

The Impact of Store image on Customer Perception

By

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DECLARATION

The researcher hereby declares that the thesis “**The Impact of Store Image on Customer Perception**” is her own work, and that all sources have been referred to, and quoted have indicated and acknowledged with complete references.

Nabeelah Waja



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

A major research project like this is never the work of anyone alone. The contributions of many different people, in their different ways, have made this possible. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the people who have been instrumental in the successful completion of this project.

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ABSTRACT:

This study aimed to shed insight on how store image influences customer perception. Everything customers see, hear and experience is linked together and forms their overall perception of a store. The first objective of the study was to analyze whether a relationship exists between the store choice and customers biographical details. The second objective is to identify components of store image that shoppers may consider important in store selection process; how the case company can use this knowledge and develop the business and customer service even further.

Eight dimensions of shopping enjoyment are proposed and a 47-item measure was developed to measure 155 consumer perceptions from various malls in the geographical area of Cape Town. Findings indicate that there are no statistically significant relations between store image and consumers demographic factors such as age, gender, level of education, marital status, occupation and income. Furthermore, respondents rated physical characteristics of the store which included factors such as the neatness and cleanliness of the store, its decor, the wideness of the aisles, air-conditioning and lighting as the most important element when making a store choice.

The implications of these results are discussed, together with practical and theoretical implications, study limitations, and future research directions.

KEY WORDS: Store image, Perception, Consumer, Store Choice, Store Loyalty, Price, Store Personnel, Advertising/ Promotion, Store Location, Image Attributes

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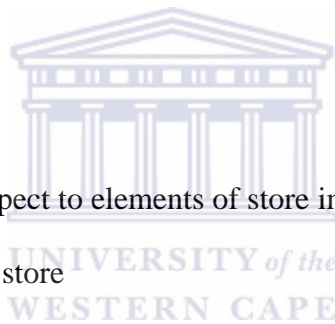
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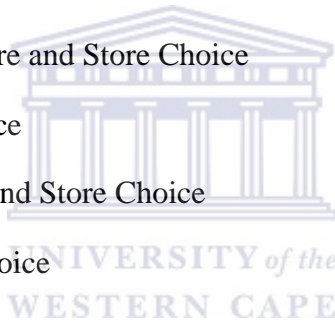
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CHAPTER 1

1.1.Introduction

This introductory chapter explains the focus of the study. More specifically, this chapter presents the background of study, its research problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study and its scope.

Image is the most powerful influence in the way people perceive their immediate environment, thus it remains a crucial concept in literature. Retailing plays an important role in the functioning of modern economies and hence in the standard of living of consumers. South Africa has a different retailing landscape “where it has both a sophisticated first world retailing sector especially in the urban areas and a third world retailing infrastructure in the rural and township areas” (Terbalanche, 1998, p. 26). The township and rural areas are not fully developed, with reliance still on the traditional forms of retailing infrastructure. In the 1900s and the early 2000s store retailers struggled to maintain a viable position in a competitive retail market (Moye & Kincade, 2002).

Store image is the overall impression of a store as perceived by consumers, tangibly and intangibly, and becomes pivotal to ascertain as it may be used as a competitive advantage by retailers to evaluate the success of their marketing efforts and establish, through similar efforts, a competitive advantage in comparable host markets overseas (Ranelid & Ballo, 2006). The importance of store image for apparel retailers cannot be disputed (Du Preez, Visser Van Noordwyk, 2006). In the highly competitive and dynamic apparel market, organisations

endeavour to use all possible resources to gain market share. One way of differentiating one store from another is the unique store image offered to clientele. Consumers use store image as an evaluative criterion in the decision-making process concerning retail outlet selection. Varley (2005, p. 19) summarised this situation as follows: “in concentrated and relatively saturated retail markets, the position that a retailer etches out in the consumers’ mind is a vital element of its strategy. Customers must be given a good reason to shop with one retailer rather than another.

The image of a retailer differentiates it from its competitors and provides the backdrop that portrays its service and merchandise offering. Store image may be one of the most important reasons why consumers prefer specific service providers and avoid others. For the prestige seeking consumer, store image is even more significant (Deeter-Schmelz, Moore & Goe-Bel, 2000). In a highly competitive environment retailers therefore have to be highly cognisant of the dimensions of their service, specifically the “mental pictures” that consumers develop of the various dimensions of their service and how that might influence the image of their organisation (Lewison, 1997). Since consumers’ choice of a store and their loyalty towards a specific store or service provider are influenced by their image of the service provider, it is crucial that the image of a service provider should be crafted with its target market in mind. That would help consumers to identify and positively associate with it (Newman & Cullen, 2002).

1.2. Problem Statement

Retail markets have become very competitive in recent times, both globally and locally. Indeed, the entering of Walmart into the South African retail market has been hailed as an event that will benefit cost-conscious buyers because of the increased competition (Cambiaso, 2011). The South African market is characterised by heterogeneous groups of consumers. This heterogeneity exists in the food and non-food markets, which comprise customers with different cultures, income, tastes, expectations, and motives (Evangeldis, 1994). In business retailing, the exploration of studies on consumer demographics, behaviour, attitude and attribute are useful as a framework for profiling consumer's ultimate choice in retail purchasing (Doherty, 2007). Dhurup (2010) argues the formation of store image is a complex process which may be influenced by various variables, which have been difficult for researchers to conceptualise and operationalise.

Retail is a fast-growing industry that is expanding each day. As the population grows, the expectations of customers increase. Customer perception has a huge influence on a customer's retail preference. It is important for retailers to know what the customers' preferences are in order to acknowledge future demands and shape their marketing strategies accordingly (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008).

In light of the above, understanding consumers' buying behaviour is of utmost importance for retailers, to enable them to maintain their competitive edge. Consumer characteristics, store attributes, store image, store choice and retailing strategies are some of the key concepts that play a role in successful retailing (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). The marketing mix along with the store image attributes equally contribute to the overall store image, which consumers apply to

evaluate the store on a multi-attribute utility function (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). Limited research has been done on the South African consumer's perception of store image attributes. This study hence endeavours to gather information on the research question: Is there a relationship between store image and customer perception?

1.3. Motivation for the study

Stores offer a variety of goods and services. The differences in the shopping experience of customers between retail outlets is often as significant to the customer as differences in the physical characteristics of the goods offered (Gomez, 2004). Taking this into account, consumer perceptions regarding franchise stores and the implications of these perceptions on store loyalty are a prominent aspect of the customer experience which has received little attention from researchers in South Africa. This study aims to fill this gap by uncovering insights into current consumer perceptions of franchise stores in the South African supermarket sector.

1.4. Aims and Objectives for the study

This study aims to investigate how people's perceptions extend to relevant concepts such as store image, trust and satisfaction among South African franchise supermarket shoppers. The purpose of the study was to find out how the store image and overall look of the store plays a role on how customers perceive that store, both when it comes to the actual store itself, how the customer

experiences the services they receive and other store image characteristics. The aim is thus to analyse existing customer's perceptions of the store.

The research objectives for this study are:

- To determine whether a relationship exists between the store choice and each of the biographical variables (age, gender, marital status, level of education, occupation and income) respectively.
- To investigate the importance of store image dimension's and sub-dimensions for consumers in an ideal retail store.
- To empirically investigate and conceptualise the relationship between a store's image and a consumer's buying behaviour.
- To identify components of store image that shoppers may consider important in store selection process. To determine the variance in the general characteristics of the store based on age, gender, marital status, level of education, occupation and income.

1.5. Hypotheses

A research hypothesis is the statement created by researchers when they speculate upon the outcome of a research or experiment (Shuttleworth, 2008) . According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010) there are three types of hypothesis namely: If-Then statements, directional and non-directional hypotheses and null and alternate hypotheses.

This study focuses on the null and alternate hypotheses format. The null hypothesis is a proposition that states a definitive, exact relationship between two variables and the alternative

hypothesis is the opposite of the null; it is a statement expressing a relationship between two variables or indicating differences between two groups (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

The hypotheses formulated for this study are:

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between the age of the respondents and the general characteristics of a store.

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between the gender of the respondents and the general characteristics of a store.

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between the marital status of the respondents and the general characteristics of a store.

H4: There is a statistically significant relationship between the level of education of the respondents and the general characteristics of a store.

H5: There is a statistically significant relationship between the occupation of the respondents and the general characteristics of a store.

H6: There is a statistically significant relationship between the income of the respondents and the general characteristics of a store.

1.6. Limitations of the study

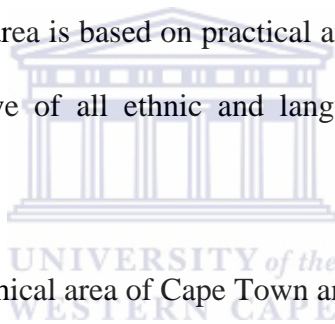
Though the sample of 155 is adequate for the purpose of this study, it cannot be considered as a representation of the general population. This limits the generalisability of the results.

Another limitation is that there may be other factors influencing the development of store image. This study is limited to the variables mentioned as the most important factors in the study.

The retail stores where the study was conducted does not represent the whole spectrum of retail stores. Therefore the findings may not be generalised to all retail stores.

The selection of the geographical area is based on practical and resource considerations, thus the study is not entirely representative of all ethnic and language groups. This could limit the generalisation of the results.

The study is limited to the geographical area of Cape Town and the store image scale was administered in English only.



1.7. Overview of the chapters:

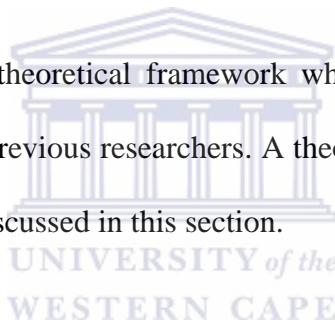
The thesis is presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This section introduces the background of the study, the rationale for the investigation, research problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study and it generally provides the positioning in the framework of the main research area.

Chapter 2: Literature Survey

The literature survey provides a theoretical framework which is a comprehensive review of literature relating to this topic by previous researchers. A theoretical background of the variables for this research purpose will be discussed in this section.



Chapter 3: Research Methodology

In this chapter the results will be presented and the approach will be explained. Also, conclusions that can be drawn from the results will be discussed. These conclusions from the results act as a basis for the recommendations that will be made for future studies.

Chapter 4: Reporting of Results

This chapter highlights the statistical results of the research study arising from the empirical analysis of the data obtained. The data is represented in tabular and graphical format to facilitate ease in understanding the data.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This section discusses the most salient results emanating from the results obtained in the study. Conclusions are drawn based on the obtained results and integrated with the existing literature. Moreover, practical implications of the research findings are highlighted and recommendations for future research are outlined.



CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The aims of the literature review are much more than a mere survey of the information that results in a list of items representing some literature on the area of study. According to Tlapana (2009) it is understood that the literature review is more of a “research facilitator”, because it influences the research at many stages of its development, from its inception to the conclusions. The literature review provides a conceptual framework to be built in which facts, relationships and findings of this research study can be placed and it helps to refine and introduce ideas that are relevant to the scope of the study. It should also be noted that the literature examined relates to studies done in other countries other than South Africa, and it can be used because it relates to the study undertaken.

Store image is an essential component of marketing communication and corporate identity representation, as it affects consumers’ perception of a store and its identity. Store image is enhanced by the variety of cues and deliberately planned messages that interplay and support one another to form the corporate identity. This study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge available to both retailers and academia.

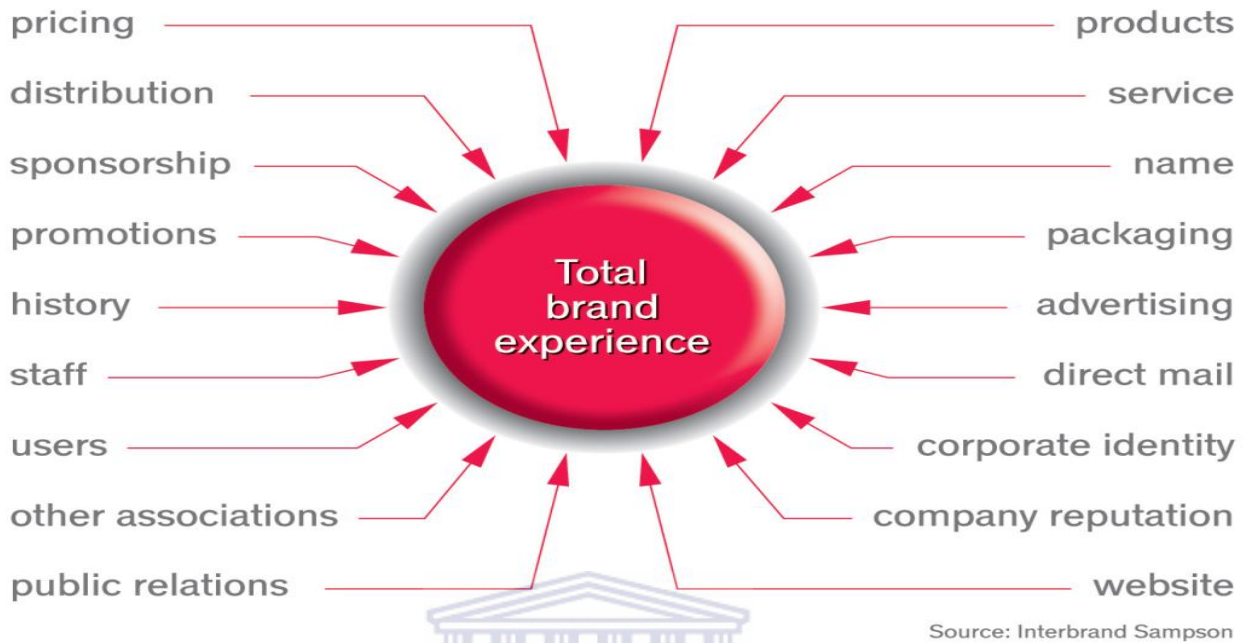
Retailing from a global perspective is gaining increasing attention compared to a few years ago. Retailers are offering newer service dimensions to create unique shopping experiences for their

customers. However, whether consumers are able to perceive newer service dimensions and getting affected for store patronage in new store formats or not, remains to be found. Osman (1993) argued against this backdrop that store image is a critical component in store choice and store loyalty.

