

Measuring Retailer Store Image: A Scale Development Study

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Abstract

This paper aims at developing a reliable and valid measure of retailer store image. Scientific scale development process has been followed. Survey methodology was used to collect data. The results are tested for reliability and validity using confirmatory factor analysis. The study conceptualizes a retailer's image as a reliable and valid multidimensional construct, explained in eight dimensions. The scale can be used to measure the perception of customers with regard to these eight factors and would provide directions to managers for retailing strategies.

Key words: store attributes; customer perception; scale development; organized retail

JEL classification: M31; L81

1. Introduction

Measurement of retailer store image is a challenging task owing to complexities in description and lack of clear definition of the construct and its dimensionalities. A lot of study in the West has been done but earlier studies emphasize the need for development of a robust metrics for its measurement. Past research has identified and classified components which make up store image. Many studies agree that store image requires a multiattribute model (Bloemer and de Ruyter, 1998), which consists of both the more visible attributes (functional qualities), such as the quality and availability of merchandise, and the less tangible attributes (psychological attributes), such as the atmosphere (e.g., lighting, sounds, smells, and colors), of the store (Cox and Brittain, 2000; Davies and Ward, 2002).

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Lewison (1997, p. 11) provides a list of store image dimensions; including product, service, price, place, and promotion, and each dimension contains several attributes. More such studies on the attributes/dimensions of retail store image are summarized in Table 1. However there has not been a single valid study focusing on this area in the Indian context as organized retail is in nascent stages yet promises a huge growth opportunity.

For the purposes of the current study, various tangible and intangible store attributes were identified based on customer perception, expert opinion, and earlier research. Validity, reliability, and model fit were examined through confirmatory factor analysis (using AMOS software) of the extracted factors.

1.1 Store Image

Store image is considered an important factor influencing store choice and patronage behavior 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 behavior is associated with acts a consumer performs for the purpose of making a purchase from a store. Consumers rely on their perceptions when choosing a store (Blackwell et al., 2006).

Several researchers also found that the importance that consumers place on store image attributes influenced patronage behavior (Baker et al., 2002). Literature has indicated that elements of the “product mix” capture the quality and assortment of goods as well as their presentation (Lindquist, 1974). Habitually, the customer’s perception on the quality of products and assortment are positively related to the patronage of a store as well as the perceived merchandise value (Grewal et al., 2003). In India the concept of private label brands nowadays is gaining more importance as the retailers have realized its contribution to overall revenue and brand equity.

In addition, pricing either in conjunction or in isolation with product policy contributes to a great degree to the retailer’s positioning and “personality” (McGoldrick, 1990). The customers in India are price sensitive and evaluate the retail offer in terms of forfeit. Pricing was found to be one of the most important attributes in grocery-shopping decisions. Further, the price level has been found to be an influential factor in terms of retail format choice and determinant of different customer groups.

Moreover, Fox et al. (2004) found that people can be inelastic to price changes, and price has a great effect on the value of the store. Although a supermarket context is a self-service one, it is certain that the service provisions to the customer are an important attribute. The service provision includes “moments of truth” with personnel: information enquires, guidance to the location of goods, interactions with cashiers, and so on. The relationship between consumer and retailer is enhanced by the service provision, which increases customers’ positive buying experience and further affects future behavior in terms of repeat visits (Reynolds and Beatty, 1999). Furthermore, customer’s perceptions regarding the performance of salespeople is a critical factor influencing satisfaction (Darian et al., 2001). However, a study by

Hansen and Solgaard (2004) found that quality and service levels did not appear to be influential on the customer across different grocery formats.

Another important attribute of store image is store atmosphere. This refers to the environment that is created by combining a set of visual elements of the physical store environment (e.g., colors, displays, decorative features, ease of movement) and stimulation of senses (e.g., smell, condition of the air, music, lighting) enabling an aesthetic consumer response. Stores with a favorable atmosphere are likely to increase the positive buying experience and customer satisfaction (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982) as well as affecting the time the customer spends in the store and the amount spent. The study suggested that consumer behavior is mostly due to emotional response brought about by the store environment. In this scenario, it is then astute to not only assume but also know that the consumer's affective state (i.e., mood) affects judgment or information processing (Bakamitsos and 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.

