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JUDUL   :   THE INFLUENCE OF STORE IMAGE ON CONSUMERS'
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STORE IN KOTA KINABALU: THE ROLE OF ATTITUDE AS
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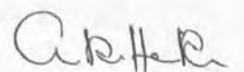4. TIDAK TERHAD

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# THE INFLUENCE OF STORE IMAGE ON CONSUMERS' REPATRONAGE INTENTIONS TOWARDS APPAREL RETAIL STORE IN KOTA KINABALU: THE ROLE OF ATTITUDE AS MEDIATOR

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## SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
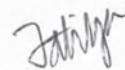## UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
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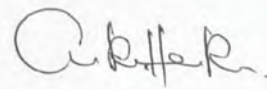
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Tatilya Chia Ching Mei
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# ABSTRACT

## THE INFLUENCE OF STORE IMAGE ON CONSUMERS' REPATRONAGE INTENTIONS TOWARDS APPAREL RETAIL STORE IN KOTA KINABALU: THE ROLE OF ATTITUDE AS MEDIATOR

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between the store image, consumers' attitude towards store and consumers' repatronage intentions, in the context of apparel retail store. Results of the study found that all dimensions of store image have significant effect on both consumers' repatronage intentions and attitude towards store. Hierarchical regression analysis was employed to test the mediating effect of attitude towards store on the relationship between store image and repatronage intentions. On overall, results revealed that attitude towards store partially and fully mediate the relationship between dimensions of store image and consumers' repatronage intentions.

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## ABSTRAK

Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan di antara imej kedai, sikap terhadap kedai dan niat kunjungan semula para pengguna, dalam konteks kedai pakaian runcit. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa semua dimensi imej kedai mempunyai kesan ketara ke atas niat kunjungan semula para pengguna dan sikap pengguna terhadap kedai. Analisis regresi hierarki telah digunakan untuk menguji kesan pengantara sikap pengguna terhadap kedai pada hubungan antara imej kedai dan niat kunjungan semula. Pada keseluruhannya, keputusan mendedahkan kesan pengantara separa dan sepenuhnya dari sikap terhadap kedai ke atas hubungan antara dimensi imej kedai dan niat kunjungan semula pengguna.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.0    Background of Study

In the recent global economic recession that occurred in 2008 and 2009, the Malaysian economy has slowed down due to the changes in consumer lifestyle and spending pattern (Euromonitor International, June 2011). Purchasing power went down among buyers, and the apparel retailing industry were affected especially when consumers began to cut off expenditure on apparel items, switching their shopping preferences into the lower price clothing and footwear brands.

Based on the report on apparel retailing industry in Malaysia; regardless of the economic downturn in 2009, growth of the industry bounced back in 2010; notably those of the international brands in the local apparel market (Euromonitor International, June 2011). International apparel companies went for outlets expansion as a mean of business confidence in the economy recovery, simultaneously releasing an array of new apparel lines into the local market, aiming to cover up the loss and slow growth experienced during the recession. Despite of the quick recovery for the international brands, majority of the domestic apparel retailers remained stagnant and have yet to show significant bounce back; creating an intensified competition between international and domestic retailers, though the sales of apparel items has back to its normal point.

In addition to this, Paulins and Geistfeld (2003) pointed out that continuously, store-based retailers do face competition from one another, also, catalogs, television shopping network, direct selling; until in recent years, the hiking consumers' preferences on internet shopping. The gradual channel switching among the Malaysian consumers is probably budding from the younger generation who grew up through the emergence period of computer technology and internet; thus, has higher level of confidence in internet retailers, particularly in the non-

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grocery products, such as clothing and footwear, further intensified the competition among apparel retailers.

Further contributing into the switching preferences among consumers is the changes in standard of living, required them adapting to the busy urban lifestyles that require conveniences in managing daily lives. Stated in the latest report of Euromonitor International in February 2012, as the young generation enters the workforce, altering to the cosmopolitan lifestyle, these consumers have shown willingness to pay for convenience of online purchasing and payment, provided with delivery services, which are features that the conventional store-based retail store failed to provide with.

