THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STORE IMAGE, OVERALL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND STORE LOYALTY

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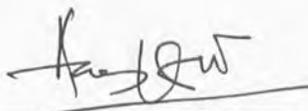5. TIDAK TERHAD.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this dissertation is my own except for quotations, excerpts, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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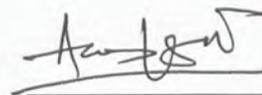
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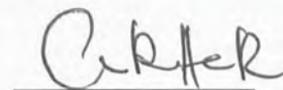DEGREE   :   MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STORE IMAGE, OVERALL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND STORE LOYALTY

This study aims to investigate the relationship that exists between selected store image dimensions, customer satisfaction and store loyalty. The objective is to examine the relationship between store image and store loyalty, between store image and overall customer satisfaction and between overall customer satisfaction and store loyalty. The study also aims to examine the role of overall customer satisfaction towards store image and store loyalty. The study should be able to help store managers determine what are the most valuable store image dimensions that they should concentrate on in order to attract customers to patronage their stores, how to ensure that they have a positive experience so that they can be satisfied and be willing to be loyal to a particular store. A survey was conducted at selected stores in the Kota Kinabalu area in for two weeks in June 2012 and managed to collect data from 270 respondents. The findings of the research showed that a significant relationship towards store loyalty exists for four of the six elements of store image that was studied namely merchandise quality, perceived price, employee customer service and reputation. Overall customer satisfaction was also found to be a significant mediator between store image and store loyalty.

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini dibuat untuk mengkaji kewujudan sebarang hubungan antara dimensi imej kedai, kepuasan pelanggan dan kesetiaan terhadap kedai. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara dimensi imej kedai dan kepuasan pelanggan, antara dimensi imej kedai dan kesetiaan terhadap kedai serta antara kepuasan pelanggan dan kesetiaan terhadap kedai. Kajian ini juga bertujuan bagi mengesahkan peranan kepuasan pelanggan sebagai perantara antara imej dimensi kedai dan kesetiaan terhadap kedai. Kajian ini akan dapat membantu pengusaha kedai mengenalpasti dimensi utama untuk dititkberatkan agar usaha dapat dilakukan untuk menggalakkan pelanggan berkunjung serta memberikan pengalaman yang positif terhadap pelanggan agar mereka akan menjadi pelanggan setia kedai mereka. Satu kajian telah dijalankan di kedai-kedai terpilih di sekitar Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu selama 2 minggu dan telah berjaya mengumpul data dari 270 responden. Daripada 6 dimensi imej yang di kaji, 4 daripadanya iaitu kualiti barangan, pandangan terhadap harga, perkhidmatan pelanggan dan reputasi mempunyai kesan signifikan kepada kesetiaan terhadap kedai. Kepuasan pelanggan juga disahkan mempunyai peranan yang penting sebagai perantara dalam hubungan antara dimensi imej dan kesetiaan pelanggan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Background

Customer loyalty is one of the key ingredients for so ensure business success. Even by only maintaining business with their current and loyal customers would have been sufficient for a company to ensure its survival (Awang, Yahya and Hussin, 2008).

The retail environment is rapidly changing with the existence of more knowledgeable and demanding customers, increasing competition with globalization as well as slow or saturated growth markets. Therefore, it is becoming harder for retailers to provide customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. However, to stay in front of their competition, retailers need to continually focus on establishing customer satisfaction and store loyalty since enhancing and retaining customer loyalty has been identified as a major source of competitive advantage within the retailing sector (Noyan and Simsek, 2011).

The mixed picture given by previous researches (Rabbanee, Ramaseshan,Wu and Vinden,2012; Mitchell and Kiral,1998; Da Silva and Syed Alwi,2006) in terms of the relationship between store image, overall customer satisfaction and store loyalty means that it is not as simple as it seems when it comes to determining what are the ingredients that will give retailers the edge in getting business from customers. The mixed picture can be attributed to various factors such as the different cultures and settings of which these researches were conducted (Vesel and Zabkar, 2009). However, the general consensus is that store image, overall customer satisfaction and store loyalty are indeed important to ensure long term sustainability (Sirohi, Mclaughlin and Wittink, 1998).

Benefits of store loyalty can be seen on how a customer or household allocates its resources towards a particular retailer (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). Loyal customers are likely to allocate more of their spending towards a store as

well as recommending the shop to the people around them such as their friends and family (Sirohi et al., 1998).

There is also an issue in terms of determining which set of store image dimensions to utilize in the study due to the fact that no consensus has been reached pertaining to this issue (Amirani and Gates, 1993). Due to the intense competition amongst stores nowadays. It is important that retailers can get an understanding of current customers' store loyalty intentions and their determinants so that retailers can devise the correct marketing strategy based on the correct variables (Sirohi et al., 1998).