Moreover, in-store convenience represents an important attribute of store environmental stimuli. In store convenience refers to a store layout and design, which helps customers plan their trip in terms of orientation and direction. They also become skilled at understanding the various signs and labels and control their shopping exploration and trip (Spies et al., 1997). The successful layout of a store depends on whether it has a clear and legible concept; i.e., one can easily find products and find them the first time on different trips. The various labels, information posters, and signs can contribute to the concept of the store layout design in creating a favorable and attractive store environment (Spies et al., 1997).

Even the importance of facilities has been established. According to Thang and Tan (2003), consumers tend to view a store with good facilities in a favorable light. Consumers' shopping orientations determine their preference for facilities (Moye and Kincade, 2002); therefore, facilities contribute to differentiating 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 and Patel, 2004).

Lee et al. (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 rationalise given [its] prominence in shaping the retail environment and ... enjoyment level." Kent (2003, 2007) focused on the design behind a store image. This study focused on the design of the brand with the retailer environment centered on consumer buying behavior.

Another important factor enhancing retailer's image is service. Service is a crucial element of a brand; this includes staff-customer interaction (i.e., sales) (Newman and Patel, 2004). Sales personnel are responsible for the social interaction with customers and hence strengthen the customer relationship. Service not only builds customer relationships but also leads to positive word-of-mouth and customer

loyalty (Newman and Patel, 2004). Customers' perception of social cues, which includes service, improves their perception of merchandise (Hu and Jasper, 2006; Newman and Patel, 2004). Teller et al. (2006) found that sales personnel service greatly affects 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 (1992). Good service therefore contributes toward forming a positive store image.

Selected studies on the attributes/dimensions of retail store image are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Dimensions of Store Image Classified by Different Studies

No.	Authors and date	Context	Attributes
1	De Wulf et al. (2001)	Shopping mall (food and apparel)	Direct mail, preferential treatment, interpersonal, communication, tangible rewards
2	De Wulf et al. (2003)	Clothing retailer	Product price, product quality, service quality, direct mail, preferential treatment, interpersonal communication, tangible rewards
3	Odekerken-Schroder et al. (2003)	Shopping mall	Communication, preferential treatment, personalization, rewarding
4	Stoel et al. (2004)	Shopping mall	Cleanliness of mall, mall hours, availability of parking, courtesy of mall personnel, location convenient to home, spaciousness of mall, location convenient to work, number of department stores in the mall, variety of specialty stores in the mall, decoration throughout the mall, atmosphere of mall, selection of entertainment features for children/young adults/adults, accessibility from the street, safety of parking, safety of the mall
5	Shim and Eastlick (1998)	Shopping mall	Safe environment, sufficient parking, safe parking, cleanliness, value for price, pleasant atmosphere, specialty retail mix, convenient location, quality merchandise, spacious walkways
6	Finn and Louviere (1996)	Shopping mall	High quality, wide selection, good service, high/low prices, latest fashions, physical characteristics
7	Reynolds et al. (2002)	Traditional malls and outlet malls	Mall essentials, brand-name merchandise, entertainment, convenience
8	Thang and Tan (2003)	Department stores	Merchandizing, store atmosphere, in-store service, reputation, accessibility, promotion, facilities, post-transaction
9	Severin et al. (2001)	Shopping center and supermarket chain	High quality, wide selection, good service, convenient location, low/high prices, latest fashions, nice atmosphere, good bargain/sales

Table 1. Dimensions of Store Image Classified by Different Studies (Continued)