## 1.1 Problem Identification

The conventional store-based apparel retailers in the Malaysian market may not have been aware of this revolutionizing shopping pattern among the consumers. Latest statistical data from on the apparel retailing sector in Malaysia shows that between year 2005 to 2010, sales volume (refer Table 1.1) and value (refer Table 1.2) of apparel items; clothing and footwear in the nation has been increasing each year at a average rate of 6.58%. However, this figure has not been that optimist for the store-based retailers (Euromonitor International, June 2011). Statistical data in Table 1.3 shown that despite the growth of apparel sales volume, market share of store-based retailers is going downwards in each year, whereas the percentage of sales by internet retailers is growing steadily. This phenomena has indirectly indicate losing of market share of the conventional store-based retailers to the non-store retailers; once again pointed out the switching preference of consumers in this modern lifestyle and emergence of advanced technology.

As mentioned in the earlier part, the domestic apparel retailers are still weak as compared to the foreign apparel retailers in the market; despite of the economic rebound experienced by the sector, but mostly occurred on foreign retailers. The underlying key factor for the failure to rebound among the domestic apparel retailers may have been the lack of knowledge and understanding towards consumers' perception and expectation on them. This study also contributes to the

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existing consumer behaviour literature by examining the mediating role of consumers' attitude towards store image on the relationship between store image and consumers' patronage intentions.

**Table 1.1: Sales of Apparel by Category: Volume 2005-2010**

| mn units | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clothing | 327.9 | 351.6 | 375.5 | 401.9 | 425.9 | 451.0 |
| Footwear | 35.8 | 41.1 | 47.3 | 55.6 | 63.6 | 73.0 |
| **Apparel** | 363.6 | 392.7 | 422.8 | 457.5 | 489.5 | 524.0 |

Source : Euromonitor International from official statistics, trade associations, trade press, company research, store checks, trade interviews, trade sources.

**Table 1.2: Sales of Apparel by Category: Value 2005-2010**

| RM million | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clothing | 10,085.7 | 11,043.1 | 11,724.5 | 12,413.3 | 13,030.4 | 13,739.3 |
| Footwear | 2,097.7 | 2,408.7 | 2,667.2 | 2,902.2 | 3,132.0 | 3,390.3 |
| **Apparel** | 12,183.3 | 13,451.8 | 14,391.6 | 15,315.5 | 16,162.4 | 17,129.6 |

Source : Euromonitor International from official statistics, trade associations, trade press, company research, store checks, trade interviews, trade sources.

**Table 1.3: Sales of Apparel by Distribution Format: % Analysis 2005-2010**

| RM million | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Store-Based Retailing** | 96.3 | 95.8 | 95.4 | 95.0 | 94.6 | 94.2 |
| **Non-Store Retailing** | 3.7 | 4.2 | 4.6 | 5.0 | 5.4 | 5.8 |
| Internet Retailing | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.9 | 4.4 | 4.8 | 5.2 |

Source : Euromonitor International from official statistics, trade associations, trade press, company research, store checks, trade interviews, trade sources.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Background study on the apparel retailing sector in the Malaysian market shows the major issue of where most local apparel retailers is facing a hard time to compete with the international companies and foreign brands. This could be seen from the difference in business rebound after the economy downturn, as compared between the foreign apparel retailers and local apparel retailers. Another issue that also occurring commonly in other countries is that growing intense competition between store-based retailers of the same sector; at the same time, from the additional pressure from other non-store based retailers (Paulins et al., 2003).

While the sales of apparel items are in the rise among the Malaysian consumers, more and more store-based retailers are moving towards the direction of becoming multi-channel retailers in order to survive under the strong competition.

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Therefore, as new retail format coming up, Verma and Gupta (2005) said that retailers have a high stake in establishing a positive store image, because their image is directly tied to sales. Store-based retailers must also be prepared to implement changes ranging from altering store layout and display, to merchandise offer, and even moving stores into favourable location. However, the lack of knowledge in managing stores and in understanding the consumers' expectation and perception towards the retail store has been an issue for the local apparel retailers to develop a well-built store image to capture the market.