1.1 Problem Statement

Retailers place an importance on how they could stay on top of their rivals due to the intense competition in the industry. However, previous researches that has been done in the past has found that the relationship between the store image, customer satisfaction and store loyalty has been inconclusive with some finding that there is a relationship while other failed to discover any significant relationship (Vesel and Zabkar, 2009; Lai,Griffin and Babin, 2009). The same goes with the role customer satisfaction in regards of its role as a significant mediator between store image and store loyalty (Caruana,2002; Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998). Hence, it is difficult for retailers to focus on the areas which they can improve or capitalize so that they can gain the extra edge in the market.

1.2 Research Question

This study intends to answer the following questions:

1) Is there a positive significant relationship between store image and store loyalty.

    i.   Is there a positive significant relationship between reputation on store loyalty.

    ii.   Is there a positive significant relationship between convenience on store loyalty.

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iii. Is there a positive significant relationship between physical facilties on store loyalty.

iv. Is there a positive significant relationship between employees customer service on store loyalty.

v. Is there a positive significant relationship between perceived price on store loyalty.

vi. Is there a positive significant relationship between merchandise quality on store loyalty.

2) Is there a positive significant relationship between store image and overall customer satisfaction.

i) Is there a positive significant relationship between reputation on overall customer satisfaction.

ii) Is there a positive significant relationship between convenience on overall customer satisfaction.

iii) Is there a positive significant relationship between physical facilties on overall customer satisfaction.

iv) Is there a positive significant relationship between employees customer service on store loyalty.

v) Is there a positive significant relationship between perceived price on store loyalty.

vi) Is there a positive significant relationship between merchandise quality on store loyalty.

3) Is there a positive significant relationship between overall customer satisfaction and store loyalty.

4) Does overall customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between store image and store loyalty.

i) Does overall customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between reputation and store loyalty.

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ii)   Does overall customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between convenience and store loyalty.

iii)   Does overall customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between physical facilties and store loyalty.

iv)   Does overall customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between employees customer service and store loyalty.

v)   Does overall customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between perceived price and store loyalty.

vi)   Does overall customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between merchandise quality and store loyalty.

1.3   Research Objective

The objective of this research is to identify significant relationships between store image, overall customer satisfaction and store loyalty. This study will include 6 dimensions of store image namely:-

i) Reputation
ii) Convenience
iii) Physical Facilities
iv) Employees Customer Service
v) Perceived Price
vi) Merchandise Quality

Specifically, the objectives are to:

1)   To examine the relationship between store image and store loyalty.

     i.   To examine the relationship between reputation and store loyalty.

     ii.   To examine the relationship between convenience and store loyalty.

     iii.   To examine the relationship between physical facilties and store loyalty.

     iv.   To examine the relationship between employees customer service and store loyalty.

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v.   To examine the relationship between perceived price and store loyalty.

vi.   To examine the relationship between merchandise quality and store loyalty.

2)   To examine the relationship between store image and overall customer satisfaction.

i.   To examine the relationship between reputation and overall customer satisfaction.

ii.   To examine the relationship between convenience and overall customer satisfaction.

iii. To examine the relationship between physical facilties and overall customer satisfaction.

iv.   To examine the relationship between employees customer service and overall customer satisfaction.

v.   To examine the relationship between perceived price and overall customer satisfaction.

vi.   To examine the relationship between merchandise quality and overall customer satisfaction.

3)   To examine the relationship between overall customer satisfaction and store loyalty.

4)   To examine the role of overall customer satisfaction as a mediating factor in the relationship between store image and store loyalty.

i.   To examine the role of overall customer satisfaction as a mediating factor in the relationship between reputation and store loyalty.

ii.   To examine the role of overall customer satisfaction as a mediating factor in the relationship between convenience and store loyalty.

iii. To examine the role of overall customer satisfaction as a mediating factor in the relationship between physical facilties and store loyalty.

iv. To examine the role of overall customer satisfaction as a mediating factor in the relationship between employees customer service and store loyalty.

v. To examine the role of overall customer satisfaction as a mediating factor in the relationship between perceived price and store loyalty.

vi. To examine the role of overall customer satisfaction as a mediating factor in the relationship between merchandise quality and store loyalty.

1.4 Significance of Study

The study will confirm the relationship that exists between store image, overall customer satisfaction and store loyalty.

The study helps to give a clearer picture to retailers on what are the factors that consumers specifically Malaysian consumers consider in their decision making regarding the destination choice of where to do their shopping. Malaysian retailers might have only consider factors that are relevant in western societies and emphasize less on elements that matters the most to their Malaysian customers.

By focusing on the right store image, retailers are able to implement the right programs that can meet the expectations of the consumers who shop at their stores and eventually help build customer loyalty towards their stores.

1.5 Scope of Study

Variables in this study will focus on investigating the relationship between store image, overall customer satisfaction and store loyalty.

