and store music perception. (Baker et al., 2002; Moye & Kincade, 2002; Paulins & Geistfield, 2003; Richardson, Jain & Dick, 1996). From the above, it is evident that not only is there no clear definition for the construct but there is inconsistency regarding the terminology and groupings considered for store image attributes and/or dimensions.

After an extensive review of literature elaborated above, we derived 11 components of store images as illustrated in table 2.3. The way in which these store attributes are perceived by stakeholders creates the store image. The following section will provide further details regarding these dimensions.

2.4.3 Store image dimensions

*Buyers respond to the total product…* (Kotler, 1973-1974, p. 48)

Visser et al. (1996) found that store dimensions are key factors in determining shopping behaviour. By developing and maintaining store image dimensions that are attractive to the target market, a sustainable competitive advantage can be developed (Birtwistle & Shearer, 2001). For the purpose of the current research, the store image dimensions to be studied have been chosen as illustrated in table 2.3 and discussed below.

*Merchandise*

The attributes of merchandise that are included in the current study are merchandise assortment, merchandise style, merchandise price and merchandise quality. Thang and Tan (2002) included selection and assortment, styling and fashion as attributes, while Birtwistle et al. (1999) included assortment, merchandise quality and merchandise style. According to Collins-Dodd and Lindley (2002), as well as Thang & Tan (2002), merchandise is considered the most important factor contributing to consumer store preference. This view is supported by Birtwistle and Shearer (2000), Collins-Dodd and Lindley (2003), Sullivan et al. (2002) and North et al. (2003), who found that merchandise has a significant influence on brand perception and store choice across consumer segments. Brand and product assortment are part of the assortment strategies followed to satisfy consumer needs and influence brand
perception. Consumers tend to seek stores with a greater assortment of merchandise to satisfy their needs (Sullivan et al., 2002). But brand assortment is also a strategy to build a store’s image through developing a private brand label (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004). According to Ailawadi and Keller (2004), the consumer segment most likely to buy private brand labels are price sensitive, of middle income, and educated. This then indicates that merchandise strategies should be formulated on the basis of target market demographics, as it influences consumer preference and patronage behaviour.

Customers’ perception is that the private label’s quality is usually higher than that of other labels and this positively influences their perception of the store image. Vahie and Paswan (2006) reported the contrary, though, stating that store atmosphere and quality will also influence the perception of a private label brand’s quality. Congruence between the quality associated with a store and the quality of a private label brand will favourably influence the emotional effect of private label brands. The customers’ perception of store image is situation specific and the selection of merchandise can overshadow the positive effect of other attributes (due to its importance to the apparel retail industry). A single visit to a store where a consumer may meet with unsatisfactory style could dis/confirm a consumer’s perception and instantly influence the perception of store image (Newman & Patel, 2004). Erdem et al. (1999) state that consumers who attach greater value to personal gratification would be more inclined to shop at a store with a wide selection of merchandise, whereas Huddleston et al. (1990) found a relationship between the lifestyle characteristics of mature female consumers and merchandise. Hu and Jasper (2006) concluded that a store with more social cues created an even higher favourable preference toward merchandise. Customers’ lifestyle qualities form part of social cues. The research findings illustrate the importance of linking merchandise with the chosen target segment. This is corroborated by Paulins and Geistfeld (2003, p. 375), who have remarked that ‘Stores losing touch with their customers through inappropriate merchandising selections will lose customers’.