Perceptions about stores are driven mainly by their tangible characteristics, such as format or list size, distance from home, as well as intangible factors such as their environment (Oliver, 1980). The retail environment is going through a myriad of changes due to the introduction of new formats and escalating customer demand, it therefore becomes important to understand the store image perceptions of consumers. This study attempts to build upon the works from several disciplines such as retailing, consumer behaviour, marketing and psychology.

The conceptual models found in the literature deals with the image in consumer behaviour, store selection, store image formulation and different levels of evaluations embedded in image structure. Berman and Evans (1998) postulate a store's image is composed of functional and emotional attributes which are organised into perceptual frameworks by shoppers and these frameworks determine shopper's expectations about a store's overall policies and strategies.

Figure 2.1. Components of store image



Hawkins et al (1989) have identified the following dimensions and components of store image:

DIMENSION

COMPONENTS

Merchandise	Quality, selection, style, price
Service	Sales personnel, ease of return,
Clientele	Other customers
Physical Facilities	Cleanliness, store layout, shopping ease, attractiveness
Convenience	Location and parking
Promotion	Advertising
Store atmosphere	Congeniality, excitement, comfort
Post-transaction	Satisfaction
Institutional	Store reputation

2.2. The difference between customer and consumer

Consumer and customer are closely related concepts in this particular discipline. These terms may be used interchangeably, but will be differentiated for the purpose of this study. Cant, Brink and Brijball (2002) postulate a customer is seen as a person or an organisational unit that plays a role in the complexion of a transaction with the marketer or an entity.

The term 'consumer' more generally refers to anyone engaging in activities such as the evaluation, acquisition, usage or disposal of goods and services. Therefore a customer is defined in terms of a specific firm whilst a consumer is not. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (1991) personal consumers buy goods and services for their own use (for example toiletries), for the use of the household (chicken), for only one member of the household (a toothbrush) or as a gift for a friend (such as a CD or a book). The goods are therefore bought for final consumption by individuals who are the end users or ultimate consumers. Organisational consumers include profit and non-profit businesses, government agencies (local, state and national) and institutions (schools, churches and prisons) as everyone needs products, equipment and services in order to run their organisations. Companies can anticipate and react to the needs and the wants of customers by understanding their behaviour. Consumer behaviour includes "those decisions and related activities of persons involved specifically in buying and using economic goods and services" (Walters & Bergiel, 1984, p. 9). Cant et al. (2002) postulate consumer behaviour as the study of individuals/groups and the processes they use to select, secure, use and dispose of products, services, experiences or ideas to satisfy the needs and the impact that these processes have on consumer and society.

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (1991, p. 5), consumer behaviour can also be understood as “the behaviour consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services they expect will satisfy their needs”. Consumer behaviour entails “the dynamic interaction of cognition, behaviour and environmental events by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives” (Bennett, 1988, p. 40).

Different retail stores carry different images in the marketplace and this image is influenced by the various elements of the retail marketing mix (Jinfeng & Zhilong, 2009). The concept of retail store image became of interest when Martineau (1958, p. 55) described the personality of a store as “a store defined in customers’ mind partly based on functional attributes and partly based on psychological attributes”. He claimed store image includes its characteristic attributes and serves as a point of reference to make customers feel the store differs from others. Functional attributes are assortments of commodities, layout, location, price value relation, and service that consumers can objectively compare with other stores. Psychological attributes are attractiveness and luxuriousness that represent special attributes of that store.

2.3. Customer Perception

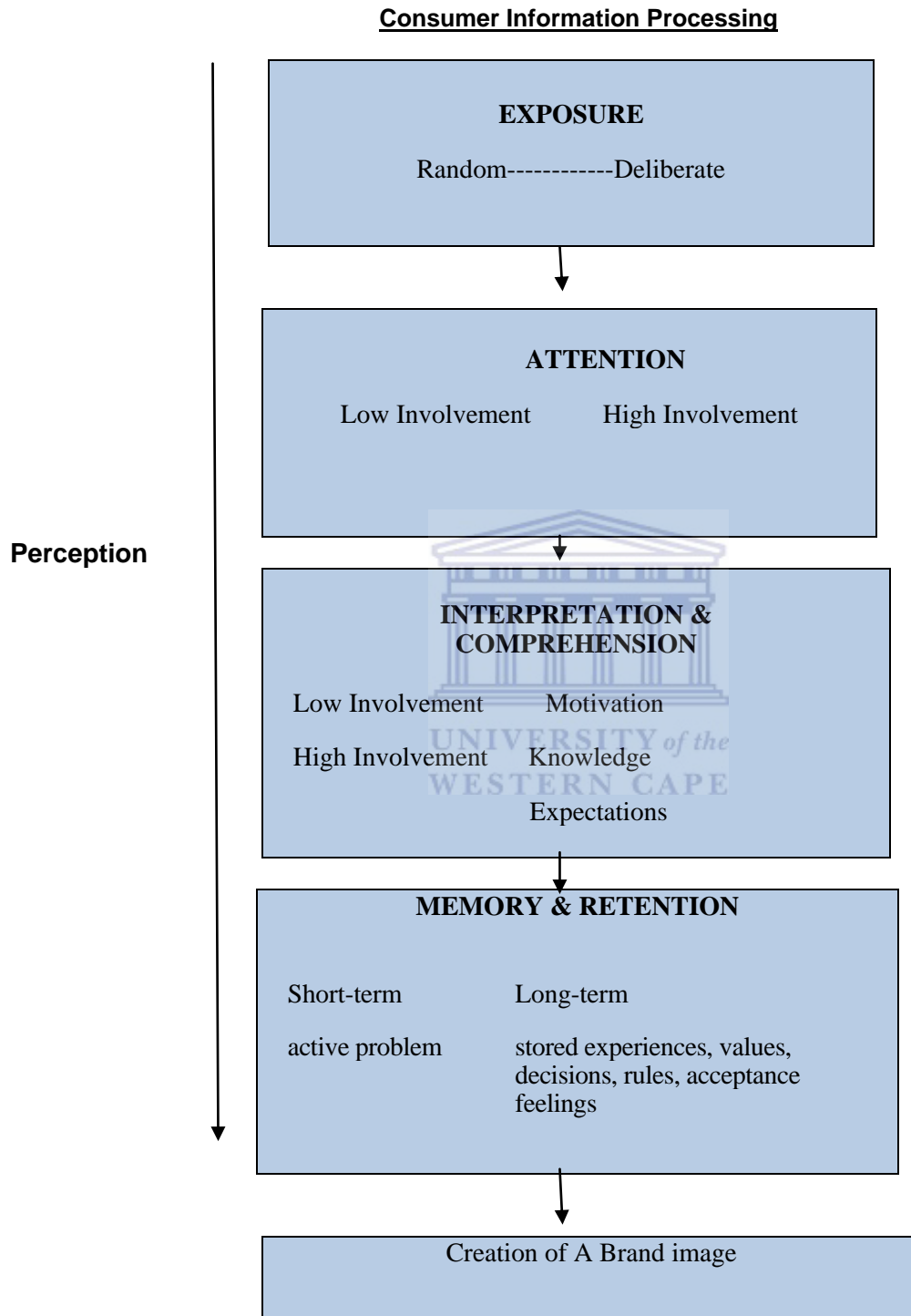
The definition of perception can be viewed as the process in which a person selects, arranges and interprets stimuli; these stimuli are filtered and adjusted to become one’s own view of the world (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2003). Even though exposed to the same thing, in the same environment, two persons will never share the exact same experience (Schiffman & Kanuk 2007). Daily, we are exposed to millions of different stimuli be it different smells, sounds, tastes,

sights and textures. The human brain absorbs and processes only a small number of all these stimuli.

Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg (2006) explain that the whole perception process is made up by three stages, the exposure stage, the attention stage and the interpretation stage. The brain takes in the stimuli in the attention stage and interprets the stimuli, according to our previous experiences and desires, in the interpretation stage. Ultimately, these three stages form our perceptions.

It is only when retailers know the customer's perceptions of the business, the products and the services that they truly know whether or not the business is going in the right direction. All interactions that occur between the customers and the business will ultimately affect the customers' view and image of the business. Selling top class products is a prerequisite for many stores in order to keep customers, but if the staff is unfriendly, the store will eventually start to lose its customers. Everything a customer sees, hears and experiences is linked together and forms their overall perception of the business, this is why it is essential for an organisation to know its customers perceptions. The meaning of customer perception is most often used in the content of how customers perceive the quality of the service they are offered. More widely speaking, customer perception is also the customer's overall picture of the company, including company image, expectations, external influences and service quality (Best & Coney, 2001).

Figure 2.2.



Source: Hawkins et al (2001, p. 84).

Figure 2.2 illustrates an information processing model showing four major steps. These steps, namely, exposure, attention, interpretation and memory leads to the creation of a brand image. Hawkings, Best and Coney (2001, p. 284) define information processing as “a series of activities by which stimuli are perceived, transformed into information and stored”. Information processing commences when the consumer is exposed to an external search.

2.4. Definition of store image

Cornelius, Natter and Faure (2010) define store image as the way in which a store is perceived by shoppers and defined in shopper’s minds. Similarly, Schiffman and Kanuk (2008) define store image as the way consumers view the store, that is, their impression or perception.

Store image can be understood as a complex, multidimensional construct based on the perception of tangible and intangible store attributes associated with eight dimensions, namely atmosphere, convenience, facilities, institutional, merchandise, promotion, sales personnel, and service. These dimensions are further delineated into sub dimensions which are underpinned by specific store attributes. The formation of store image relies on the perception of a store which varies by retailer, product and target market. By implication, store image is influenced by (1) the consumer's perception of a set of salient store attributes, (2) the importance the consumer places on the various store image dimensions, sub dimensions and the associated store attributes, as well as (3) the retailer's manipulation of these store attributes through strategic management (Du Preez, Visser & Van Noordwyk, 2008).

Martineau (1958, p. 47) was one of the earlier scholars to offer the following description of store image: "it is ... the way in which a store is defined in the shoppers mind, partly by its functional

qualities and partly by its aura of psychological attributes. The more favourable the image, the more likely it is that the consumers would shop and buy at the store". Store image has also been viewed as an overall attitude of the consumer towards a store (Steenkamp & Wedel, 1999).

In addition, Lindquist (1974-1975, p. 30) defines store image as a "structure of some sort that ties together the dimensions that are at work and conceptualises store image as nine key attributes: merchandise, service, clientele, physical facilities, convenience, promotion, store ambience, institutional factors and post-transaction satisfaction.

A myriad of studies have been conducted on the meaning and measurement of store image (Lindquist 1974-1975; Hansen & Deutscher 1977-1978) whereby store image is considered as a critical component in store choice and store loyalty (Thompson & Chen, 1998). The perspective that is taken in retail literature treat store image as a result of store salient attributes, that is, image is a function of store salient attributes. Thus over the years different authors have distinguished various store attributes that are part of the overall image (Dickerson & Albaum 1977; Hansen & Deustscher 1977/78; Lindquist, 1974/75; Dawson, Bloch & Ridgway, 1990; Moschis, Curasi & Bellinger 2004).

2.5. The significance of store image

Store image is a particularly important construct for retailers, because it has been found to be a strong predictor of retailer choice (Grewal, Krishnan, Baker and Borin, 1998), important for

understanding the inferences of store and product quality (Baker, Grewal and Parasuraman, 1994; Darden and Babin, 1994), a predictor of store satisfaction (Bloemer and de Ruyter, 1998), an antecedent of competitive positioning (Burt and Carralero-Encinas, 2000), and a predictor of store loyalty (Sirgy and Samli, 1985). Terblanche (2001) states that store image is operationalised as consisting of five dimensions, namely image congruence, utilitarian value, merchandise variety and quality, location and staff competence.

Hatch and Schultz (2003) define corporate images as the views of the organisation developed by its stakeholders and the outside world's overall impression of the company including the view of consumers, shareholders, the media, and the general public and so on. The main focus of a retail company should be to attain congruence between the communicated corporate image via the store and the image understood in the minds of the consumers (Burt, 2000). In order to succeed with corporate image communication, many communication channels as possible should be used. The most common ones include store web pages, advertising, catalogues (Markwick & Fill, 1997).

Corporations build a strong character by defining themselves in the minds of consumers and differentiating themselves from competition. The concept of corporate identity is part of the wider aspect of corporate branding. According to Visser (2006) a corporate brand is formed by corporate strategy, corporate culture and corporate identity. Corporate strategy comprises the core values of the brand, philosophy and mission which are driven by top management. Stuart (1999) adds that corporate culture manifests through the meanings and values that the employees of the organisation hold and use.

Corporate identity is a mix of characteristic organisations possess as an entity (Gylling & Lienberg-repo, 2005). In communicating its corporate identity, an organisation must be positioned in the mind of the consumer market as the retailer that fulfils their needs unlike other retailers. There are two main positioning concerns, in the first instance is consumer positioning, which concentrates on portraying how the product fulfils the consumer's 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 and also fulfil the specific needs of customers but retailers should strive to achieve both simultaneously. All of these aspects are portrayed through store image and create a better understanding of the different concepts and their contributions to corporate strategy.