The research was conducted at selected supermarkets and hypermarkets located within the Kota Kinabalu City limits for a period of 2 weeks. A sample from 400 respondents will be taken. This number should be sufficient to represent the population based on Hair et al. (2006) on the 41 items contained in the questionaire. Customers who just finished their grocery shopping in the hypermarket were stopped and asked of their willingness to participate in the

survey. This is done in order to gauge the respondents post experience overall satisfaction where customers are only contacted once they have finished their shopping (Reddy, Reddy and Azeem, 2011).

Hence the unit of analysis will be on the individual consumer in order to find what are the relationships that exist between store image as well as the the function of overall customer satisfaction towards store loyalty.

1.6 Definition of Terms

The definitions for the terms were mainly adapted from Wu and Tian (2009), Reddy et al. (2011), Chowdhury, Reardon and Srivastava (1998) as well as Bridson, Evans and Hickman (2008).

As the questionnaires for reputation, convenience, physical facilities employees' customer service and perceived price were adopted from Wu and Tian (2009), the definitions for these store images were similarly adopted from the same source as well as from other sources. While for overall customer satisfaction and store loyalty, the definition will be adopted from Bridson et al. (2008: pp366).

1.6.1 Reputation

In Wu and Tian (2009), reputation was labelled as institutional factors. In this study, it was renamed reputation. It consists of the style of the store whether it is conservative or modern, its attributes for reputation and reliability. A high level for reputation will imply that the store provides excellent goods and services. As a result, customers will be able to able to recognize and recall the store more easily.

1.6.2 Convenience

Convenience involves factors related to how easy is it to get services in the store, the amount of travelling that needs to be done to get to the store as well as how easy is it to purchase goods from the store. For Awang, Yahya and Hussin (2008), it is related to the quality of store appearance, and convenience of store layout. High level convenience entails an accessible location as well as increasing customers satisfaction through easy shopping, time saving, service accessibility as

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well as flexible opening time of the store. It also includes the provision of spacious and ample parking ground (Wu and Tian, 2009).

Table 1.1: Definition of Variables by Authors

Store Image	Author	Type of Variable
Reputation	Wu and Tian (2009)	Independent
Convenience	Wu and Tian (2009)	Independent
	Chowdhury et al. (1998)	
Physical facilities	Wu and Tian (2009)	Independent
Employees customer service	Wu and Tian (2009)	Independent
	Chowdhury et al. (1998)	
Perceived price	Wu and Tian (2009)	Independent
	Chowdhury et al. (1998)	
Merchandise Quality	Reddy et al (2011)	Independent
Overall Customer Satisfaction	Reddy et al. (2011)	Mediator
	Bridson et al. (2008).	
Loyalty	Reddy et al. (2011)	Dependent
	Wu and Tian (2009)	
	Bridson et al. (2008)	

1.6.3 Physical Facilities

Physical facilities takes into account of the in store physical features such as design, lighting and layout. Managers should arrange appealing physical facilities in a store since consumers infer the quality of services and goods from the physical facilities of the store i.e. physical facilities are indicators of expected quality. Consumer satisfaction caused by physical facilities will also enhance retailer associations (Wu and Tian, 2009).

1.6.4 Employees Customer Service

Measures the level of service that a customer experience such as level of assistance received, speed of service etc while patronizing the store. According to Reddy et al. (2011: pp. 354), the importance of service quality on loyalty varies

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across situations and service quality is more important than satisfaction for retailing setup.

1.6.5 Perceived price

Measures the value for money that the customer receives when purchasing goods from the store. Consumers will be more satisfied with a store with good perceived price because they can buy products for less. Good value for money creates the perception of saving, which leads to better customer satisfaction and retailer associations (Wu and Tian, 2009).

1.6.6 Merchandise Quality

Is related to the range, quality and price of the products sold in the store. Merchandise is usually the core part that consumers purchase Reddy et al. (2011: pp. 354). Merchandise Quality is a measure of the perception that the consumer has relating to the quality of the products that are sold in the store. In the study done by Hsu, Huang and Swanson (2010), they defined merchandise dimension as one that involves customers' value perceptions in relationship to quality of produce and meat at fair prices, in addition to an extensive selection of products and brands to provide customer choice.

Sirohi et al. (1998 : pp. 226) considered perceived quality as being defined by the consumer's judgment about the extent of superiority or excellence of the product and can be classified as intrinsic or extrinsic cues. Intrinsic cues involve the physical composition of the product (e.g. flavor and color in beverages) while extrinsic cues include other, generally controllable, elements (e.g. price and brand name). The effect of perceived merchandise quality on shoppers' store loyalty intentions will influence the degree of importance of the extrinsic cues.

1.6.7 Overall Customer Satisfaction

Based on the definition from Bridson et al. (2008: pp. 366), the expectation disconfirmation paradigm whereby satisfaction results from the meeting of the consumer's standards will be adopted in this study as it is the dominant view. It

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