Promotion

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) focuses on building a clear position and image through integrated marketing, with advertising being an important channel (Kliatchko, 2005). Sales incentives, displays and advertising are attributes of promotion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Content of Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Merchandise</strong></td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Excellence of quality relative to other stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Excellence of quality relative to price.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overall excellence of quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Low price relative to other stores</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reasonable price relative to product.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overall lowness of product prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assortment</td>
<td>Availability of new (fashionable) products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Variety of brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Variety of product designs and colours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Variety of kinds of products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overall availability of various brands and kind of products to choose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promotion</strong></td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Frequency of sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scope of sales product</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provision of new product information</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Invitation of cultural events and special sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sending cards for birthday or anniversary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of gifts events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Placement of right catalogues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Variety of gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits of store credit cards (long credit and mileage)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Information provision of advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Usefulness of shopping plan of advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Appeal of advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence of advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convenience</strong></td>
<td>Convenience of shopping</td>
<td>Easy movement within the store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Easy search of wanted goods</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Possibility of blanket purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overall convenience of shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Store facility</strong></td>
<td>Convenience of location</td>
<td>Easy entrance and exit to parking lot</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connection to public transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Proximity to home and work place</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Availability to free parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Store service</strong></td>
<td>Store facility</td>
<td>Easy use of physical facilities at the store (escalators, elevators and baby carts)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Well assorted rest area (snack corner, toilet, coffee shop, chairs)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clean in and out facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salesperson service</td>
<td>Kindness of sales persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assistance of sales person on product related information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provision of new information by sales persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Affirmative action-solutions of complaints to salesperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credit service</td>
<td>Variety of credit card accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Easy return and exchange of goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Possibility of money return in the case of impossibility of return or exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Store atmosphere</strong></td>
<td>Store atmosphere</td>
<td>Happiness of shopping atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relaxation of shopping atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent presentation and decoration of products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Luxurious atmosphere of lighting, colour and facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Store brand</strong></td>
<td>Store brand</td>
<td>High class image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High brand name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dimensions of promotions form a part of IMC. However, promotion does not only
form a part of IMC; by incorporating promotion into the IMC strategy the gap between promotion and sales can be eliminated, thereby increasing profit (Smith, Gopalakrishna & Chatterjee, 2006). The goal of IMC is to build a stronger brand and increase sales through the influence of consumers. Promotions are a precondition of brand recognition and enhancement, which influence sales (Ratnatunga & Ewing, 2005). One of the major changes in marketing includes new technology in which advertising is consumer focused to nurture customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kliatchko, 2005). The promotions dimension is therefore a significant tool in the IMC process because of its proximity to consumers and its direct influence on consumer behaviour. Although promotion is viewed as a positive stimulus by management, a study of patronage motives and product purchase patterns found that special events/exhibits and promotions were among the least mentioned motives for product purchase, and were therefore indicated as less important that other store image attributes (Yavas, 2001). This is in contrast to other research. Paulins and Geistfeld (2003) reported a distinct difference between highly educated and less educated consumers in the response to advertising. The fact that educated consumers are more selective makes them more difficult to entice through advertising. Thang and Tan (2003) found that promotions have a significant influence on consumer preference. Consumers have to be constantly attracted by advertising to stimulate interest and create store awareness. But consumers are exposed to a large amount of information and advertising messages; therefore an integrated and consistent marketing communication strategy is critical for strengthening the message which marketers strive to send. A strong communication strategy is vital in competing in the marketplace and in managing the corporate identity, while promotions provide the key in conveying information to consumers (Markwick & Fill, 1995). Lincoln and Samli (1981) assessed the influence of actually promoting store image attributes. They found that consumers who had seen the relevant advertisements gave higher image scores than the consumers who did not see the advertisements. Du Frene, Engelland, Lehman and Pearson (2005) found that consumer-centric advertising through interactive e-mailing changed consumers’ attitudes towards the brand, which, in turn, affected intention to purchase. According to Sen, Block and Chandran (2002), displays do not hold high incentive value for consumers, but rather act to make customers aware of the possible purchase and usage of the merchandise. Window displays, for example, relay information before a client enters a store and contribute to store entry and product purchase. It is evident
that the expenditure on promotions should be viewed as a contributing factor to building store image and subsequent profit.

Convenience

Convenience is a vital part of society at present. With expanding internet facilities and individuals spending more time at work and less time at home, time spent on shopping is an expensive resource. Chowdhary (1999) notes that convenience is a specifically desirable characteristic for older consumers. Hyllegard et al. (2005), however, found that convenience was less important to consumers aged 56 to 88, but very important to the age groups between 18 and 55. They furthermore established that the preference for convenience differed across nationalities (Spanish, European and American consumers). They, however, did not find any gender differences in terms of preference. In a study by Kim and Jin (2001) convenience was cited as a reason for consumers preferring multi-national discount stores over national stores. Store hours comprise another aspect of convenience. Hyllegard et al. (2005) found that store hours are less important to older consumers, because older consumers have more time to shop. They concluded that store hours and convenience have the strongest influence on patronage behaviour across nationalities. Retail stores focusing on younger markets should therefore incorporate a focus around convenience and extended shopping hours. This greater concern identified in the younger market could be due to changing lifestyles and busy social lives (Hyllegard et al., 2005) A vital part of convenience is site selection/ location planning, because it influences parking, location and transportation. This is a significant decision because it cannot be altered once made. Location, transportation and traveling time influence the consumer market patronizing the store and, inevitably, sales (Wood & Browne, 2007). Thang and Tan (2003), for instance, note that retailers are chosen on the basis of accessibility, ease of transportation and time duration of traveling. They found that accessibility of a store is rated second to merchandising and that even stores located on the same street still engendered varying perceptions with regard to accessibility. The smallest distance can however influence a store’s success or failure (Wood & Browne, 2007). The importance of traveling distance in influencing intention to remain loyal to a store was noted by Miranda et al. (2005). Newman and Patel (2004) reported that, by focusing on features which influence the ease of shopping, retailers are able to differentiate themselves from the competition. Koo (2003), on the other hand,
investigated the inter-relationships among store images, store satisfaction, and store loyalty among Korean discount retail patrons, and found that convenience has a direct and indirect impact on store loyalty, but not on store satisfaction. This is contradicted by Chang and Tu (2005), who found that convenience, has a direct relationship with customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, as well as an indirect relationship with customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. Retailers should therefore consider convenience and its sub-dimensions carefully as this can help build a consumer base and consumer loyalty.

**Store Facilities**

Facilities refer to the provisions made to ease the shopping process and the infrastructure that enhances the consumer's comfort while shopping (Nevin & Houston, 1980). According to Thang and Tan (2003), consumers tend to view a store with good facilities in a favourable light. Consumers’ shopping orientations determine their preference for facilities (Moye & Kincade, 2002), therefore facilities contribute to differentiate the retailer from its competition. Features which could differentiate a store by easing the shopping process are the availability of changing rooms, fast checkout facilities and layout (Newman & Patel, 2004). These authors postulated that customers’ perceptions and behaviour could be altered through any small change made in store image, specifically store entrances, checkouts and queuing. However, if inappropriate, these features could also create an unwillingness to remain in a store.