2.6. Demographics

According to Hawkins, Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) demographics refers to objective and measurable characteristics such as language, educational level, income, age, geographical location, family structure, ethnic background, marital status and gender. South Africa has a high unemployment rate and low educational and skills levels which impacts on customers' buying power and behaviour, demographics thus influences consumer behaviour by directly influencing their attributes, for example, individual values and decision-making styles (Hyllegard, Eckman, Descals & Borja, 2005). Furthermore, education influences the choice of people's occupations and this determines their level of income. Bellenger, Robertson and Greenberg (1977) found the consumer's level of education also influences shopping centre patronage factors as it relates to store image. Consumer's 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 Gietsfield (2003) focused on identifying attributes that affect the store image preference and found that consumers are more critical of store image attributes when they have a higher education.

Lumpkin (1985) and Visser and Du Preez (1996) studied the needs of elderly or mature consumers and their findings concluded age groups within elderly markets differed regarding their preference for store image attributes.

Demographics in isolation cannot provide a complete picture of the consumer (Lambert, 1996). Even though income can be tied to spending behaviour, it reveals little about customer's personal interests, health and discretionary time (Oates, Schufeldt & Vaught, 1996). Consumer's lifestyle is therefore a necessary variable when attempting to understand behaviour.

Kleinhans (2003) explains that 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 lifecycle and time utilization). Fox (1989) states lifestyle can be defined as 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 Honey (1990) define lifestyle as a way of living shaped by values and experiences. It is important to understand that lifestyle focuses on actions within a social context; is a large part of self-image. Reynolds (1978) included lifestyle in their study on self-image and store image congruency. Self-image therefore indirectly affects store image preferences (Mills, 1985). Osman (1993) confirmed this where customer's perception of store image dimensions depends on their lifestyle. According to

Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006), consumers' lifestyle influences their needs and attitudes, thus it simultaneously affects purchase behaviour, through understanding lifestyle, retailers can understand consumer preferences (Kleinhans, 2003).

2.7. Customer Satisfaction and Store loyalty in relation to Store choice

The measurement of customer satisfaction was considered initially in the 1960's as a problem of analysis of consumer behaviour. Customer satisfaction is proposed to be the key objective of both defensive and offensive marketing strategies aimed at retaining existing customers and gaining new customers (Fornell, 1992). Customer satisfaction has been described as one of the priorities of managers of service or product related organisations. Service oriented firms tend to focus on consumer satisfaction as a way to differentiate themselves from their competitors with the delivery of high quality service (Parasuraman, 1985). It has a positive impact on consumers' attitudes toward products, services, firms, future choice behaviours and other post-purchase activities that are beneficial to the firm (Boulding, 1993).

Researchers and practitioners have proposed many definitions for the concept of consumer satisfaction. It is the function of an initial standard and some perceived discrepancy from the initial reference point. Oliver (1980) refers to customer satisfaction as an individual's evaluative response of outcomes of products and services. They further state it is the perceived quality or the difference between what consumers expect and what they receive. Parasuraman et al., (1988) adds that customer satisfaction occurs when one's experience of a service offering matches one's expectations. According to Czepielec (1974) satisfaction with a product or service is a consumer's subjective evaluation of the benefits obtained from the consumption of a specific product or service. It is their evaluation of the extent to which the product or service fulfils the

complete set of wants and needs which the consumption act was expected to meet. Although there are numerous definitions used to describe customer satisfaction, there is agreement it is considered the subjective response of individuals to their judgment of confirmation/disconfirmation resulting from the comparison between expectations and perceived performance of products and services. Confirmation occurs when an individual's expectations are precisely met. Disconfirmation occurs when an individual's expectations are either exceeded (positive disconfirmation) or not exceeded (negative disconfirmation) (Oliver, 1980).

In general, the satisfaction of consumer wants and needs is the ultimate goal of all economic and marketing processes. Samuelson (1967) equates satisfaction with the concept of product and service utility. He argues customers will buy a product because it gives them satisfaction or utility. Samuelson believes from economic point of view individuals make rational choices concerning the allocation of their resources with the final purpose of maximising satisfaction.

According to Engel (1995), satisfaction influences the consumer beliefs and external search patterns used in future decision processes. Satisfaction strengthens future purchase decisions while dissatisfaction weakens future action. Satisfied customers are more willing to pay for the benefits they receive and are more likely to be tolerant of increases in price, this implies high margins and customer loyalty (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Low customer satisfaction implies greater turnover of the base, higher replacement costs and due to the difficulty of attracting new ones who are satisfied with doing business with a new rival, higher customer acquisition costs. In addition, satisfied customers are more likely to engage in positive word of mouth and less likely to engage in damaging negative word of mouth for the firm (Anderson & Weitz, 1994; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990).

Consumers can be dissatisfied with the service or the merchandise or both during their visit to the store. In that case, the customer is less likely to choose that store in the future thus decreasing sales. Satisfaction has been widely debated in services marketing literature (Dong, 2003).

Store satisfaction includes consumer's perception of store characteristics as well as their evaluation of the products acquired from the store (Westbrook, 1981). Satisfaction is an "evaluation of emotion and a consumer is satisfied when the service evokes a positive feeling based on the disconfirmation paradigm" (Hunt 1977, p. 67). Westbrook and Black (1985) further state the level of satisfaction could measure the motives underlying consumers shopping activities found different levels of satisfaction during shopping activities. Dawson (1990) also established shoppers with strong product motives were more satisfied with the product, whereas shoppers with high experiential motives were more satisfied with the facility. Customer's patronage behaviour towards a particular store is therefore dependent on their image of that particular store. The more favourable the store image, the higher the valence of the store to the consumer.

Marshall and Keller (1999) view satisfaction as a resulting variable of strong association or images along with preference and loyalty. As a consequence, consumers shop at stores where they can maximize their satisfaction considering both retail attributes and shopping costs. Research on the relationships among store image, store satisfaction and store loyalty among Korean discount retail customers found there is a positive direct relationship between store image and store satisfaction (Dong, 2003).

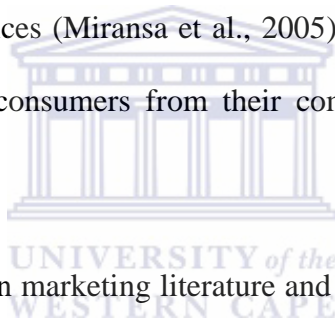
Satisfaction is also viewed as a post-decision customer experience (Caruana, 2002; Torres 2001) and a key diagnostic measure of loyalty (Aaker, 1991). Satisfaction is often regarded as an

antecedent to store loyalty (Bitner 1990) and a favourable store image leads to store loyalty (Dick & Basu, 1994).

In their study Bloemer and De Ruyter (1998) established store image affects store loyalty via satisfaction, that is, satisfaction is a mediator variable. This means when customers are satisfied, they have a higher propensity to store loyalty (Brink & Berndt, 2004) and store satisfaction often leads to shopper loyalty (Berman & Evans, 2004). Oliver and MacMillan (1992) suggest the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is non-linear so when satisfaction increased above a critical level, repeat purchase also increases. Store loyalty is most frequently related to store image. Research found that a favourable store image leads to store loyalty, loyalty as comprising of two dimensions: attitudinal and behavioural aspects (Dick & Basu, 1994; Dong, 2003).

The behavioural aspect of loyalty focuses on a measure of proportion to a purchase of a specific brand, while attitudinal loyalty is measured by a psychological commitment to a store (Dong, 2003). All these definitions suggest how a consumer's commitment is a necessary condition for store loyalty to occur. Consumer store loyalty is indicated by an intention to perform a diverse set of behaviours that signal a motivation to maintain a relationship with the retailer including allocating a higher share of wallet to the store, engaging in positive word of mouth and repeat purchasing (Sirohi, McLaughlin & Wittink 1998; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). Satisfaction is likely to increase loyalty, suggesting that it is a prerequisite for loyalty and customer retention (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2004). Thus store image not only has a direct effect on customer loyalty, but it is also mediated by customer satisfaction. Furthermore, a person becomes committed to a store and therefore becomes loyal; commitment is thus a necessary condition for store loyalty (Bloemer & De Ruyter, 1998).

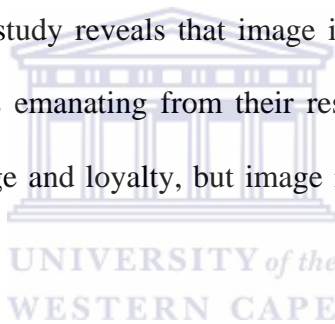
Managers face the challenge to build store loyalty and commitment, being critical in a market place where there is a choice between numerous stores with similar products (Bloemer & Du Ruyter, 1998; Miranda , 2005; Osman, 1993). The idea is to have a long-term loyal customer who is reluctant to change stores due to an emotional bond with the unit. A short-term loyal customer feels less of a bond and will change stores seemingly better option is available (Chang & Tu, 2005). Therefore, store loyalty is more an indication of repeat visiting and possibility of wanting a specific product from a particular retailer as pointed out by Bowen and Shoemaker (1998); is 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 (Miransa et al., 2005). If retailers manage the perception of store image, they can isolate consumers from their competitors by building store loyalty (Osman, 1993).



Loyalty has been broadly studied in marketing literature and is an important concept in strategic marketing. Many researchers have accepted the notion that loyalty or loyal customers are the lifeblood of an organization regardless of its scale and business scope (Chen & Quester 2006). The important role of loyalty in business is also recognized by various authors. For example, Oliver (1999) asserts that keeping loyal customers is critical for business to maximize their profit. Ailawadi and Keller (2004) agreed that customer loyalty can result in an increased profit for retailers as customers purchase a higher percentage of merchandise from retailers.

Loyalty has also been the subject of study in retailing. The retailing environment that becomes increasingly competitive and also the slow growth faced by today's retailer's call for the paramount pursuit of consumer loyalty. In a more recent study, the emphasis of loyalty concept

by retailers is as a result of re-emergence of relationship marketing (Terblanche & Boshoff, 2006). In a different view, Martenson (2007) examined the store loyalty in retail context by analyzing corporate brand image and satisfaction as the factors that influence store loyalty. Bloemer and Schroeder (2002), examined the relationship between store satisfaction and store loyalty by assessing antecedents of store satisfaction in terms of store image, positive affect and consumer relationship proneness. Their results reveal that store image as well as consumer relationship proneness and store affect have a positive impact on store satisfaction and in turn lead to store loyalty. Similarly, Bloemer, De Ruyter and Peters (1998) investigated how image, perceived service quality and satisfaction determine loyalty in a retail bank setting at the global construct level and the empirical study reveals that image is indirectly related to bank loyalty through perceived quality. Results emanating from their research suggest that there is a clear positive relationship between image and loyalty, but image is indirectly related to bank loyalty via satisfaction.



Bloemer and Ruyter (1998) found store image influences store loyalty through its satisfaction. The probability that a customer will shop at a given store increases as the individual's perception of the store becomes more positive. In general, consumers patronize stores whose images are congruent with their self-perception and unconscious needs. Thus, store specific attitudes (for example store image) and general attitudes toward the type of store influence shopping behaviour such as shopping frequency (Darley & Lim, 1999, p. 312).

Store image is considered an important factor influencing store choice and patronage behaviour which acts a criterion in a option process. Kleinhans (2003) postulates store image influences the way in which consumers evaluate and choose the store. Patronage behaviour is associated with acts a consumer performs for the purpose of making a purchase from a store. Knowledge about the influence of store image perception on patronage behaviour may empower retailers to design their stores according the desired store image that could lead to consequent store choice.

In a study of store loyalty, Lessig (1973) examined the relationship between store image and store loyalty in order to predict it using store image attributes. The importance of the influence which store image has upon patronage was indicated. The nature and strength of the relationship between image and loyalty was that knowledge of the aforementioned provides a significant input into the simultaneous prediction of loyalties to the alternative retail stores.

The identity of the 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 customer's decision-making processes, which result in store choice (Baker et al., 2002).

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These features include store characteristics such as product assortment, store layout, store location, price-value relationship and other elements that consumers compare with competitors. The variety of attributes identified by researchers and their related findings suggest that all retail store attributes are not equally salient in affecting store choice (Paulins & Geistfeld 2003).

2.8. Store Environment

Retailers are known to design store environments in a manner that will enhance consumers' positive feelings, under the assumption that this will lead to desired consumer behaviours, such as a higher willingness to purchase or stay in the store for longer. The importance of store environment in enhancing the shopping experiences of consumers has long been appreciated.

The store design plays a key role in influencing shopper's behaviour. It should also help in the presentation of the store and the merchandise. A successful use of design should be able to synthesise all the elements of the strategic mix such as merchandise policy, pricing, and other factors of the exterior and interior of the store (Brown, 1979).

The concept of atmospherics was introduced in 1973 by Kotler. He described it as "the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability" (Kotler, 1973, p. 56). More specifically, this term refers to the design of an environment through the use of colours, lighting, sounds and furnishing, to stimulate perceptual and emotional responses by consumers, and ultimately to affect their behaviour. These dimensions are to be incorporated within a store design. For example, in department stores the aromas, music and colours are related to consumer behaviour (Bellizi & Hite 1992; Yalch &

Spangenberg, 1990). These environmental stimuli affect the emotional states of pleasure, arousal and dominance which determine the response atmospheric store environment was considered a feature among store image components (Lindquist, 1974; Zimmer & Golden, 1988).

Baker (1994), however, concluded atmospheric store environment provided cues to consumer's inferences of store image. Furthermore, atmospheric store environment influenced the quality of merchandise and the quality of store service (Crane & Clarke, 1988).