As new retail formats continue to develop and secure their positions in the market, knowledge of what attributes attract customers to stores is more important than ever (Paulins et al., 2003). Thus, it is very crucial to understand how store image would influence consumers' store selection, for the apparel retailers and contributing to the academic theoretical implication. Most importantly, retailers or store managers need to identify which are the store attributes that affect the consumers' revisit intention towards a particular store, as regular customers are major key element of sustaining a business.

## 1.3    Research Questions

The study was conducted among apparel shoppers within the area of Kota Kinabalu on the basis of the following research questions:

i.   Does retail store image (store atmosphere, location, value, salesperson, after sale service, merchandising) have a positive relationship with consumers' repatronage intentions?

ii.  Does retail store image (store atmosphere, location, value, salesperson, after sale service, merchandising) have a positive relationship with consumers' attitude towards store?

iii. Does attitude towards store have a positive relationship with consumers' repatronage intentions?

iv.  To what extent is the relationship between retail store image (store atmosphere, location, value, salesperson, after sale service, merchandising) and consumers' repatronage intentions is mediated by attitude towards store?

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## 1.4    Objectives of Study

The study examined the relationship between the store image and consumers' repatronage intentions for apparel retail store, within the area of Kota Kinabalu, comprising of the following objectives:

i.    To examine the influence of retail store image (store atmosphere, location, value, salesperson, after sale service, merchandising) on consumers' repatronage intentions.

ii.   To examine the influence of retail store image (store atmosphere, location, value, salesperson, after sale service, merchandising) on consumers' attitude towards store.

iii.  To examine the influence of attitude towards store on consumers' repatronage intentions.

iv.   To examine the attitude towards store as a mediating factor in the relationship between retail store image (store atmosphere, location, value, salesperson, after sale service, merchandising) and consumers' repatronage intentions.

## 1.5    Significance of Study

The findings of this study should be beneficial for both academics and practitioners to further understand the relationships between store image, consumers' attitude and patronage intentions in the apparel products market setting. From the theoretical perspective, this study will contribute to consumer behaviour and store patronage literature by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between store image, consumers' attitude towards store and consumers' patronage intention in the context of clothing and footwear products in Malaysia. This study conceptualizes store image that consists of six store attributes; store atmosphere, location, value, salesperson, after sale service, and merchandising. Applying the combination of these store attributes into the study should provide more comprehensive knowledge in understanding how consumers perceive the store's image. This study also contributes to the existing consumer behaviour literature by examining the mediating role of consumers' attitude on the relationship between store image and consumers' patronage intentions.

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From the managerial perspectives, the findings of this study will be beneficial to retailing practitioners especially those involved with store management and in the apparel industry. This study should help store managers to gain better insight of the key factors that contribute to the formation of consumers' repatronage intentions and hence, consumer retention. Effectively developing and improving the overall consumers' sentiments towards these store attributes is important in today's store-based retailing competitive market, which is suggested in leading to consumers' repatronage behaviour. Hence, the findings of this study should provide beneficial insights for store managers in the apparel retailing industry by identifying the key store attributes that affect consumers' attitude and repatronage intention. The identified store attributes may help store managers or retailers to develop effective strategies that could increase the store's appeal, improve consumers' attitude towards store and hence, create consumers' repatronage intentions towards apparel retail stores in Malaysia.

## 1.6 Scope of Study

In a recent review, from year 2006 to 2010, the overall Malaysian consumer expenditure has shown an increase of 29 percent. In the meantime, consumers' expenditure on clothing and footwear has shown a total growth of 19.7 percent (Euromonitor, June 2011). Despite of the positive growth on the sales of clothing and footwear over the years, consumer spending on apparel remained as unpredictable for the apparel retailers, as it is closely related to consumer attitude towards the apparel retailer or store; in which is the key factor leading to customer retention and store loyalty. Nevertheless, no previous study has been previously on the response of the Malaysian consumers towards apparel retail store image attributes, and their intention to revisit. Therefore, this study focused on the mediating effect of consumers' attitude towards the apparel retailer stores on their revisit intention, based on personal shopping experience. Apparel items in the study are to be inclusive of all types of clothing and footwear in the context of Malaysia; both of men's and women's. Targeted apparel retail store covered of those major apparel retailing players in the area of Kota Kinabalu, located in the shopping complex.