Lee, Ibrahim and Hsueh-Shan (2005, p. 333) investigated the importance that male consumers place on certain attributes and found a friendly design layout to be one of the few variables obtaining high scores, ‘... which is not difficult to rationalize given [its] prominence in shaping the retail environment and...enjoyment level’. Kent (2003; 2007) focused on the design behind a store image. This 2003 study focused on the design of the brand with the retailer environment centered on consumer buying behaviour. He found that the interior design as well as the functional elements enhance the brand identity and create a strong experience. The focus of design therefore is also on the facilities now, not only on merchandise and store fronts. Kent (2003) concentrated on factors such as the ability to actually reach products, the significance of floor space and the maximization of sales space by arranging a lot of stock in a manner that seems spacious through the use of open aisles. Hence, by
changing a store’s style of layout, specifically, facilities can create and support the brand identity. A 2007 study by Kent extends this idea of design to focus on stores and facilities that the store could offer. The space chosen for a store ideally is what will affect the layout and store appearance; the decision, for example, cannot solely be based on location. Even though the importance of facilities is established, Marianne (2003) reports that fitting rooms and fitting room lighting have not received enough attention over the years, due to the fact that management perceive these aspects to be less important to customers. Kerfoot, Davies and Ward (2003) conducted a study on visual merchandising, and found that the role of lighting should not be to merely provide light through brightness or fluorescent lights, but should rather aim to be inviting. Their research also brought perceptions regarding fixtures and aisles to light. Consumers consistently indicated that glass was the best material for presentation. Furthermore, consumers felt that clear aisles increased browsing through the perception of a route to follow, whereas a store without a clear aisle made it difficult for consumers to decide where to start browsing and hard to move through the store (Kerfoot et al., 2003). In other studies where the importance of store image attributes was investigated, facilities did not receive very high importance ratings (Bearden, 1977; Hansen & Deutscher, 1977-1978; Lee et al., 2005). Facilities form part of the complete store image presentation, and neglect thereof can have an impact on the perception of the store as a whole.

**Store Service**
Service is a crucial element of a brand; this includes staff-customer interaction (sales) (Newman & Patel, 2004). As shown above, sales personnel are responsible for the social interaction with customers through this interplay between service and sales personnel. Service builds customer relationships and leads to positive-word-of-mouth and customer loyalty (Newman & Patel, 2004). Customers’ perception of social cues, which includes service, improves their perception of merchandise (Hu & Jasper, 2006; Newman & Patel, 2004). Teller, Kotzab and Grant (2006) found that sales personnel service greatly affect store choice, even more than modern services, such as home delivery. Service by sales personnel through knowledge and courteousness is emphasized by Berman and Evans (1995). Good service therefore contributes toward forming a positive store image. Thang and Tan (2003) concluded that stores that provide good service leave shoppers with a more favourable perception which promotes
repeat visits and has a positive impact on consumer purchase behaviour. Miranda et al. (2004) underscored this by concluding that intention to remain loyal to a store is influenced by several factors, including service. Hellier et al., (2003) also showed that customers’ repurchase intention is influenced by service. While the repurchase intention is thus influenced by service quality, Wirtz et al. (2007) stated that the effect of service on consumer behaviour is moderated by emotional arousal. Huddleston et al. (1990), found that mature female consumers’ lifestyle characteristics influence their preferences for services. In contrast, Oates et al. (1996) showed that the perception of the importance of the service dimension is not notably different among elderly consumer segments on the basis of lifestyle. Research results, however, highlight the fact that management should take note of the impact that service can have on consumer behaviour and that the preference for service is influenced by independent consumer variables.

Sales Personnel

Building interpersonal relationships with customers can provide the edge in creating store loyalty when competing in a fairly homogeneous market. Sales personnel play an important role in creating the social cues in a store that are found to improve evaluations of store image (Hu & Jasper, 2006). The interaction with customers through sales personnel is central to consumer-focused communication (Knee, 2002). Koo (2003) notes that Korean consumers first need to form a favourable store image on non-physical characteristics to promote a positive attitude towards the store. This emphasizes the need to improve sales personnel service. Lee et al. (2005), however, did not find a significant relationship between sales personnel and store loyalty or store satisfaction. Oates et al. (1996) argued that consumer segments based on lifestyle differ with regard to the importance that they attach to sales personnel. This could be attributed to differences related to value. Baker et al. (2002) investigated the influence of store environmental cues on customers’ perceived merchandise value and patronage intention. They concluded that sales personnel influenced the perceptions of interpersonal service quality, which, in turn, influenced patronage intention, thus underscoring the importance of sales personnel in building store image. The sales personnel’s product knowledge is a key store image attribute in male shopping behaviour, according to Lee et al. (2005). The personal appearance of sales personnel influences the customers’ perception of a store. If, for example, the
personnel is described as obese, regardless of sex or age, the store is perceived as having a poorer image and being less successful (Klassen, Clayson & Jasper, 1996). Not only do sales personnel have an effect on how the store is viewed, but the perceptions of the retail environment can influence customers’ beliefs about the people who work in such an environment. Arun and Stafford (2000) for instance found that sales personnel are regarded as having more credibility in the prestige store ambience and less in the discount store ambience.