No.	Authors and date	Context	Attributes
10	Leo and Philippe (2002)	Metropolitan retailers	Retail mix, pricing, environment, accessibility
11	Anselmsson (2006)	Shopping center	Selection, atmosphere, convenience, salespeople, location, refreshments, promotional activities, merchandising policy
12	El-Adly (2007)	Shopping mall	Comfort, entertainment, diversity, mall essence, convenience, and luxury
13	Morschett et al. (2005)	Grocery stores	Selection, quality products, freshness, price, one-stop shopping possibility, advertising, checkout lines, service, convenience, store design, customer relationship programs, tidiness, cleanliness
14	Barich and Srinivasan (1993)	Department store	Product variety, product quality, store attractiveness, reasonable prices, convenience, customer service
15	Sirohi et al. (1998)	Supermarket chain	Store operations, store appearance, personnel service, sales promotion, relative price, merchandise quality, perceived value, perceived value of competitor
16	Porter and Claycomb (1997)	Clothing retailer	Fashion, selection, quality of merchandise, customer service, sales personnel, physical condition, store atmosphere
17	Cox and Brittain (2000)	Shopping mall	Merchandise, store location, promotion, pricing policy, service, store clientele, store atmosphere, layout
18	Davies and Ward (2002)	Supermarket	Merchandise (assortment, quality, brand mix and price); store location, internal and external environment, atmosphere, and name/fascia; service (personnel and levels of quality); promotion (advertising/public relations and in-store)
19	En-Chi Chang (2010)	Hypermarket	Convenience, reputation, store atmosphere; service personnel; merchandise, services
20	Burt and Carralero-Encinas (2000)	Shopping mall	Customer service, store reputation, produce range, physical characteristics, character and pricing policy
21	Wang and Ha (2011)	Department Store	Post-transaction service, direct mail, interpersonal communication, merchandise, preferential treatment, and store atmosphere
22	Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou (2008)	Supermarket	Products, pricing, atmosphere, personnel, merchandising, and in-store convenience

Retail literature agrees that consumers impute differing degrees of value on certain store attributes (Osman, 1993). Store image has been regarded as an important antecedent in retail studies of store preference, consumer satisfaction, the

frequency of store visits, shopping trips, shopping expenditure, and store loyalty (Pan and Zinkhan, 2006; Martenson, 2007).

Therefore, to measure retailer store image with a retail store and its offer, it is necessary to have a robust model, a crucial weapon for retail success.

2. Methodology

2.1 Scale Development

Guidelines provided by Nunnally (1978) were followed for scale development. This involved generating initial scale items, item screening and refinement using review panels, formal pre-test of item purification and revision, further test for refinement of the items, and finally conducting a field survey for validation. A similar process has been followed for scale development in many other studies (Colwell et al., 2008).

Extensive review of the literature and exploratory surveys of selected retail consumers and retail managers enabled us to define the retailer store image. This stage helped in developing an initial list of 53 items associated with store image. Principal component analysis was conducted to extract a set of factors capable of capturing the main domain of retailer store image. Prior to the final extraction of factors, a Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy confirmed a significant correlation among the variables supporting application of factor analysis. The factors finally selected were given self-explanatory labels (Table 2). Out of 53 variables, 41 were grouped under 8 factors. All factors were checked for their reliability through Cronbach's alpha value. The Cronbach's alpha values of the dimensions were high across all questionnaires, ranging between 0.67 and 0.92, indicating strong internal consistency. These were well above the recommended value of 0.6 (Nunnally, 1978). The 8 factors which were identified were: atmosphere, convenience, facilities, merchandise, services, price, transparency in transaction, and wow factor. The reliability and factor loading results are portrayed in Table 2.

The study now aims at empirically confirming the reliability and validity of the retail store image scale (RSIS) in the context of the Indian retail environment. The scale comprises the 8 major constructs explaining the store image. Each construct in turn is explained via distinct sets of statements being measured on a common intensity-based 5-point Likert scale (from totally disagree to totally agree).