Baker (1986) developed a typology categorising the atmospheric store environmental elements into three groups: ambient factors, design factors and social factors. Ambient factors are non-visual background conditions of the store including elements such as music/sound, lighting, scent and temperature. Several empirical studies have been conducted to investigate the effects of background sound /music in the store. Milliman (1986), who conducted research with the managers of 52 retail stores, found customers made more purchases in a store that offered background music than in a store that did not offer background music. Music also had a positive relationship with customers' moods. In accordance with Rubel's (1996) research, 91 percent of retail customers were influenced by background music while they were shopping. High prestige store images and low prestige store images with ambient factors received attention from researchers (i.e., music, and lighting). They found the high prestige store image had soft and dim lighting with classical background music and the low prestige store image had bright and harsh lighting with no background music (Baker, 1994).

Design factors emphasize its importance as being an important comparative visual tool. Beliefs about the patronage behaviour of consumers are apparent in the design and construction of retail environments (Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994). Seeing a store and seeing merchandise in the

windows leads to visiting the store and thus performing purchase intent. The store design factors were classified into functional (store layout, display, comfort, and privacy) and aesthetic elements (architecture, colour, material and style) (Marans & Speckelmeyer, 1982). Using those elements, retailers create a store identity and encourage consumer's shopping activities. Also, store design is a way of presenting merchandise in a store to facilitate and stimulate consumer purchasing behaviour. Thus, store design has been called a "silent salesman" because it has been used in an attempt to attract and hold consumers' momentary attention (Buttle, 1984). The physical features of a retail store, such as window displays, merchandising displays, store layout, colour and store decor area. Those physical features of a retail store have been considered "behaviour-triggering devices" rather than inescapable determinants of choice (Buttle, 1984).

Social factors involve the people who are within a store environment that include the number, type and behaviour of salespeople and other customers (Baker, 1986). Crowding arises from both a physical density and a psychological state of mind of the individual. According to Esser (1972) psychological crowding occurs as high density produces stimulus overload from inappropriate or unfamiliar social contacts. He explored the sequential relationships among several variables related to retail store environment and shopping. The number of salespeople per department store is a mean of evaluating store service quality. According to Baker (1994), the number of salespeople present at any given time in a store affects consumers' perceived merchandise and service quality, and influence customers' perceived store image. Also, a high prestige store image is produced by friendly and additional sales personnel on the floor.

Many researchers argue that the influence of store environment on consumer purchase behaviour is mediated by the consumer's emotional state. Donovan and Rossiter (1982) were one of the

earliest researchers to study the mediating role of consumer emotion in this context. They suggest that store atmosphere, engendered by the usual myriad of in-store variables, is represented psychologically by consumers in terms of two major emotional states, that is, pleasure and arousal. These two emotional states are significant mediators of shopping behaviours within the store, such as enjoyment of shopping in the store, time spent browsing and exploring the store's offerings, willingness to talk to sales personnel, tendency to spend more money than originally planned, and likelihood of returning to the store. Bitner (1992) argues that the physical environment of the store may evoke cognitive, emotional, and physiological responses which will influence consumers' approach or avoidance behaviour in the retailing context. Approach behaviour may include staying longer in the store, spending more money, and/or buying more merchandise. Bitner (2002) also suggests that the strength and direction of the relation between store environment and a consumer's response to the environment is moderated by personal and situational factors. Previous studies have shown that personality traits can influence a person's reaction to the physical surroundings (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Russell & Snodgrass, 1987). An individual's response to an environment often depends on situational factors such as their plans or purposes for being in the environment (Russell & Snodgrass, 1987).

Donovan et al., (1994) found that the emotional state of a consumer induced by store environments (for example, pleasure and arousal) appear to be a strong reason why consumers spend extra time in certain stores, and spend more money than initially intended. Their research also suggests that the contribution of these emotional variables to consumer behaviour is independent of cognitive variables such as individual perceptions of quality and price. However,

impulse buying or overspending may result from a desire to alleviate negative emotions as well as from experiencing positive emotions. In other words, people may have various negatively-originated or positively-originated motives for over spending. Donovan et al. (1994) believe that further classification of the relationship between shopping motives and emotional states is needed.

Sherman et al. (1997) also studied the mediating role of consumer emotions in the influence of store environment on consumer purchase behaviour. Their results suggest that although cognitive factors may largely account for store selection and for most planned purchases within the store, the environment in the store and the emotional state of consumers, may be important determinants of certain purchase behaviours, such as impulse buying. Sherman et al. (1997) recommend that future studies investigate different types of shoppers and their motivations when entering the store and how various consumer groups react to store image and atmosphere.

In addition to ambient, design, and social cues, crowding is another factor that researchers believe to have an influence on consumer shopping behaviour. Crowding is perceived as a result of physical, social, and personal factors that sensitize the individual to actual or potential problems arising from scarce space (Stokols, 1972). When the number of people, objects, or both, in a limited space restricts or interferes with activities and goal achievement, an individual will perceive the environment to be crowded. Research has shown that the level of in-store crowding perceived by shoppers can affect their patronage decisions as well as their satisfaction with overall shopping activity (Eroglu & Machleit, 1990).

Thang and Tan (2003) further assert that attributes of store image and appearance affect consumer's preference for the stores. The stimuli that pertain to store attributes include merchandising, store atmosphere, in-store service, accessibility, reputation, promotion, facilities and post-transaction service. Consumer's preference is based on their post-visit ranking of the stores. To a certain extent, consumer visits to retail stores often take the form of a recreational activity whose worthiness is reinforced by the level of service provision within the store. Hence, the quality of in-store services is likely to have a strong impact on consumer's purchasing behaviour and, if not liked or incompatible with the values or the beliefs sought by the target consumers, might inhibit attraction.

2.9. Background music and store selection

The degree to which retail atmosphere influences a consumer's store selection decision varies according to the types of products and services provided by the retailer (Kotler, 1973). For some retail operations such as nightclubs, bars and discotheques, atmosphere may serve as one of the primary consumer selection criteria. Atmosphere can help define a retailer's image (Ward et al. 1992) and background music can be an important component of retail atmosphere (Langrehr, 1991; Milliman, 1982). Because of its potential impact on atmosphere, background music may influence choice between stores of the same type (Baker et al., 1992). Consequently, playing the appropriate background music may help a retailer to develop a desirable atmosphere, which in turn contributes to the image of the retailer and consumer store choice (Zillman and Bhatia, 1989).

Given the potential benefits of background music, a retailer might be prompted to ask, "What type of music should I be playing?" The answer to this question is not straightforward. Given the potential for influence and profitability, it is important to understand the nature of music and the specific musical characteristics, which are purported to elicit behavioral responses. More specifically, retailers need to be aware of the specific manipulable characteristics of music and how these factors can influence shopping behaviour.

Herrington and Capella (1994) identify three factors retailers should consider before a final choice on background music is made.

- A retailer must carefully define the selected target market and the demographic details of this market, for example: age, income, marital status, education, gender, and ethnic background. Most of this information can be obtained by examining customer data and/or by conducting market research. Efforts should be made to also determine the ethnic characteristics of target segments. Musical tastes vary by culture (Wright, 1975), and culture often varies by ethnic background. Herrington et al. (1994) emphasizes the fact that background music should reflect the ethnic background of shoppers. This is particularly important for the South African scenario where (especially after 1994) shoppers from a particularly wide variety of cultural backgrounds are frequenting coffee shops and restaurants more frequently.
- Retailers must also ensure that the selected background music fits the image which the store wants to convey. In order to do this, they must determine the most appropriate type of music to play based on customer and store characteristics. There are numerous examples of providers who use music to help create atmospheres that are consistent with their service offerings. Restaurants offering international menus (e.g. Mexican, Chinese, Italian, and French) often

play music of the country of origin. Other restaurants specializing in a particular type of cuisine also use music in a similar fashion. Some BBQ restaurants play either rhythm and blues or country and western, depending on the theme, to create an ethnic atmosphere (Herrington & Capella, 1996).

- When selecting the music to be played, Herrington and Capella (1994) suggest that the following aspects should be considered: First, preference for any given tune or music tends to be closely related to familiarity. The more familiar the listener is with a tune the more probable it is that (she will like it, according to Zissman and Neirmark (in Herrington and Capella, 1994). Second, music preference tends to increase with the number of exposures up to a point after which the preference begins to decline with each successive exposure

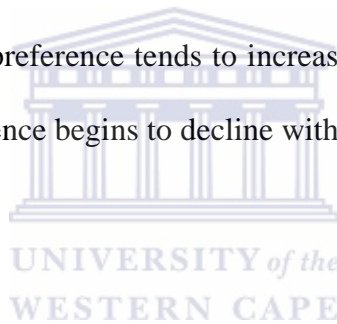
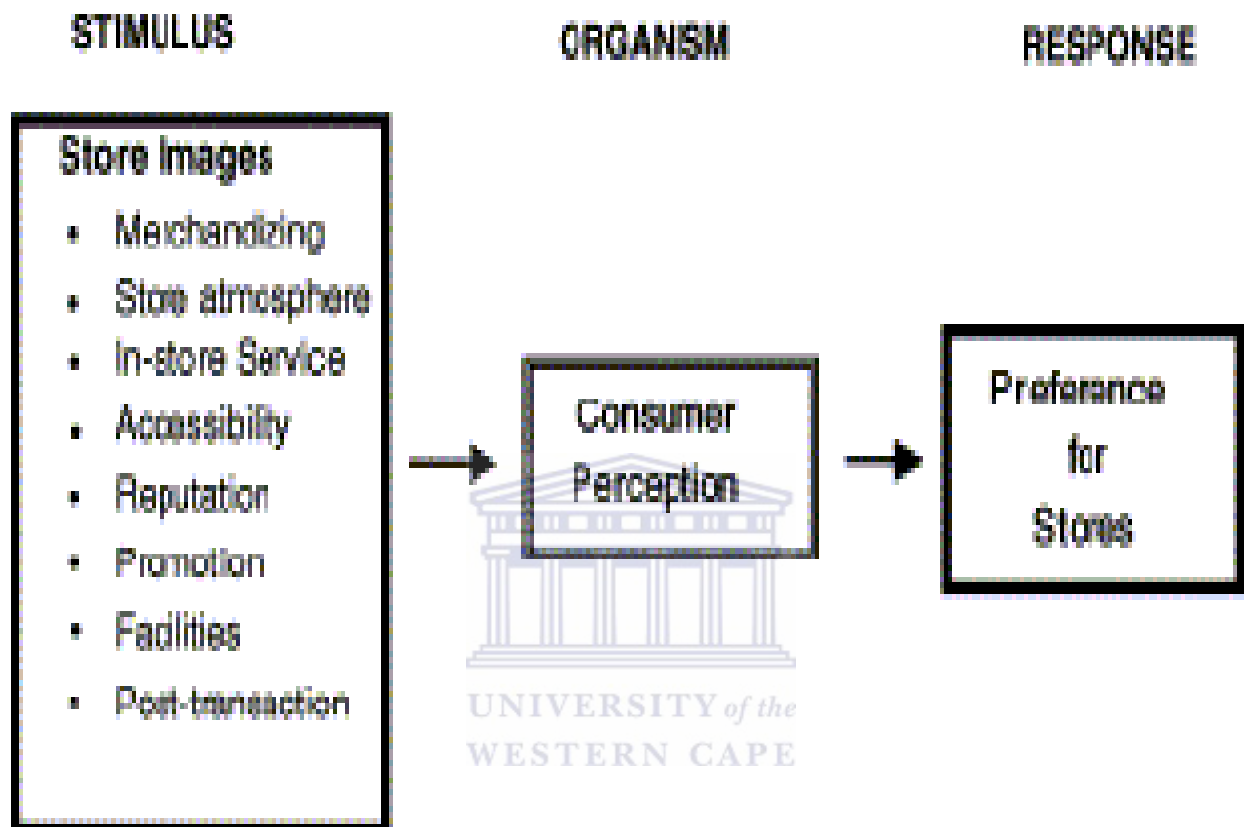


Figure 2.3.

A Stimulus, Organism, Response Model of consumer retail purchase behaviour



Source: Thang and Tan (2003, p.193)

As shown in the above illustration the stimuli that pertain to store attributes include merchandising, store atmosphere, in-store service, accessibility, reputation, promotion, facilities and transaction service. The S–O–R Model of consumer retail purchase behaviour focuses on the most important elements to succeed with store appearance and image. In becoming a customer oriented business, management needs to be familiar with each of the elements in the model (Thang & Tan, 2003).

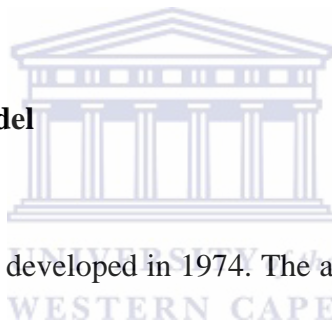
2.10. Waiting as a determinant of Store Image

An aspect that could be detrimental in terms of a store's image, even if all the other elements of the service offering have been attended to meticulously, is waiting. Waiting and queuing, for whatever reason at any point in a store such as the fitting room or at the checkout point, is even associated with service failure and injustice (Craighead, Karwan, & Miller, 2004; Tom & Lucey, 1995). Waiting, for whatever reason, negatively impacts on store image and consumers' eventual satisfaction with the service encounter (Hartley & Ward, 2006). Waiting also breeds negative emotions, which negatively affects a store's image and customers' satisfaction with a service encounter. Positive evaluations of a service provider prior to the wait may even be negated by negative emotions caused by waiting at the checkout (Van Riel, Semeijn, Ribbink, & Bombert-Peters, 2012). Any obstacle in a store that causes a delay and that creates the impression that time is wasted may therefore encourage a consumer to use alternative service providers (Yan & Lotz, 2006). Consumers in developing countries, especially in smaller towns, unfortunately do not always have alternative service providers to go to.

When having to wait repetitively, they could therefore become particularly frustrated. On a more positive note, other researchers have found that the effect of waiting could be reduced or negated if waiting is well managed or when sufficient distraction is provided during waiting (Rafaeli, Barron, & Haber, K, 2002; Katz, Larson, & Larson, 1991). Solutions to problems associated with waiting therefore exist, provided that a conclusive understanding of the phenomenon is reached.