**Store Atmosphere**

Store atmosphere plays a vital role in the consumer’s experience. Atmospherics involve a conscious designing of space to affect customers’ sensory experience. It mostly has to do with the ‘spatial aesthetic’ features of the store and serves as a ‘silent language’ in communication to consumers (Kotler, 1973-1974, p. 48 & 50). These sensory experiences affect a person’s emotional state and therefore the way in which product information will be evaluated. A positive store experience enhances satisfaction and will lead to increased shopping frequency, and therefore lead to increased sales (Koo, 2003). Store atmosphere, specifically in reference to design and ambient factors, is a significant variable as it influences consumer preference, interpersonal service quality, merchandise quality and monetary price perception, as well as shopping experience cost (Baker *et al.*, 2002; Thang & Tan, 2003). Furthermore, Newman and Patel (2004) reported that store atmosphere is one of the crucial factors and determinants of store choice. Richardson *et al.* (1996) found that the aesthetics of a store can improve the evaluation of the quality of products by customers. Samli *et al.* (1999) included the attribute *interior décor* in their study on the contrast between management and customer perceptions of store image. The results indicated that décor is perceived as slightly less important by management than by customers. However, this attribute was included in their service quality dimension with the notation that the retailer could very easily exceed customer expectations through the use of these attributes. Terblanché and Boshoff (2006) supported this by indicating that store décor is important to the store environment as it is a controllable aspect that can contribute to creating customer satisfaction through fulfilling expectations. This is due to the fact that décor and popular music can align a store with its target market (Newman & Patel, 2004). Smell (as part of store interior) is a very strong emotional trigger. The sense of pleasant arousal derived from fragrance increases exploratory tendencies
behaviour (Orth & Bourrain, 2005). The emotional experience is as important as the shopping experience, because consumers have affective expectations too (Wirtz, Mattila & Tan, 2007). According to Sway (2007), scent marketing can make a consumer feel comfortable and put consumers in a good mood that could positively influence purchasing decisions. Smell is a strong emotional trigger. However, Donovan and Rossiter’s (1982) evaluation of the emotional states aroused by store atmosphere and the effect on approach/avoidance behaviour came to the conclusion that research on store atmosphere does not achieve strong results because it affects an emotional state which is difficult to verbalize and is transient, therefore difficult to recall. Their research therefore proposed that store atmosphere affects emotion and this, in turn, affects shopping related intention. This research was extended by Donovan, Rossiter, Marcooly and Nesdale (1994), who found that emotional state not only affects intention but actual purchase behaviour as well. A positive emotional experience engendered by store atmosphere will increase the estimated spending and time spent in the store. According to Donovan et al. (1994), this is partly due to the emotional variable being evaluated apart from cognitive variables, e.g. quality and price perception. Wirtz et al. (2007) confirmed the positive effect of emotional arousal congruence on in-store behaviours. Based on the expectations of the target market, store designers should therefore make tactical decisions regarding store atmosphere, in order to positively influence consumers’ in-store experience (Hartman & Spiro, 2005). From the above-mentioned, it is clear that atmosphere is a significant tool, since it provides management with the power to manipulate the effect of store environment on consumer behaviour.

**Store Brand**

Store image is considered an important factor influencing store choice and patronage behaviour and has received increased attention from practitioners and academics (Berry, 1969). Store image influences the way in which consumers evaluate and choose a store (Kleinhans, 2003). Patronage behaviour is associated with acts a consumer performs for the purpose of making a purchase from a store. The identity of a store, presented in the store image, communicates useful information to consumers that they utilize during pre-purchase decision-making (North et al., 2003). Store image cues therefore influence consumers’ decision-making processes, which result in store choice (Baker et al., 2002). Store image and store positioning also
greatly predict store choice and, ultimately, retail success (Baker et al., 2002). Knowledge about the influence of store image perception on patronage behaviour may empower retailers to design their stores according to the desired store image that could lead to consequent store choice (Kleinhans, 2003). The relationship between store image and patronage behaviour has been examined by numerous researchers. Results indicate that a customer’s perception of a store influences store patronage. Moye and Giddings (2002), as well as Moye and Kincade (2002), investigated the effect of shopping orientation on consumers’ perception of store image and the resulting patronage behaviour. Both studies confirmed that shopping orientation indirectly influenced store choice through store image. Several researchers also found that the importance that consumers place on store image attributes influenced patronage behaviour (Shim & Bickle, 1994; Shim & Kotsiopulos, 1992; Baker et al., 2002. Donovan and Rossiter (1982) suggested that consumer behaviour is mostly due to emotional response brought about by the store environment. In this scenario, it is then astute to not only assume, but to know that the consumer’s affective state (mood) affects judgment or information processing (Bakamitsos & Siomkos, 2005). A person’s mood can act as an object or as a tool. When affective state is an object, it acts as a heuristic cue and therefore bases judgment on heuristic cues and not on information. A consumer’s mood therefore affects how the consumer evaluates, and a positive mood is more likely to lead to a positive evaluation and thus store choice (De Ruyter & Bloemer, 1999).

The probability that a consumer will shop at a given store increases as the individual’s perceptions of the store become more positive. In general, consumers patronize stores whose image is congruent with their self-perceptions and unconscious needs. Thus, store specific attitudes (e.g. store image) and general attitudes toward the type of store influence shopping behaviour (e.g. shopping frequency)

(Darley & Lim, 1999, p.312)

Birtwistle and Shearer (2001) propose five reasons why consumers choose a particular store, namely stock held, price ranges, quality of products, fashionability of goods and style of clothing. Four of these fall directly under the dimension of merchandise, which contributes to the forming of a store image (Lindquist, 1974-1975)? Therefore it indicates that store image attributes influence patronage behaviour. Satisfied consumers, however, do not necessarily remain satisfied customers, let alone loyal.
Managing a store’s image requires constant feedback to ensure that its marketing strategy is addressing customer needs and leads to continuous customer satisfaction (Hellier, Geursen, Carr & Rickard, 2003).