The store-image-dimension-based questionnaire was administered to 400 respondents comprising frequent customers of prominent organized apparel retail outlets having major presence across the Indian National Capital Region in particular and across India in general. The selection of respondents has been done on a convenience basis. A total of 319 valid and complete responses have been used for the final study. On the basis of responses received, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) has been conducted using AMOS software to confirming the empirical

reliability and validity of the RSIS model in the Indian retail environment in the context of organized apparel retailers.

Table 2. Results of Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Factor loadings</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
<i>Atmosphere</i>	Fashionability of store interior	0.893	0.793
	Style of décor in store	0.761	
	Music in store	0.754	
	Colors used in store	0.713	
	Finishing materials used in the store	0.709	
<i>Convenience</i>	Time it takes to travel to store	0.876	0.742
	Accessibility of store	0.864	
	Parking space	0.816	
	Shopping ease	0.768	
<i>Facilities</i>	Position/width of aisles in store	0.913	0.831
	Number of trial rooms	0.894	
	Accessibility of merchandise rails	0.784	
	Baggage counter	0.760	
<i>Price</i>	Charge reasonable prices	0.876	0.783
	The prices are low compare to the competitors	0.842	
	The price quality relation	0.796	
<i>Merchandise</i>	Varieties of merchandise categories	0.842	0.842
	Quality of merchandise in store	0.795	
	Availability of designer label merchandise	0.763	
	Carry the latest fashions and styles	0.712	
<i>Wow</i>	Free gifts and vouchers	0.869	0.763
	Membership benefits	0.841	
	Loyalty cards	0.726	
<i>Service</i>	Expertise of sales personnel	0.879	0.742
	Courteousness of sales personnel	0.792	
	Return and exchange	0.738	
	Availability of mail order	0.783	
<i>Transparency in transaction</i>	Average transaction completion time	0.862	0.747
	Availability of multiple billing counters	0.794	
	Point-of-sale card payment options	0.736	

3. Data Analysis and Findings

The study determines construct-wise reliability using Cronbach's alpha estimates (Cronbach, 1951) and validity based on model fit estimates.

3.1 Reliability Analysis

All constructs were found to be reliable as their individual construct reliability (CR) values are greater than the floor estimate of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978) (Table 2). The construct-wise reliability was estimated owing multi-dimensionality of the store image constructs. In addition, the overall reliability of the measurement model was also established by achieving a Cronbach's alpha statistic of 0.95.

3.2 Validity Analysis

To establish validity of independent constructs and over all measurements in the model, CFA has been carried out. Validity measures are mainly of three types: content validity and construct validity, comprising convergent validity and discriminant validity.

3.3 Content Validity

The content validity of a construct can be defined as the degree to which the measure spans the domain of the construct's theoretical definition (Rungtusanatham, 1998). For the purpose of this study, content validity of the instrument was established in consultation with academicians, professional domain experts, and retail executives.

3.4 Construct Validity

Construct validity involves the assessment of the degree to which an operationalization correctly measures its targeted variables (O'Learly-Kelly and Vokurka, 1998). According to them, establishing construct validity involves the empirical assessment of unidimensionality, reliability, and validity (convergent and discriminant). In the present study, in order to check unidimensionality, a measurement model was specified for each construct, and CFA was run for all the constructs. Individual items in the model were examined to see how closely they represent the same construct. A comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.90 or above for the model implies that there exists a strong evidence of unidimensionality (Byrne, 1994). The CFI values obtained for all 8 constructs in the scale are equal to or above 0.90 (Table 3), indicating strong evidence of unidimensionality for the scale. Upon satisfaction of unidimensionality and reliability parameters, the scale was further subjected to empirical validation analysis.