Apart from its influence on store image (Van Riel et al., 2012), consumer behaviour literature (Bielen & Demoulin, 2007; McDonnell, 2007) also acknowledges waiting as a time construct that involves four dimensions. The subjective dimension of time involves a consumers' estimation of waiting time; the objective dimension encapsulates the actual duration of the wait; the cognitive dimension reflects a consumers' view of the acceptability of elapsed time; while the affective dimension involves a consumers' emotional responses to the time duration (Bielen & Demoulin, 2007; McDonnell, 2007).

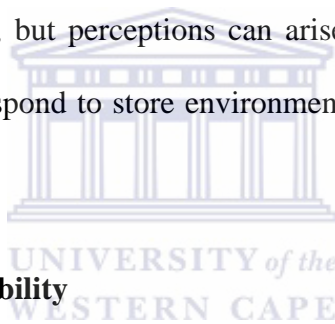
2.11. The Mehrabian-Russell model



The Mehrabian-Russell model was developed in 1974. The aim was to give a deeper insight into behavioural theories and how these can be influenced. The basic idea behind the model is that the store environment affects customer's perceptions and behaviours within a store. The model comprises elements of environmental stimuli, emotional states and behaviour. The environmental stimulus refers to the stimuli we receive with our senses such as sight, hearing, smell etcetera. After interpreting these stimuli received when entering a store, an emotional state expands either one of pleasure or of arousal. The next step that follows is a response to the emotional state through behaviour. The behaviour that will follow is most likely either approach or avoidance related. An approach, or positive, related behaviour is of course the more desired one, this means that the customers experience a good feeling in the store, and therefore wants to spend additional time and thus the likelihood of a purchase is increased (Sullivan & Adcock, 2002). This model

can be used for creating an appealing store environment if the owner understands customer's reactions to different types of store design elements like atmospheres or displays.

When understanding these reactions correctly exact environmental stimuli can be created, this is a prerequisite for building the desired emotional state that will affect the customer's in-store behaviour positively. However, it is important to remember how difficult it is or even impossible it may be to influence thoroughly customer's perceptions and behaviours. Everyone already carry an existing emotional state when entering a store and those emotions may influence the emotions received in-store (Sullivan & Adcock, 2002). This model is useful when looking at the emotional responses accompanied, but perceptions can arise from other sources than only the emotional, since customers can respond to store environments cognitively or physiologically as well (Sweeney & Wyber, 2002).



2.10. Store Location and Accessibility

Levy and Weitz (2004) define accessibility as the ease with which a customer may get into and out of a site. To assess a site's accessibility, the retailer simultaneously evaluates several factors such as road patterns, road conditions and barriers. In road patterns, primary trading areas needs major arteries or freeways so customers can travel easily to the site. Road condition includes age, number of lanes, and number of stop lights, congestion and general state of repair of roads in the primary trading area.

This functional dimension of shopping centre image has received attention in the literature, and is considered important on a number of fronts (Sit, Merrilees & Birch, 2003; Dennis, Newman &

Marsland, 2005). However, while some early research has considered travel distances in relation to shopping centre patronage. Bell (1999) in particular notes that these considerations have until now failed to capture emotional responses which lead to consumer's image perceptions.

One of the key decisions faced by customers is where to shop in terms of shopping location. Mendes and Themindo (2004) define store location as the physical space occupied by a shop, they further attribute that, it is the catchment area of a shop which experiences intense economic and commercial activities. Store location relates to the shopping convenience in terms of time, shopping hours and ability to buy goods and services. Schiffman, Dash and Dillon (1977) postulate that location becomes critical as the population moves towards the suburb. The size of an outlet is also an important factor in store choice. Unless a customer is particularly interested in fast service or convenience, larger outlets are preferred over smaller outlets, all other things being equal (Hawkins, Best & Coney, 1992). Location has an obvious impact on store patronage. Generally, the closer consumers are to a store, the greater their likelihood to purchase from that store. The further away consumers are from a store, the greater the number of intervening alternatives, and thus the lower the likelihood to patronize that store (Loudon & Bitta, 1995).

According to Wood and Browne (2007), locations, transportation, travelling time influence the customers' market patronage. Wood et al. (2007) further add, the smallest distance can however influence a stores success or failure. However convenience is a vital part of society at present. Chang and Tu (2005) found that convenience has a direct relationship with customer's satisfaction and loyalty. With increased car ownership, customers are prepared to travel longer distances to patronise shopping centres where the retail mix is sufficiently attractive, rather than

making shopping centre choices based on the nearest convenient location (Dennis, Marsland & Cockett, 2002; Whyatt, 2004). This suggests that ease of travel to and within attractive locations has an important role in shopping decision making, particularly in regard to the growth of competition from Internet shopping (Dennis, Newman & Marsland, 2005).

Sit, Merrilees and Birch (2003) separate accessibility in a shopping centre into macro-accessibility which refers to transport links from the home location to the shopping centre, and micro-accessibility which refers to parking facilities and ease of navigation between stores and other facilities within the centre, arguing that paying attention to both aspects will make the shopping experience more enjoyable. This is supported by Leo and Philippe (2002) who indicate that poor directional indicators for travellers to a shopping location result in dissatisfaction and disappointment with the shopping expedition. Oppewal and Timmermans (1999) found that one of the aspects of the micro-accessibility of public space, which were favoured by customers, was compactness of layout, in terms of accessing stores and space reserved for pedestrian access. It seems likely that the factors contributing towards a customer's perceptions of shopping accessibility such as transport links, car parking facilities, store location and ease of movement for pedestrians should influence their enjoyment of the shopping experience.

2.11. Price

The price level of a store is a determinant of store image by the type of consumer frequenting that particular outlet. It is presumptuous to assume price as the determinant attribute of where consumers shop. Terblanch and Boschhoff (2004) affirm price has an important bearing on

satisfaction.. The study by Torres (2001) revealed price was an important criterion considered when choosing a store. The reality of retailing is that low prices may attract consumers, but it will not keep them unless other attributes such as convenience, location, product selection and service are acceptable (Engel et al., 1993). Carpenter and Moore (2006) affirm pricing, product assortment and variety, merchandise quality, store environment and atmosphere are important factors in determining the choice of consumers. In-store signs are also useful for directing consumers to particular merchandise and for offering product benefits and price information (Peter & Olson, 1987).

2.12. Store personnel

Building interpersonal relationships with customers can provide the edge in creating store loyalty when competing in a fairly homogeneous market (Janse van Noordwyk, 2010). Sales personnel play an important role in creating the social cues in a store that are found to improve the evaluations of the store image. Malhotz (2001) postulates that an employees' relationship with a customer and their willingness to provide assistance are important. Baker (2002) concluded sales personnel influenced the perceptions of interpersonal service quality which in turn influence patronage intention. The appearance of employees, interaction of store employees, friendly and knowledgeable personnel are important determinants for consumers to make future purchase decisions at a store. Consumers will tend to patronize those stores where individuals similar to them are perceived to be shopping (Loudon & Bitta, 1995). The personal appearance of sales personnel influences the customers' perception of a store (Klaasen, Logon & Jasoer, 1996).

Staff-customer interactions in retailing occur at multiple levels and are complex (Macintosh and Lockshin, 1997). Despite its complexity, it is a vital part of consumers' retail experiences and

subsequent satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessments (Jamal and Adelowore, 2008; Dabholkar., 1996; Carman, 1990). ‘Personal interaction’ refers to customer perceptions of the interactions that take place during the process of shopping assistance, and includes components such as staff attitudes, their behaviours, and their expertise (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Bitner, 1990), their ability to inspire confidence, and being courteous and helpful (Dabholkar, 1996). Since personal interaction basically captures how the customer is treated by a staff member, it therefore reflects the functional service quality concept referred to by Grönroos (1982), or the shopping assistance is delivered. In a study by Terblanche (2011), staff competence is operationalised as all face-to-face personal interactions between supermarket employees, promptness, the trust customers have in employees, and how knowledgeable staff is.



2.13. Advertising/Promotion

Advertising is an important channel in getting a product to a possible target market. Sales incentives, displays and advertising are attributes of promotion. According to Kliatchko (2005) advertising is consumer focused to nurture customer satisfaction and loyalty. Although promotion is viewed as 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 (Yavas, 2011). Promotions have a significant influence on consumer preference therefore the consumers have to be attracted by advertising to stimulate and create store awareness. 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 (Marwick & Fill, 1995).

Pearson (2003) found consumer centric advertising through interactive e-mail change customers' attitudes towards the brand which in turn affected the intention to purchase. Displays do not hold high incentive value for consumers, but rather act to make consumers aware of possible purchase and usage merchandise (Sen, Block & Chandran, 2002).

2.14. Other factors affecting store choice

According to Levy et al (2012) successful retailers are customer centric, their strategic and tactical decisions revolve around their present and potential customers. Customers make decisions about what stores to patronize, products and services to use and channels to use. Store choice decisions in the food retailing industry have been widely discussed in the literature. It is well known that consumers make periodic visits to supermarkets (stores) to satisfy their consumption needs in many categories. According to Berman and Evans (2010) consumers' decision to shop at a supermarket is in general based on location or convenience, assortment and quality of merchandise, service quality, price image, ambience conditions and promotions as well as brand selection. Theory assumes that a specific store type is chosen and then a specific store within this store type. Previous literature concludes that several variables, like assortment, location and price among others, influence store and store type choice, (Baumol and Ide, 1956). This work considers specific consumer attitudes, towards quality, freshness, environment, advertisement, organic food and prices, and several socio-demographics. These attitudes influence store type choice, and assuming there is a true relation between these choices, an implied image order can be established.

2.15. Conclusion

A comprehensive review of the literature relating to the functional elements of store image, that is, those factors taken into consideration when consumers choose a store to shop at has been discussed. Where possible, reference is made to areas in which research has been conducted on these various elements.



CHAPTER 3

3.1. Introduction

In the following chapter, the most appropriate methods for measuring the impact of store image on customer perception are presented. More specifically, this chapter describes and explains the sample selection, the statistical analysis, the questionnaires, the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument, the data collection method and the statistical methods adopted to analyze the research data collected for this study. In essence this chapter highlights the problem statement and objectives as mentioned in the previous chapter, describes the research plan and how it was executed.



3.2. Problem Statement'

Retail markets have become very competitive in recent times, both globally and locally. Indeed, the entering of Walmart into the South African retail market has been hailed as an event that will benefit cost-conscious buyers because of the increased competition (Cambiaso, 2011). The South African market is characterised by heterogeneous groups of consumers. This heterogeneity exists in the food and non-food markets, which comprise customers with different cultures, income, tastes, expectations, and motives (Evangeldis, 1994). In business retailing, the exploration of studies on consumer demographics, behaviour, attitude and attribute are useful as a framework for profiling consumer's ultimate choice in retail purchasing (Doherty, 2007). Dhurup (2010) argues the formation of store image is a complex process which may be influenced by various variables, which have been difficult for researchers to conceptualise and operationalise.

Retail is a fast-growing industry that is expanding each day. As the population grows, the expectations of customers increase. Customer perception has a huge influence on a customer's retail preference. It is important for retailers to know what customers' preferences are in order to acknowledge future demands and shape their marketing strategies accordingly (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008).

In light of the above, understanding consumers' buying behaviour is of utmost importance for retailers, to enable them to maintain their competitive edge. Consumer characteristics, store attributes, store image, store choice and retailing strategies are some of the key concepts that play a role in successful retailing (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). The marketing mix along with the store image attributes equally contribute to the overall store image, which consumers apply to evaluate the store on a multi-attribute utility function (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). Limited research has been done on the South African consumer's perception of store image attributes. This study hence endeavours to gather information on the research question: Is there a relationship between store image and customer perception?

3.3. Objectives of the study

- To determine whether a relationship exists between the store choice and each of the biographical variables (age, gender, marital status, level of education, occupation and income) respectively.
- To investigate the importance of store image dimension's and sub-dimensions for consumers in an ideal retail store.

- To empirically investigate and conceptualise the relationship between a store's image and a consumer's buying behaviour.
- To identify components of store image that shoppers may consider important in store selection process. To determine the variance in the general characteristics of the store based on age, gender, marital status, level of education, occupation and income

3.4. Population and Sample

Population refers to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. It is for the benefit of the population that research is done. However, due to the large sizes of populations, researchers often cannot test every individual in the population, because it is too expensive and time-consuming. This is the reason why researchers rely on sampling techniques (Oliver, 1980).

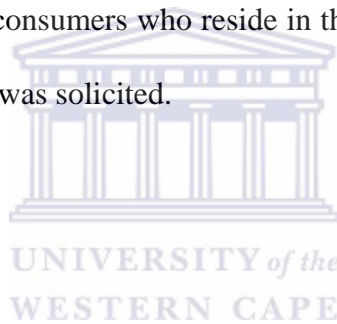
The target population consisted of consumers who form part of the various malls where the research was conducted.

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) a sample is a subgroup or subset of the population, by studying the sample, the researcher would be able to draw conclusions that would be generalisable to the population of interest. The sample size for this study is 260. According to the population-to-sample-size table by Sekeran (2001) the corresponding minimum sample size for a population of 260 is 155, therefore confirming the adequacy of the sample size securing a 30% response rate.

3.5. Sampling

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) states in probability sampling the elements in the population have some chance of being selected as sample subjects. In non-probability sampling, the elements do not have a known or predetermined chance of being selected as subjects. For the purpose of this study non-probability sampling was deployed.

In particular, a snowball sample was used. The advantages of a snowball sample are that it is quick, easy, convenient and inexpensive. While the disadvantages are that there is limited control by researcher over who responds, the possibility of bias and restricted generalisability (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Responses from consumers who reside in the greater Cape Town area and who shop at a major supermarket chain was solicited.