Janse van Noordwyk (2002) identified and described institutional, store reputation and store association attributes and grouped them together as the institutional dimension of store image. The institutional dimension plays a significant role in the overall impression of the corporate identity. Before an identity or the reputation of the company can affect consumer behaviour, the consumer should have experienced some involvement and identification with the identity. This is explained through the low involvement theory and classical conditioning, which states that repetition, builds awareness, whereupon a particular emotion will be associated with the stimulus (identity) (Alessandri, 2001). This positive association influences consumer behaviour. According to Newman and Patel (2004), identity adds a much needed symbolic aspect to shopping, therefore store image imitates the corporate identity to encourage the association which customers form, and subsequently uses the association to influence patronage behaviour. Huddleston et al. (1990) describe reputation as a desirable characteristic that attracts consumers. Huddleston et al. (1990) investigated the relationship between retail store attributes and the lifestyle characteristics of mature female consumers. They found a relationship between lifestyle and store reputation, suggesting that lifestyle influences consumer preference for store reputation. An investigation into the perception of preference for retail stores based on multi-attributes of store image concluded that a reputable store is preferred because better quality and value is assumed (Thang & Tan, 2003). Reputable stores are better able to secure consumer affiliation and trust, and thereby build store loyalty and encourage repeat purchase. A store can even improve its reputation by carrying a reputable in-store brand, which will positively influence the store brand reputation, therefore strengthening store loyalty even further (Collins-Dodd & Lindley, 2003). The fact is that reputation builds a brand name, and this conveys useful information to consumers in their pre-purchase decision-making process (North et al., 2003). Erdem et al. (1999) studied the relationship between the importance of consumer values and the importance of store image attributes. The results indicated that consumers who attached high importance to a comfortable life, an exciting life, pleasure and social recognition, would also attach high importance to store status, which includes clientele and
reputation. According to Shostack (1982), the store’s reputation and clientele are functions of retailing and merchandise, thus they cannot be separated. The institutional dimension is consequently dependent on the quality and class of service and merchandise. Newman and Patel (2004), note that this relationship works both ways, in that reputation influences the quality and price perceptions held by customers. Sales personnel should therefore ‘live the brand’ (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001, p. 99). These authors state that sales personnel’s behaviour will align with the values of the corporate identity if internal communication and human resource management are aligned with the same values (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). Corporate reputation influences customers’ intention to buy, assures quality and service and influences customer loyalty (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). This is because customers identify with the corporate identity and expect its values to be present in the store image. It is thus apparent in the fiercely competitive marketplace that the institutional dimension as representation of the corporate identity and reputation in store image is imperative as it influences consumer store preference.

2.5 Customer satisfaction
One of the aims of establishing a particular store image is to meet customers’ needs and to create a positive customer experience. Creating customer satisfaction may lead to the long-term goal of future profits and sustained business viability. Customer satisfaction increases repeat purchase behaviour and the purchase of other products at the same store (Chang & Tu, 2005). According to Chen-Yu and Hong (2002), consumers spend their funds in such a way as to maximize satisfaction, which is also the desired outcome of a marketing strategy. Satisfaction not only reinforces the resolution or intent to repurchase, but also store loyalty (Patterson & Spreng, 1997; Bloemer, Kasper, & Lemmink, 1990; Kincade, Redwine & Hancock, 1992). The definition of customer satisfaction is based on the disconfirmation paradigm; satisfaction is derived through the matching of expectations. The chosen alternative meets or exceeds (emotive or cognitive) expectations (Blackwell et al., 2006). Customer satisfaction is a response to expectation, product performance after purchase, product experience, or the shopping experience. The response is a reaction from the evaluation of standards; between pre-purchase expectations, wants or ideals and the actually shopping- and/ or product experience (Bloemer & De Ruyter, 1998; Grace, 2005; Howard & Sheth, 1969). Therefore customer satisfaction depends on whether the expectations entertained prior to a shopping experience are met.
Retail satisfaction consists of three categories: shopping systems satisfaction which includes availability and types of outlets; buying systems satisfaction which includes selection and actual purchasing of products and consumer satisfaction derived from the use of the product (Westbrook, 1987). Dissatisfaction with any of the three aspects could lead to customer disloyalty, decrease in sales and erosion of the market share. Customer satisfaction has three stages: the pre-sales stage when expectations are about the product, service, benefits, price and availability; the sales period when the customer experiences the environment, the product, type of service, delivery, quality and redress from buying; the after-sales stage when the customer expects support or advice, replacement or refund, repair or uses the complaints procedures.

These consumer satisfaction theories are based on analyzing discrepancies between customer expectations and evaluation of those expectations about products and services (Churchill and Suprenant, 1982). Normal expectations are what the customer thinks the product ought to be in terms of specific elements such as size and colour. Comparison of such elements to expected norms is thought to lead to confirmation or disconfirmation. Meeting normal expectations therefore results in confirmation and therefore satisfaction. Although size charts provide norms for garment fit, they have been a source of confusion and dissatisfaction amongst consumers. This is because, even within the same retailer, there can be a variation of actual measurements in garments, which are labeled with the same size code. There is even more size variation amongst different retailers. One approach has been to evaluate satisfaction as a consumption experience: a post-choice evaluative judgment (Tse and Wilton, 1988). Consumer satisfaction therefore refers to consumers’ responses to the evaluation of perceived discrepancy between prior expectations and actual performance of the product. Therefore consumer satisfaction is influenced by a pre-experience comparison standard and disconfirmation. The second approach considers emotional response as satisfaction itself involving three constructs: expectations, perceived performance and disconfirmation (Cadotte et al., 1987).