Table 3. Model Fit Indices for Individual Constructs of RSIS Model

<i>Indices</i>	<i>Ideally</i>	<i>Atmosphere</i>	<i>Convenience</i>	<i>Facilities</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Merchandise</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>TIT</i>	<i>WOW</i>
CFI	≥ 0.95	0.949	0.987	0.982	0.998	0.997	0.932	0.962	0.952
GFI	≥ 0.95	0.986	0.976	0.956	0.994	0.995	0.916	0.936	0.923
AGFI	≥ 0.80	0.949	0.936	0.920	0.977	0.975	0.920	0.913	0.910
CMIN/df	< 3	2.804	2.892	2.630	1.267	1.625	1.430	2.130	2.130
P-value	≥ 0.05	0.024	0.003	< 0.001	0.281	0.197	0.023	0.031	< 0.001
RMSEA	≤ 0.05	0.075	0.077	0.072	0.029	0.044	0.078	0.042	0.052
P close	≥ 0.05	0.171	0.097	0.045	0.620	0.429	0.035	0.085	0.041

3.5 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which multiple methods of measuring a variable provide the same results (O’Leary-Kelly and Vokurka, 1998). Convergent validity can be established with the help of CR based on Cronbach’s alpha and average variance explained (AVE). The following criteria must be satisfied to ensure convergent validity: $CR > 0.7$, $CR > AVE$, and $AVE > 0.5$ (Hair et al., 2010).

The alpha value of all 8 constructs is higher than 0.7. The AVE of 4 individual constructs were found to be greater than 0.5. Further, in case of all 8 individual constructs, the CR (alpha) statistic is significantly greater than the respective AVE statistic (Table 4). Thus, all individual constructs satisfied all pre-requisites of convergent validity.

3.6 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is the degree to which the measures of different latent variables are unique. Discriminant validity is ensured if a measure does not correlate very highly with other measures from which it is supposed to differ (O’Leary-Kelly and Vokurka, 1998). Discriminant validity is established on the basis of AVE and maximum shared variance (MSV).

Criteria for ensuring discriminant validity are $MSV < AVE$ and $ASV < AVE$ (Hair et al., 2010). Within the present study, MSV and ASV for each of the 8 individual constructs have been determined. The measurement model was found to be valid in terms of discriminant validity as both MSV and ASV of individual constructs have been found to be lower than their respective AVE estimates (Table 4). The discriminant validity statistics for the individual constructs were determined using Microsoft Excel-based validity concerns toolkit developed by Prof. Gakingston.

Table 4. Reliability and Validity Estimates of the RSIS Measurement Model

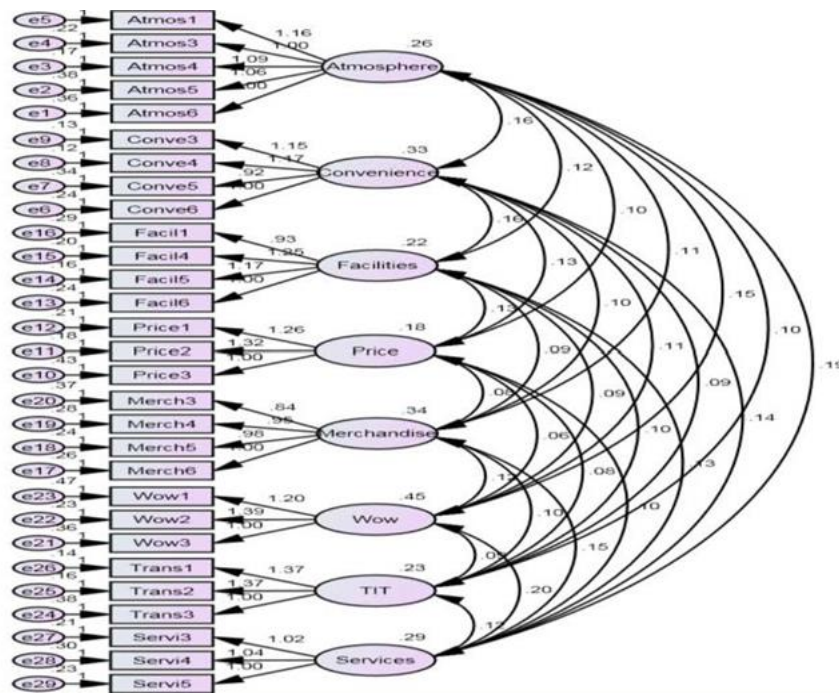
Construct	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
<i>WOW</i>	0.924	0.671	0.446	0.280
<i>ATMOS</i>	0.841	0.515	0.511	0.309
<i>PRICE</i>	0.817	0.532	0.375	0.223
<i>FACIL</i>	0.838	0.511	0.375	0.298
<i>CONV</i>	0.862	0.680	0.367	0.239
<i>SERVI</i>	0.814	0.593	0.511	0.351
<i>MERC</i>	0.888	0.617	0.465	0.284
<i>TIT</i>	0.873	0.572	0.473	0.279