3.6. Research Approach

3.6.1. Advantages and disadvantages of Qualitative and Quantitative research

Leedy (1993) explains qualitative research produces a greater depth of understanding for cases being studied. In addition, the researcher also gains more detailed and rich data in the form of comprehensive written descriptions or visual evidence. Leedy further adds there are a number of disadvantages associated with qualitative research, it gives the researcher a subjective view of the study and its participants, hence reducing generalisability. Furthermore, it is costly, time consuming and may be more complex to generalise.

Quantitative research yields broader and more generalisable findings as it is more likely to yield replicable results (Patton, 2002, p. 14). He postulates that quantitative research has focused research questions which are highly structured in that it has understandable methods (counting, scales). Quantitative research requires a lower effort in terms of time and cost.

The disadvantages associated with quantitative research is that preset answers will not necessarily reflect how people really feel about a subject and in some cases might just be the closest match. Research questions can lead to 'structural' bias and false representation, where the data actually reflects the view of them instead of the participating subject.

3.6.2. Data Collection Method

Data was extracted using quantitative research. The study was executed in a cross-sectional design using questionnaires to source information regarding the constructs being studied. A questionnaire is an instrument that a researcher uses to measure variables. The researcher conceptualises and operationalises variables as questions. Respondents read the questions themselves and make answers on a questionnaire (Neuman, 1997).

According to Hayes (2001), there are advantages and disadvantages associated with the use of questionnaires for collecting data in a research study.

The advantages are:

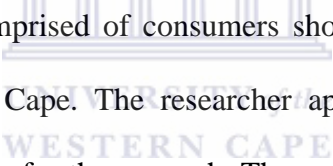
- The questionnaire is useful to obtain information from reasonably large groups of participants
- Large groups of participants can be assessed simultaneously and costs are relatively low

- They are quick and efficient

The disadvantages of using questionnaires are:

- The response rate from participants in answering the questionnaire may be low
- They are inflexible
- Information received may not be in great depth
- Participants may ignore the questionnaire or parts of it and the researcher will receive incomplete questionnaires which will have to be discarded

3.6.3. Procedure



Respondents for this research comprised of consumers shopping in two malls in the Greater Cape Town area in the Western Cape. The researcher approached top management of the shopping malls to obtain permission for the research. The survey was conducted during daytime shopping hours in September 2013. The study targeted 155 customers. A total of one-hundred and sixty (160) questionnaires was administered, with one-hundred and fifty-five (155) fully completed questionnaires being returned, thereby constituting a ninety-seven percent (97%) return rate.

A cover letter was attached to each questionnaire and handed to respondents, this was to assure respondents that their information would be kept anonymous and confidential. They were made aware of their important role and the requirement of honesty when responding to help to ensure the accuracy of the results. Respondents were also provided with detailed instructions as to how

the questionnaires were to be completed. The rationale behind providing clear instructions and assuring confidentiality of information is based on the fact that this significantly reduces the likelihood of obtaining biased responses (Sekaran, 2003).

3.6.4. Measuring instrument

The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section one measured demographic variables including gender, marital status, age, level of education, occupation and income. Section two consisted out of store location, general characteristics of the store, convenience of reaching the store from your location, physical characteristics of store, products offered, prices charged by the store, store personnel, store advertising and customer services. The respondents were asked to rate each of the mentioned items ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The questions were based on a 1-5 point Likert Scale, which indicates a degree of agreement or disagreement with each of a series of statements related to the research topic (Martins, 1996).

The scale was as follows:

1 - Strongly disagree

2 - Disagree

3 - Neither agrees nor disagrees

4 - Agree

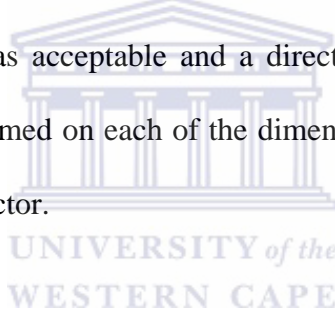
5 - Strongly agree

3.7. Measuring Instrument: Psychometric Properties

3.7.1. Validity

Foxcroft and Roodt (2002) state that the validity of research instruments is when the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. According to Chettiar (1996), when looking at validity with respect to the questionnaire used in this study, the convergent and discriminant validity supports the instrument's legitimacy.

Model-fit, convergent and discriminant validity were assessed through a goodness-of-fit (GOF). Construct validity of the questionnaire was assessed by the computation of the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the scale which was acceptable and a direct indicator of construct validity. In addition factor analysis was performed on each of the dimensions to determine what percentage of variance is explained by each factor.



3.7.2. Reliability

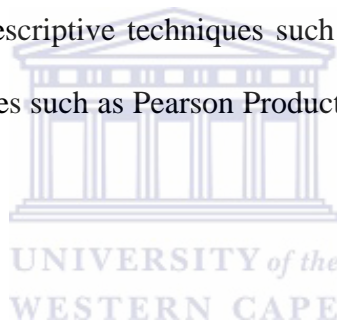
The reliability of an instrument is demonstrated when the results obtained are consistent every time the instrument is used. Reliability is important because if an instrument is statically reliable, the results and proposed recommendations will hold more credibility (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2002).

The standardized Cronbach α was 0.742 which exceeds the acceptable benchmark levels of 0.70, and can therefore be regarded as sufficiently reliable (Malhotra, 2004).

3.8. Statistical Methods: Data Analysis

The computer program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used for analysing the data in this study. SPSS is a mathematical tool enabling researchers to compute the results of the data gathered, so that conclusions and future research can be presented and proposed. The tool assists with configuring the raw data sourced through the research instruments - into intelligence that can be used as results of the research.

For the purposes of testing the research hypotheses, a number of statistical techniques were employed. These included both descriptive techniques such as frequencies, percentages, tables and charts and inferential techniques such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation and analysis of variance (ANOVA).



3.8.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics describe the phenomena of interest (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010), and is used to analyze data for classifying and summarizing numerical data. Neuman (2003) and Huysamen (1990) add that descriptive statistics enable researchers' to demonstrate data in a structured, accurate and summarised format, in order to make an analysis and interpretation sounder. Descriptive statistics included frequency tables, percentages, measures of central tendency and dispersion, and enhance presentation of the findings. Hence, "the aim of a descriptive study is to summarise long lists of data so that an overall impression of the distribution involved can be formed more easily, that is, presenting data in a meaningful form" (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 96).

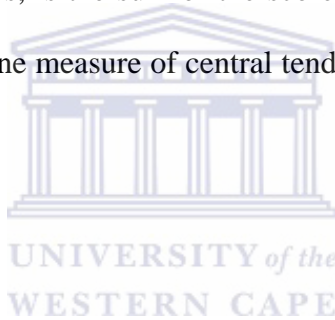
Cooper and Schindler (2003) further stated descriptive statistics confirm the accuracy of the findings through graphical and visual representation of the data.

3.8.2. Frequencies

A frequency distribution is a table displaying various possible measurement categories, as well as the number of cases falling into them (Huysamen, 1987). Thus the number of cases falling in a particular category is known as the frequency of that category.

3.8.3. Mean

“The mean of a collection of scores, is the sum of the scores divided by the number of scores” (Huysamen, 1987, p. 39). This is one measure of central tendency that provides a general idea of the entire data.



3.8.4. Mode

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), this is a way of presenting data in the form of summary averages or measures of central tendency. It is also seen as the most frequent attribute either grouped or ungrouped.

3.8.5. Standard deviation

In addition to a measure of central tendency, it is a desirable to have a measure of dispersion of data. The standard deviation is a measure amongst scores (Sekaran, 1992). It measures the amount by which the values in the data distribution differ from the mean (Moodley, 1998).

3.8.6. Percentages

Percentage in a research study is used to represent the data proportionally based on a range of 100. It is also used to provide a basis for the data to be standardised, in order to enable conclusive findings about the constructs being researched (Cooper & Emory, 1995).

3.8.7. Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion

Huysamen (1998) believes that central tendency enables the researcher to evaluate how the measure is distributed, in order to make the findings more conclusive and comprehensive. The statistical methods applied with respect this type of descriptive statistic are mean, median, mode and standard deviation. Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991) define mean as the average of all the data gathered, and the mean is used to enable the assertion of a view with respect to the results.

According to Huysamen (1998), the median is the midpoint of the ordered data, where the data are arranged in ascending or descending order. Sekeran and Bougie (2010) describe mode as the frequency of the data which basically highlights trends. He further describes standard deviation as the measure that computes the variability, that is, the square root of the variance of the data set. The standard deviation provides the researcher with input about how the data set is spread or dispersed.

3.9. Inferential Statistics

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), inferential statistics allow researchers to infer from the data through analysis - the relationship between two variables, differences between variables among different subgroups, and how several independent variables might explain the variance in a dependent variable. The use of inferential statistics allows more conclusive findings to be presented using:

- Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient
- Multiple Regression Analysis

3.9.1. The Pearson Product Correlation

For the purpose of establishing whether a statistically significant relationship exists between store image and customer perception, the Pearson correlation method was used. This method provides an index of the strength, magnitude and direction of the relationship between variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Cohen and Swerdlik (2002) further state that the relationship is constant when there is a strong correlation coefficient. The product-moment correlation coefficient is, therefore, suitable for the purposes of the present study since the study attempted to describe the relationship between store image and customer perception.

3.10.1. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA):

Aron and Aron (1999) reported that analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a procedure used to test the hypothesis if there is more than one sample or group. Murphy and Davidshofer (2001) add that ANOVA is the inferential technique which provides the researcher with interpretative analysis on the data, where systematic differences in the data are assigned and variance is computed. In

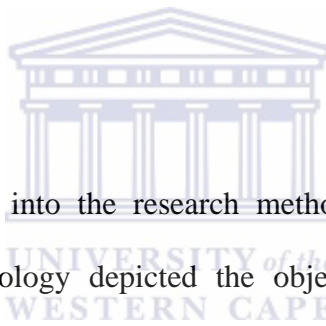
this study, ANOVA was used to establish whether a statistically significant difference exists between store choice and general characteristics of a store, store location, physical characteristics of a store, product range, prices charged, store personnel, advertising and customer service.

3.11.1. Factor Analysis

Factor analysis can be used to (1) understand the structure of a set of variables; (2) to construct a questionnaire to measure an underlying variable and (3) to reduce a data set to a more manageable size while retaining as much of the original information as possible (Field, 2005). In this study, the validity of the store image questionnaire was assessed using factor analysis.

3.12. Conclusion

This chapter provided an insight into the research methodology used in the study. More specifically, the research methodology depicted the objectives of the study, the sampling technique utilised, the description of the sample, the measuring instruments used and the rationale for its inclusion as well as the statistical methods employed in testing the research hypotheses were discussed.



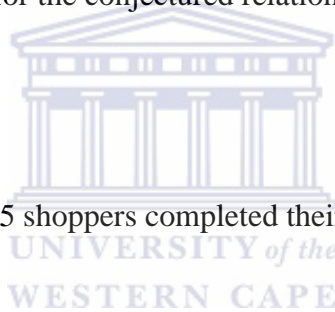
CHAPTER 4

4.1. Introduction

This chapter commences with a detailed analysis of data that provides an insight into the findings of the study, accompanied by numerical and graphical representations of the data and interpretation of the results. The statistical programme used for the analyses and presentation of data is the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The graphs presented in this section are extracted from Microsoft Excel to further clarify the findings. The descriptive and inferential statistics generated for the conjectured relationships are presented and discussed.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The biographical information of 155 shoppers completed their questionnaires in the research is graphically illustrated.



The subjects' responses as it regards their age are presented graphically in Figure 4.1.