For marketers, consumer satisfaction is a desired outcome of activities and links processes culminating in purchase and consumption to post-purchase behaviour such as attitude change, repeat purchase and brand loyalty (Churchill and Suprenant, 1982; Smith, 1994). While the satisfied customer may influence others to buy, dissatisfaction can lead to complaints, legal action or negative word-of-mouth communication (Engel et al., 1990).
Bloemer and De Ruyter (1998) postulated a relationship between store image, store choice, customer satisfaction and store loyalty and found that satisfaction is the result of a conscious evaluation of store image. The positive evaluation of store image leads to store commitment, which, in turn, leads to store loyalty. There is, however, some form of latent satisfaction which occurs unconsciously, and this is the result of implicit store choice. Thus, store image has a direct, positive effect on store loyalty, as well as an indirect positive effect on store loyalty through satisfaction. Bloemer and De Ruyter (1998) found a positive relationship between the three factors and that the effect of store image is mediated by satisfaction. Chang and Tu (2005) also found a significant direct and indirect relationship between store image and store loyalty, mediated by customer satisfaction.

According to Kim and Jin (2001), customers’ satisfaction and the intention to repurchase result from the customers’ emotional experience during the purchase stage and, hence, from the appraisal of the store’s image. Atmospheric variables influence customers’ satisfaction regardless of shopping orientation; some variables do, however, contribute to satisfaction for specific consumer segments (McKinney, 2004). Customers’ satisfaction or dissatisfaction and intention to repurchase are therefore indicators of the customers’ perception of the store, which, in turn, is created by store image. Customers’ satisfaction or dissatisfaction is prevalent not only in the consumption stage but also while purchasing, thus emphasizing the importance of store image. The greater the satisfaction of the customer during purchasing, the greater the intention to repeat purchase (Chen-Yu & Hong, 2002). Baker et al. (2002) affirmed that consumers evaluate store image dimensions as reliable information cues about product attributes, price, quality, value and overall shopping experience. Bitner (1990) reported that consumers concentrate on design and ambient environment cues when evaluating a store. According to Jacoby and Mazursky (1984), consumers depend heavily on pictures of store interiors for information during the shopping experience. Customer satisfaction is therefore reached through a positive evaluation of the desired store image. It can therefore be deduced that needs satisfaction and shopping satisfaction lead to store choice, which underscores why stores strive toward the needs and goal satisfaction of consumers (Baker et al., 2002). In the previous sections, the significance of store image in corporate identity and the importance
thereof to retailers was pointed out. Dependent and independent variables in store image research were highlighted to substantiate the significance of a store’s image in successful retailing.

2.6 Store Loyalty

Customer loyalty can be classified into brand loyalty, vendor loyalty, service loyalty, and store loyalty (Dick and Basu 1994). With lack of consistency, marketing researchers have defined customer loyalty. We can classify these definitions into a behavioural approach, an attitudinal approach, and a combined approach.

**Behavioural Definition**

Early studies on loyalty have been done on individual brand which can be measured from panel data and brand loyalty largely was understood as behavioural concept. They focused on observing and measuring the continuation of purchases in the past (Brown 1952-1953). Kuehn (1962) used stochastic approach to find behaviour of brand loyalty of customers. He saw brand loyalty a function of purchasing history of customers. Lipstein (1959) thought brand loyalty as a function of probability of purchase of the same product or a function of time for a specific brand. Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) summarized 53 early definitions of loyalty and made a conceptual definition. According to their definition, loyalty is a biased behavioural reaction of consumers in the choice of one among many alternatives in a period of time and it can be represented as a function of decision-making process. Jeuland (1979) also used stochastic model to define brand loyalty. In his study, it was defined as long-term probability of choice or purchase ratio of a specific brand among total product categories and such behaviour was named as inertia.

In summary, behavioural definition of store loyalty is a tendency of consumers to purchase repetitively in a period of time and it can be operationally defined and measured as purchase ratio as repetitive purchase behaviour (Raj 1982), purchase frequency. By using these definitions, it can be objectively measured and has an advantage of distinguishing store loyalty for various stores. But it has limitations that researchers can easily use subjective judgments and that it is hard to explain how the store loyalty is formed and why it changes.

**Attitudinal Definition**

Attitude is a learned tendency of preference to consistently show favor or disfavor and
affirmative or negative reactions. Consumers have a favorable attitude to a specified brand but they don’t always purchase that brand since there are various situations. But attitude influences behaviour a lot. Thus the concept of loyalty is viewed not separated from the attitude that represents individual psychological tendency in repetitive purchases. Moreover, the attitude of consumers relatively evaluating a specified brand is important since repetitive purchases mean that consumers choose it among various alternatives.

In summary, store loyalty in an attitudinal sense can be understood as store preference or psychological commitment and thus it can be defined as favorable attitude to the specified store and operationally it can be measured future probability of purchase (Oh 1995). By this definition, we can figure out the process of psychological formation of it but it is uncertain that favorable attitude to the specified store is converted to real action to buy. The marketers can see the store loyalty in attitudinal approach have little practical value.