4. Model Fit Estimation—Measurement Model

Upon satisfaction of reliability and validity of individual constructs as well as the overall RSIS measurement model, the study proceeded to determine fitness of

the overall measurement model (Figure 1) based on model fit indices generated as a part of AMOS output.

Figure 1. Retailer Store Image Scale—A Measurement Model



Model fit is assessed on the basis of CMIN/df, the corresponding p-value, the comparative fit index (CFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and P close. Model fit indices for all individual constructs were calculated. Out of the 8 constructs forming the part of RSIS, 3 constructs (i.e., wow, convenience, and services) generated good results with respect to all the specified indices, while the remaining 5 (i.e., atmosphere, price, TIT, facilities, and merchandise) reflected good results with respect to 5 out of the 7 model fit indices considered, and hence were deemed fit based on the rule of majority. Subsequent to determination of model fit indices for individual constructs the model fit estimates were calculated towards ascertaining fitness of the overall RSIS measurement model comprising of all eight constructs. The RSIS measurement model was deemed fit based on acceptable model fit indices (Table 5).

Further, the indices of default model were found to have higher convergence towards the saturated model indices compared to the indices of independent model as indicated by AMOS output.

Table 5. Model Fit Indices of the RSIS Measurement Model

Indices	Recommended Value	Model Fit Indices
GFI	≥ 0.95	0.88
P-value	≥ 0.05	< 0.01
CFI	≥ 0.95	0.94
CMIN/df	< 3	2.01
AGFI	≥ 0.80	0.85
RMSEA	≤ 0.05	0.05
P close	≥ 0.05	0.05

5. Conclusion, Implications and Future Scope

The measurement of store image assumes paramount significance in the retail context. Establishment of valid and reliable RSIS will serve as a strategic tool for retailers operating across diverse formats. The present research establishes the reliability and validity of a modified 8-construct RSIS model comprising atmosphere, convenience, facilities, merchandise, services, price, transparency in transaction, and wow factor.

Managerial Implications. Prevalent retail practices focus on creating a pleasurable shopping experience in anticipation to deliver favorable customer service. Retail managers can be significantly benefited by a reliable and valid RSIS as it will enable them to measure customers' overall perception and feelings towards retail store image. It can serve as an instant feedback on retailing service efforts in terms of service, transparency in transaction, atmosphere, product assortment (merchandise), and convenience. Expected and actual levels of customer responses can be studied. An understanding of customers' experiential responses may help retailers in better management of retail stores and aligning their efforts towards ensuring enhanced overall retail shopping experience. Retailers can further identify the factors leading to creation of a positive retail customer's experience in terms of store image.

Scope for Future Research. The present study validates the modified RSIS in the context of organized apparel retail (departmental) stores in the context of the Indian retail environment. Further, respondents for the study comprised customers of stores having significant presence within the Indian National Capital Region. Generalizations of results on overall retail segment requires more studies on a cross section of samples in different store contexts and regions within India for validation purposes. The influence of moderating variables such as consumer profile, type of store, and other situational variables may be assessed by future research.

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