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## 1.7    Definition of Terms Used
### 1.7.1  Store Image

As cited from a study by Martineau (1958: 47), he proposed store image as "*the way in which the store is defined on the shopper's mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes*". According to Gundala (2010), "store image" can be expressed as a function of the main attributes that consumers to evaluate and compare among retailers of the same segment; in which in the context of this study, "*store image*" is an overall definition of an apparel retail store based on several associated store attributes.

### 1.7.2  Retailing

According to the MRA (Malaysia Retailers Association), the local retailing industry in Malaysia comprehends of various types of retail businesses, ranging from hypermarkets, department stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, drug stores, and food, fashion and accessories specialty stores. Literally, "retailing" is being defined as the sales of new and used goods to the public for individual or household consumption; it is the aggregation of store-based retailing and non-store retailing (Euromonitor International, 2012).

Store-based retailing is further divided into grocery retailers and non-grocery retailers. Grocery retailers refers to those selling mainly food and beverages, and other daily grocery products; whereas non-grocery retailers as per defined by Euromonitor International (2012), is inclusive of mixed retailers, health and beauty retailers, clothing and footwear retailers, home furniture and household goods retailers, durable goods retailers, leisure and personal goods retailers, and other non-grocery retailers.

Thus, in the context of this research paper, "retailing" implies the "apparel retailing", or the sales of new apparel items; clothing and footwear, to the individuals or household.

### 1.7.3 Apparel

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "apparel" literally could be translated to "clothing". On the other hand, Euromonitor International (2012) described that *"apparel is the aggregation of clothing and footwear"*. Further defined, that items categorized under "clothing" are articles of dress, wearing apparel, garments, baby and toddler wear, boys' clothing and girls' clothing, supplementary garments and clothing articles, knitted accessories such as hats and scarves, men's clothing and women's clothing.

Meanwhile, "footwear" is the aggregation of children's footwear, men's footwear and women's footwear; inclusive of both indoor and outdoor footwear, also sports and non-sports footwear made from various materials. In this research, definition of "apparel" will be referred to classification by Euromonitor International, throughout the whole process and report. "Apparel" items being referred are to be inclusive of only first hand items, which must be new when it is being offered or sold to the consumer. Any second-hand or used items, and vintage clothing or footwear would also be excluded.

### 1.7.4 Repatronage Intentions

The word "*patronage*" derived from its root word of "*patron*", which means regular customer of a store, restaurant, hotel, etc. "*Patronage*" is defined as the support given by a patron. Hence, in the context of apparel shopping, "*repatronage intentions*" is the intention of consumers in revisiting or giving continuous support to a particular apparel retail stores.

### 1.7.5 Attitude towards Store

Literally, the word "*attitude*" means a way of thinking. As according to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), in defining "*attitude*", most researches would agree that it can be described as *a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object*. Hence, in the proposed study on consumer behaviour in apparel shopping is referring to the favourable or unfavourable attitude and responds towards a particular apparel retail store.

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## 1.8    Organization of Thesis

The study begins with an overview on the background of study, and the related issues. Scope and objectives of study, along with definition of key terms are discussed in this section. Next chapter will proceed on review of the past literature and researches related to store image, attitude towards store, and consumers' repatronage intentions. Relevant theories developed on the relevant variables will also be discussed. Proceed with the third chapter is the research framework and hypotheses on relationships among store images, attitude towards store & consumer's repatronage intentions, including the research design. In chapter four, analysis outcome of the collected data will be presented, together with testing results of research hypotheses. Findings of results will be further discussed in chapter five. Lastly, conclusion for theoretical and managerial implication based on the research findings will be presented, as well as suggestion for future research of the relevant field of study.

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