Combined Definition of both Behavioural and Attitudinal Approach
Dick and Basu (1994) combined both behavioural and attitudinal approaches and then defined store loyalty as favorable attitude and repetitive purchase of consumers so that the concept can be comprehensively understood and they argue that their concept was desirable since both components could be measured. Either favorable attitude or repetitive purchase alone cannot be necessary and sufficient conditions of index of store loyalty and the both must be considered together in the light of consumers.

2.6.1 Dimensions of loyalty
Customer loyalty has been largely treated by researchers as either repurchase behaviour (e.g. Gwinner et al., 1998; Liljander and Strandvik, 1993; Loveman, 1998; Soderlund, 1998) or repurchase behaviour combined with an attitudinal component (e.g. Dick and Basu, 1994; Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998; Oliver, 1996; de Ruyter et al., 1998; Lemmink and Mattsson, 1998; Griffin, 1995; Price and Arnould, 1999). While the first of these two approaches remains popular with services researchers, authors have long recognized the problems associated with treating loyalty as repurchase behaviour exclusively. Such measures do not distinguish spuriously loyal customers (Moulson, 1965). By focusing on purchase, shoppers who are retained customers by default are aggregated with truly loyal customers who shop as a positive choice (Denison and Knox, 1995). Often, customers are retained for long periods but without a genuine relationship ever being developed. In addition, Barnes (1997) acknowledges that a
customer may not purchase frequently from a firm, even though he or she may feel something of a relationship toward that firm. There may be many other reasons for lack of visitation. Further, this problem of spurious loyalty is not alleviated by the alternative approach of adding attitudinal components to repurchase behaviour. The weakness of the repeat purchase with attitude model was demonstrated algebraically by Iacobucci et al. (1994). This form of additive model fails because the attitude component is not unique. That is, the Dick and Basu (1994) specification breaks down as loyalty equals repeat purchase.

In contrast to the classical additive model (e.g. Dick and Basu, 1994) researchers such as Blodgett et al. (1997) distinguish loyalty as a psychological outcome and repurchase intentions as a behavioural outcome. That is, the constructs perform differently. A psychologically loyal customer may not intend to purchase from a service provider because their circumstances prevent them (Barnes, 1997). In support, CZepiel (1990) and Kingstrom (1983) have argued strongly for loyalty to be treated as a psychological construct. Further, in an interesting development, Oliver (1999) extends the notion of incorporating repeat purchase with loyalty by suggesting that psychological strategies are needed to achieve ultimate loyalty. In the following sections, the literature is reviewed to synthesize the attitudinal components of previous loyalty conceptualizations. Excluding repeat purchase, four dimensions of loyalty can be distinguished in the services literature. These dimensions are:

1. positive word-of-mouth;
2. a resistance to switch;
3. identifying with the service; and
4. a preference for a particular service provider

Positive word-of-mouth is a common approach to loyalty conceptualization. Loyal customers become an advocate for the service (Payne, 1993). Four variations of the advocacy concept can be identified:

1. Providing positive word-of-mouth (e.g. Zeithaml et al., 1996; Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998).
2. Recommending the service to others (Stum and Thiry, 1991; Fisk et al., 1990).
3. Encouraging others to use the service (Kingstrom, 1983; Bettencourt and Brown, 1997).
4. Defending the service provider’s virtues has been proposed by Kingstrom (1983).

A key aspect is the proactive nature of advocacy. According to McGarry (1995), while a satisfied
customer is merely a passive recipient of service the loyal customer feels a positive connection to the service provider. Loyal customers become active ambassadors for the business. The second strand of this loyalty construction is the tendency to resist changing service providers. This tendency has been expressed as the bonding to another when such constancy seems contrary to self-interest (Gilmore and CZepiel, 1987) or demonstrates immunity to the pull of the competition (Stum and Thiry, 1991). This theme is also supported by Oliver (1997) who expressed loyalty as a commitment to repurchase against the odds and costs. Finally, Crosby and Taylor (1983) refer to voter resistance in the face of conflicting information or experience. Operationalizations of customer loyalty often have included scale items that reflect a lack of resistance or otherwise to this switching between service providers (e.g. Thompson and Kaminski, 1993; Jain et al., 1987).

The third strand is implicit in the intuitive notions of expressing ourselves about service providers we visit regularly. The relationship building between customer and provider produces a sense of ownership over the service with consumers referring to ‘my accountant’, ‘my hairdresser’, or ‘my mechanic’ (Gabbott and Hogg, 1994, p. 320). Bhattacharya et al. (1995, p. 47) found that membership of an organization ‘creates a sense of belongingness’. Identification is linked to the customer's resistance to change by both Oliver (1999) and Crosby and Taylor (1983). The latter authors argue that resistance is maximized when the customer identifies strongly with the service provider and that these values are important to the customer. Finally, Kingstrom (1983) defines physician loyalty as a psychological attachment that is reflected by:

1. strong advocacy of the provider’s virtues;
2. high resistance to change doctors; and
3. having personal health beliefs and/or values that are perceived to be congruent with the health care provider.