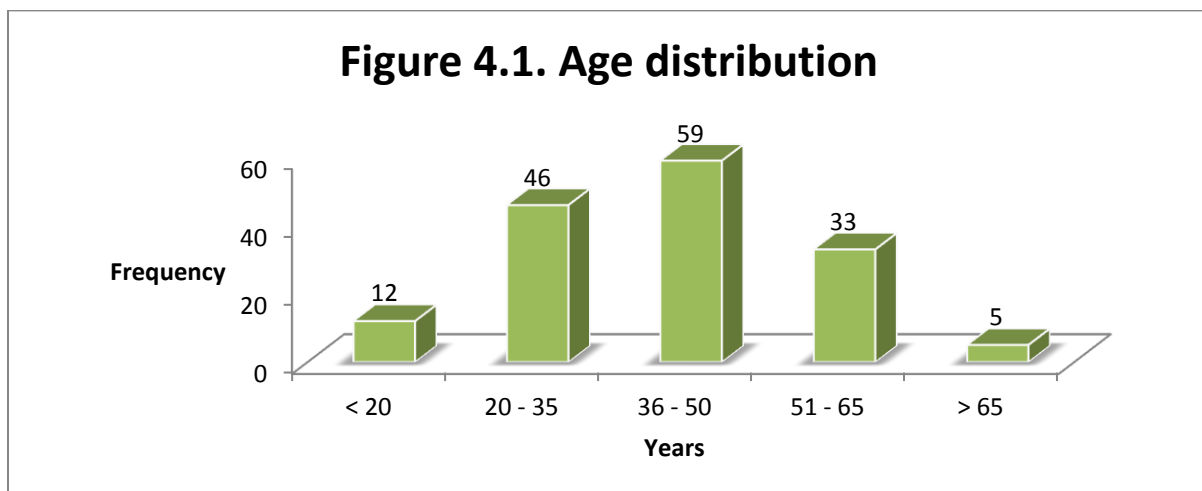
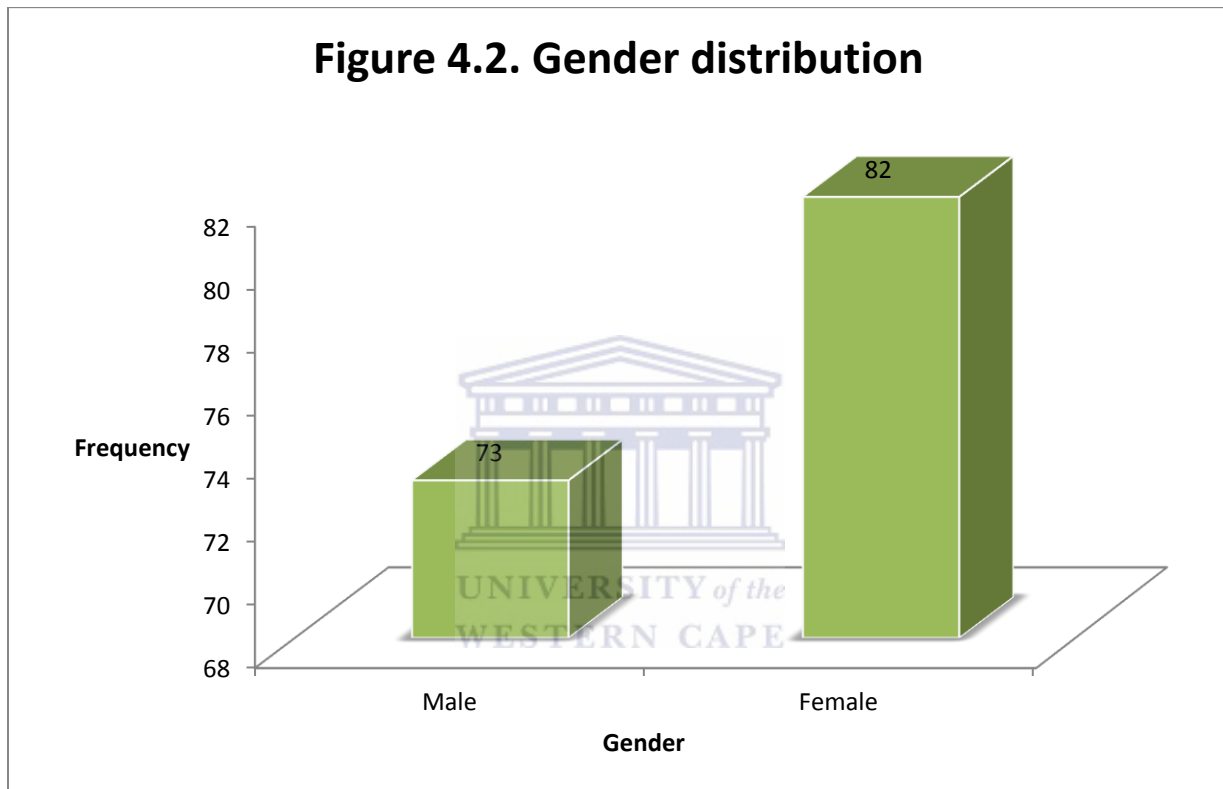


Figure 4.1 represents the age distribution of the participants. The majority of the respondents (38.1%, N=59) are in the age group of 36-50 years, while (29.7%, N=46) are in the age category of 20-35. Those between 51 and 65 years of age (N=33) made up 21.3% of the sample. Respondents under 20 years of age (N=12) compromised 7.7% of the sample while the further five respondents (3.2%) are over 65.

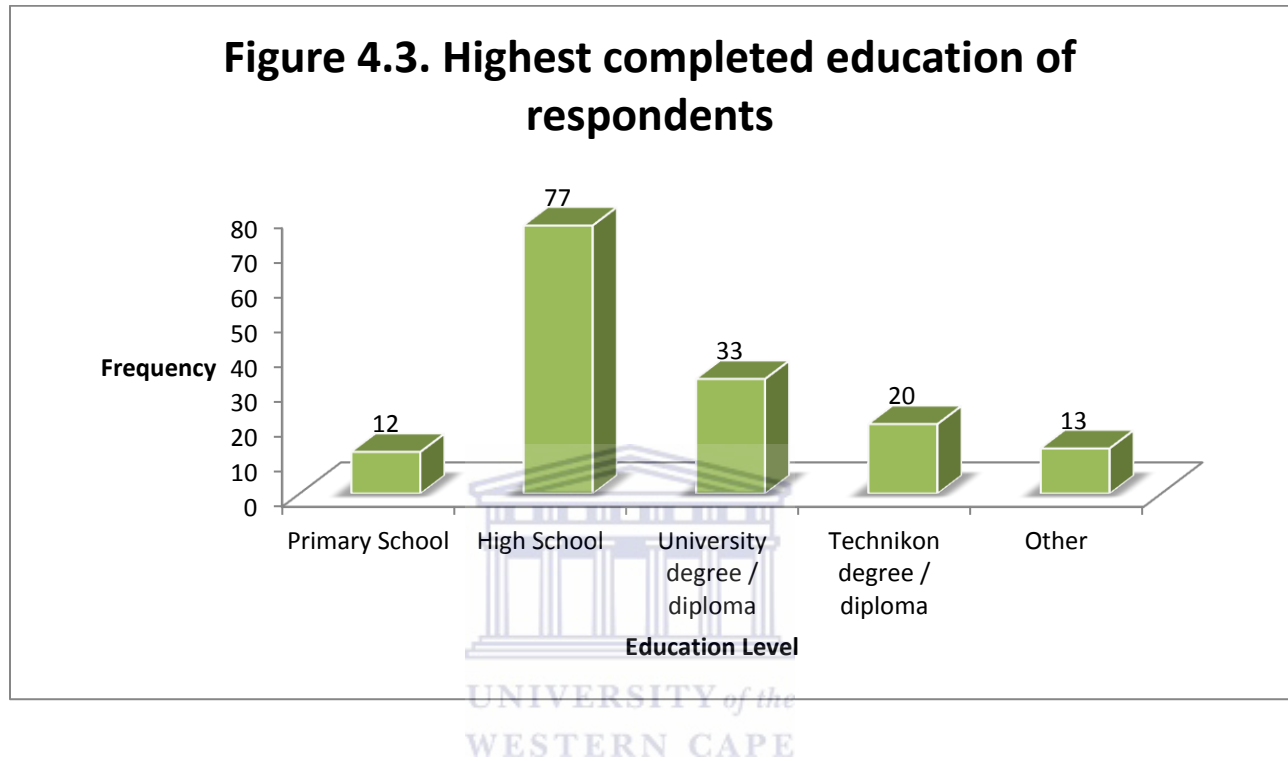


Figure 4.2 presents a graphical representation of the gender distribution of the selected sample.



As can be seen from Figure 4.2, the majority of the respondents are female. More specifically, 52.9% (n=82) of the subjects are female, while 47.1% (n=73) are male.

The respondents level of education is illustrated in Figure 4.3



Most of the respondents, 49.7% (n=77) have completed high school, second to that is 21.3% (N=33) who acquired a university degree / diploma. While, 12.9% (n=20) have a Technikon diploma, and only 7.7% (N=12) completed primary school, the remaining 8.4% (N=13) have indicated other.

The marital status of the respondents is presented graphically in Figure 4.4

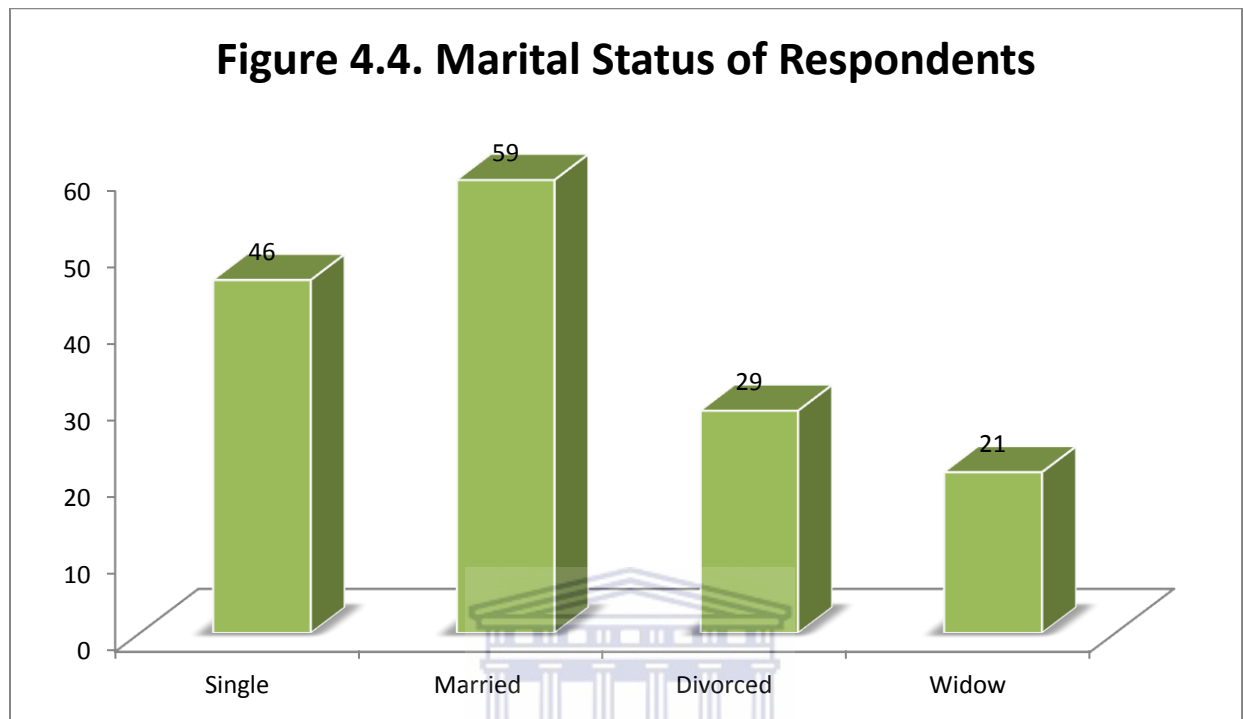


Figure 4.4 illustrates the majority of the respondents, being 38.1% (n=59) are married, while a further 29.7 % (n=46) are single. Furthermore, 13.5% (n=21) are widowed and the remaining 29 respondents (18.7%) of the sample indicated that they are divorced.

The distribution of the sample with regards to their occupation is presented graphically in Figure 4.5

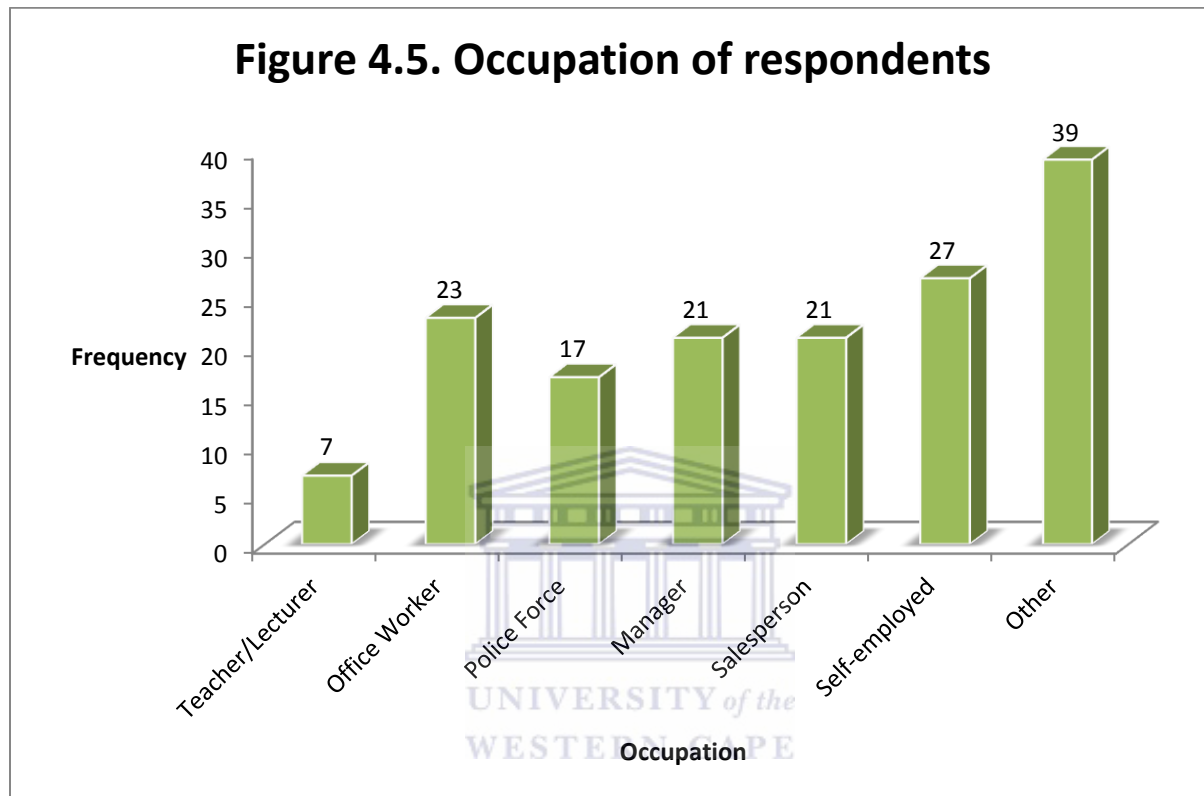
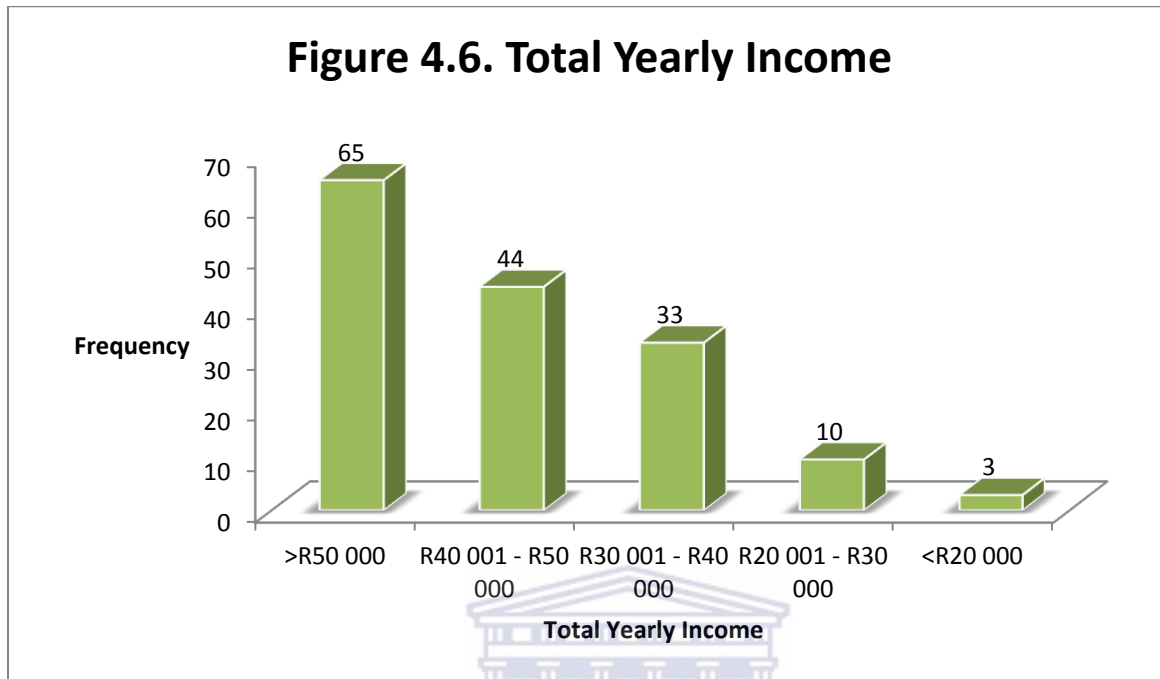