The final strand of the loyalty conceptualization is customer preference for the service ahead of competition. Many researchers propose that customer preference is central to a loyalty conceptualization (e.g. Dick and Basu, 1994; Gremler and Brown, 1997; Oliver, 1999). According to Oliver (1999) loyalty is an attained state of enduring preference. This key role of preference is also supported by social identity theory which indicates that group membership leads to consistent in-group favouritism because it boosts self-esteem (Lippa, 1990). When the customer identifies with the service provider's values, involvement or ego defense will maintain consistent in-group favouritism (Crosby and Taylor, 1983). Preference as a component of loyalty is also linked to the notion of volition. Loyal customers need to be seen as acting out of volition
(Barnes, 1997) in making their preferred choice. This view of loyalty contrasts with the entrapment approach which has been criticized by Dick and Basu (1994) as leading to customer detention.

In summary, loyalty is regarded as a construct that is distinct from repurchase behaviour. Four dimensions of loyalty can be distinguished that reflect the extant services literature. Loyalty is defined here as the enduring psychological attachment of a customer to a particular service provider. Attachment is reflected through:

1. advocacy of the service to others;
2. tendency to resist switching to alternate service providers;
3. identification with the service provider; and
4. having a relative preference for the service ahead of other competitors.

2.6.2 The Relationship between Store Image Attributes and Store Loyalty

Now we define store loyalty as ‘favorable attitude of consumers and tendency to purchase relatively in a period of time’.

Thus, store loyalty refers to repeat purchase behaviour. Repeat purchase behaviour is evidenced by purchases made at the same retailer for similar products (Osman, 1993). Bloemer and De Ruyter (1998) developed a more specific definition namely, ‘The biased (non random) behavioural response (revisit), expressed over time, by some decision-making unit with respect to one store out of a set of stores, which is a function of psychological (decision-making and evaluative) processes resulting in [store] commitment’.

The two critical elements in this definition are:

1. That store choice is biased, and
2. The importance of store commitment.

A person becomes committed to a store and therefore becomes loyal; store commitment is thus a necessary condition for store loyalty (Bloemer & De Ruyter, 1998). Managers face the challenge to build store loyalty and commitment, it is critical in a marketplace where there is a choice between numerous stores with similar products (Bloemer & De Ruyter, 1998; Miranda et al., 2005; Osman, 1993). The ideal is to
have a long-term loyal customer who is reluctant to change stores due to an emotional bond with the store. A short-term loyal customer feels less of a bond and will change stores when a seemingly better option is available (Chang & Tu, 2005). Therefore, if store loyalty is more an indication of repeat visiting possibility than the wanting of a specific product from a specific retailer, as pointed out by Bowen and Shoemaker (1998), it is still a crucial customer characteristic in the competitive environment of apparel retail. It is important for retailers to seek information on the shopping experience when planning to build store loyalty with augmented services (Miranda et al., 2005). If retailers manage the perception of store image, they can isolate consumers from their competitors by building store loyalty (Osman, 1993). In Kunkel and Berry's (1968) broad definition of store image as ‘...the total conceptualized or expected reinforcement that a person associates with shopping at a particular store', the word reinforcement is especially significant. The learning process occurs through reinforcement and motivates repeat behaviour, primarily through positive feedback. The desired store image can therefore serve as a positive feedback mechanism (reinforcement) which makes consumers return for repeat purchases (Hawkins et al., 2004). It is significant because it is the key to a loyal customer and ensures repeat purchase behaviour. Bloemer and De Ruyter (1998) investigated the relationship between store image, customer satisfaction and store loyalty. They found that store image perception is directly related to store loyalty, but rather an indirect positive effect on store loyalty through consumer satisfaction. However, research results concerning the influence of store image attributes on consumer satisfaction and store loyalty indicate that different attributes affected the two dependent variables; store loyalty was influenced by frequent buyer reward, travel distance, size of average bill and store signage while level of assistance influences both (Miranda et al., 2005).

There have been two kinds of views on the relationship between store image and store loyalty. The first view is that store image attributes directly influences store loyalty. The other is that store image itself affects store loyalty. Matineau (1958) relates store image and store loyalty by arguing that store image has an influence on store loyalty. Singson (1975) focuses on the store image attributes and finds that price and quality are the most important store image attributes affecting store loyalty and assortment follows them. Lessig (1973) finds that the store image measured by store atmosphere, product, price, and promotion is correlated with store loyalty.
2.6.3. The relationships between satisfaction and store loyalty behavior

Past research suggests that customer satisfaction has a positive impact on post purchase attitudes and purchase intentions (Huddleston, Whipple and VanAuken 2004; Sivadas and Baker-Previtt, 2000; Hallowell, 1996), although some studies did not find a significant relationship between satisfaction and re-patronage intention in a mall setting (Stoel, Wickliffe and Lee, 2004; Dawson and Ridgway, 1990). Customer satisfaction is an outcome of purchase experience, i.e. a Post consumption evaluation of the degree to which a store or product meets or exceeds customer expectations in terms of rewards and costs. Positive customer perceptions of store attributes result in enhanced customer satisfaction. Satisfaction elicits emotions, which in turn leads to positive loyalty intentions. Satisfied customers are likely to become retained customers, while dissatisfied customers are sooner or later likely to switch to competitors. In the long run, retained customers produce a higher annual revenue and margin per customer than do lost or new customers (Best, 2004). As suggested by Sivadas and Baker-Previtt (2000) there is a positive relationship between affective loyalty (satisfaction) and conative loyalty. If satisfied with purchases at one particular store, consumers are likely to have positive attitudes toward that store. This leads to consumers’ commitments to recommend a store to friends and to return to the store for either similar or other purchase tasks.
References