Figure 4.5 illustrates that 25.2% of subjects (N=39) have other jobs than those specified. Second to that 17.5% (n=27) are self-employed, while 14.8% (n=23) comprised of office workers. There is an equal representation of salespeople and those in managerial positions (N=21), that is, 13.5%. The remaining 11% (n=17) of those surveyed are employed in police force and 4.5% (n=7) are employed as teachers/lecturers.

The total yearly income of the respondents is depicted in Figure 4.6



From figure 4.6 it is evident the majority of subjects earn R50 000 and over, that is 41.9% (N=65). This is followed by 28.4% (N= 44) who earn between R40 001 – R50 000. It is evident that 21.3% (N= 33) earn between R30 001 – R40 000 per annum, while 6.5% (N=10) of the respondents yearly income is between R20 001 – R 30 000. The remaining 1.9% (N= 3) of respondents earn less than R20 000 per annum.

Figure 4.7 illustrates the store choice of the respondents

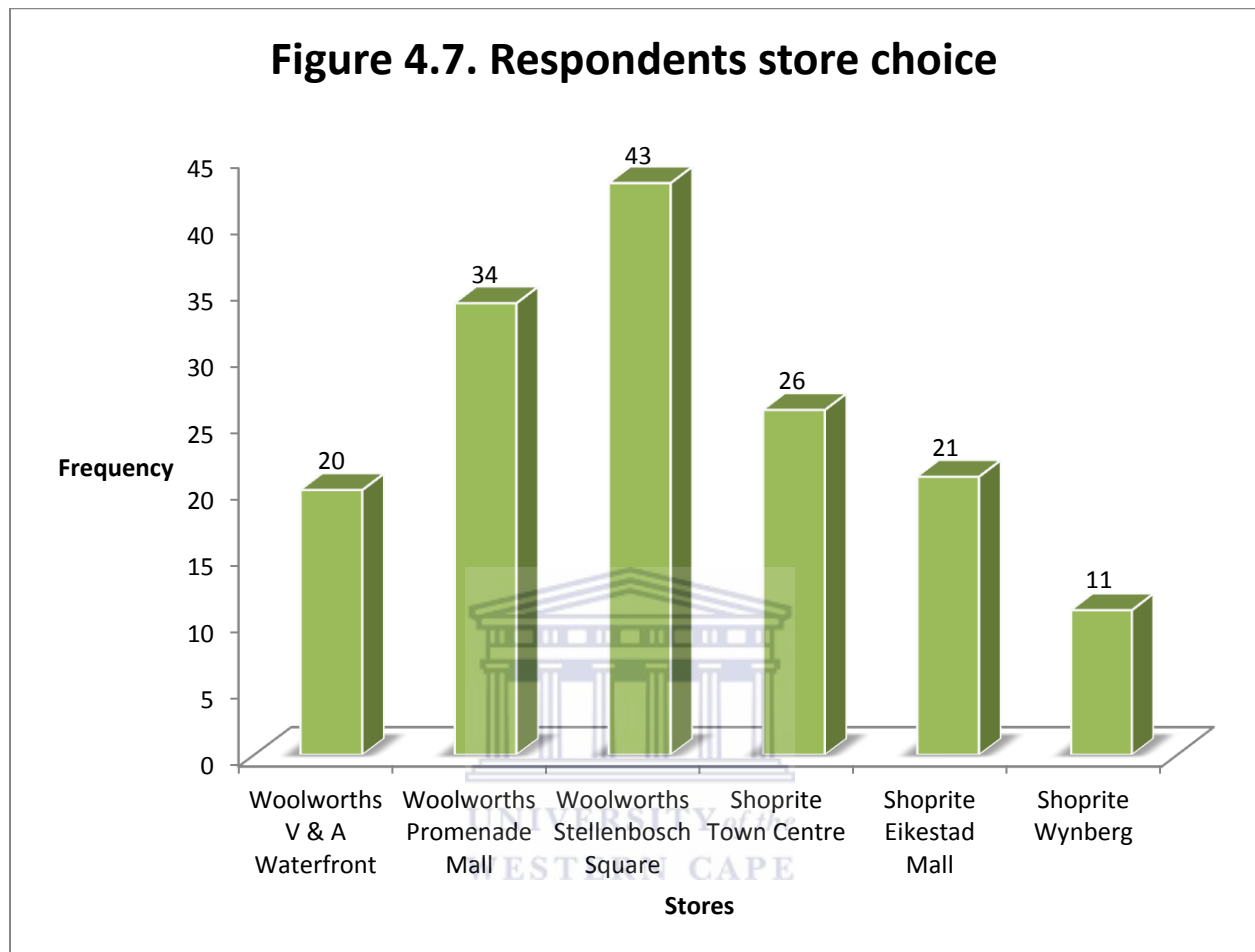


Figure 4.7 indicates the majority of consumers surveyed, shopped at Woolworths, Stellenbosch Square (N=43), that is, 27.7%, and at Woolworths Promenade Mall (N=34), that is, 21.9%. In addition, 16.8% of subjects (N=26) prefer Shoprite Town Centre. A total of twenty-one (13.5%) of respondents indicated their preference for Shoprite Eikestad Mall, while 12.9% (N= 20) of respondents choose to shop at Woolworths Victoria & Alfred Waterfront. The remaining eleven (7.1%) of the sample favoured to shop at Shoprite Wynberg.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics for the elements of store image.

Element	No. of items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
General characteristics	3	155	13.19	1.088	-.424	.100	10	15
Location	4	155	11.88	3.416	.577	-.154	5	21
Physical characteristics	13	155	47.28	7.410	-.348	.261	25	62
Product Range	4	155	14.11	2.793	-.085	-.716	8	20
Prices Charged	3	155	9.92	2.459	-.159	-.715	4	15
Store personnel	8	155	26.59	4.756	.402	.121	16	40
Store Advertising	5	155	18.06	3.793	-.318	-.297	9	25
Service Offered	7	155	23.53	3.329	-.369	.589	12	30

The elements of store image were ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being an indication of the subjects' "strong disagreement" towards the element and 5 being an indication of a "strong agreement".

From Table 4.1 it can be concluded consumers rated the physical characteristics of a store as being the most important criterion (mean = 47.28, SD = 7.410). This was followed by the store

personnel, with a mean of 26.59 and a standard deviation of 4.756. The dimension with the lowest mean was that of the price charged by the stores for the product (mean = 9.92, SD = 2.459).

Physical characteristics of the store included factors such as the neatness and cleanliness of the store, its decor, the wideness of the aisles, air-conditioning and lighting.



4.3. Inferential Statistics

4.3.1. Reliability:

Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability refers to consistency, stability and freedom for error (Sekaran, 2003). One way to establish reliability of a questionnaire is to calculate Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha.

Table 4.2. Reliability scores for the questionnaire utilised in this study

Reliability Statistic	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Store Image Questionnaire	.742	47

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the scale. In the social sciences, a Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of 0.7 and higher reflects the internal consistency of the instrument (Sekaran, 2003). The result for the Store Image Questionnaire is 0.742. This exceeds 0.7 which is regarded as sufficiently reliable.

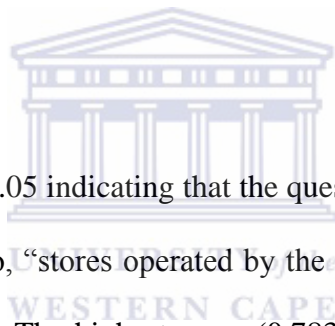
4.4. Factor Analysis of the store image questionnaire

The validity of the store image questionnaire was assessed using factor analysis. Factor analysis was used on the measuring instruments to determine their unidimensionality.

Table 4.3. Validity Scores

<u>Communalities</u>		
	<u>Initial</u>	<u>Extraction</u>
Store image 1	1.000	.638
Store image 2	1.000	.376
Store image 3	1.000	.646
Store image 4	1.000	.647
Store image 5	1.000	.773
Store image 6	1.000	.584
Store image 7	1.000	.712
Store image 8	1.000	.621
Store image 9	1.000	.747
Store image 10	1.000	.648
Store image 11	1.000	.719
Store image 12	1.000	.664
Store image 13	1.000	.589
Store image 14	1.000	.709
Store image 15	1.000	.696
Store image 16	1.000	.696
Store image 17	1.000	.715
Store image 18	1.000	.715
Store image 19	1.000	.783
Store image 20	1.000	.715
Store image 21	1.000	.621
Store image 22	1.000	.687
Store image 23	1.000	.737
Store image 24	1.000	.613
Store image 25	1.000	.602
Store image 26	1.000	.740
Store image 27	1.000	.673
Store image 28	1.000	.693
Store image 29	1.000	.732
Store image 30	1.000	.663
Store image 31	1.000	.716
Store image 32	1.000	.625
Store image 33	1.000	.620

Store image 34	1.000	.690
Store image 35	1.000	.766
Store image 36	1.000	.647
Store image 37	1.000	.687
Store image 38	1.000	.752
Store image 39	1.000	.676
Store image 40	1.000	.736
Store image 41	1.000	.657
Store image 42	1.000	.697
Store image 43	1.000	.689
Store image 44	1.000	.605
Store image 45	1.000	.590
Store image 46	1.000	.538
Store image 47	1.000	.669



In Table 4.3, all scores are above 0.05 indicating that the questionnaire is valid. The lowest score (0.376) is for question number two, “stores operated by the company”. This score is still above 0.05 indicating that it is still valid. The highest score (0.783) is for question number nine-teen, “known emergency exits”. Hence indicating that the questionnaire is measuring what it supposed to be measuring.

4.5. Correlations

Table 4.4. Correlation Table

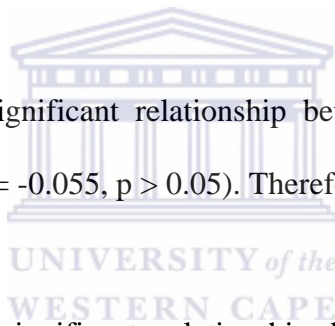
Biographical factors		General Characteristics
Age	Pearson Correlation	.138
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.087
	N	155
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.543
	N	155
Level of education	Pearson Correlation	.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.599
	N	155
Marital Status	Pearson Correlation	-.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.866
	N	155
Occupation	Pearson Correlation	-.055
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.495
	N	155
Income	Pearson Correlation	-.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.597
	N	155

4.6. Outcome of hypothesised relationships

As illustrated in Table 4.4. the following can be deduced:

- There is no statistically significant relationship between age and the general characteristics of a store ($r = 0.138$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

- There is no statistically significant relationship between gender and the general characteristics of a store ($r = 0.049$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.
- There is no statistically significant relationship between level of education and the general characteristics of a store ($r = 0.043$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.
- There is no statistically significant relationship between marital status and the general characteristics of a store ($r = -0.014$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.
- There is no statistically significant relationship between occupation and the general characteristics of a store ($r = -0.055$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.
- There is no statistically significant relationship between income and the general characteristics of a store. ($r = -0.043$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.



4.7. Regression Analysis

Table 4.5. Regression

Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.992 ^a	.984	.983	1.583		
	Sum of				
	Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	22891.764	8	49.922	1141.531	.000 ^b
1 Residual	365.977	146	41.325		
Total	23257.742	154			
Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-1.382	2.461		-.562	.575
gentot	1.028	.120	.091	8.576	.000
convtot	1.018	.040	.283	25.602	.000
phystot	1.009	.018	.608	56.806	.000
producttot	.959	.047	.218	20.423	.000
pricetot	1.134	.055	.227	20.584	.000
perstot	.987	.028	.382	35.096	.000
adverttot	1.009	.037	.311	27.221	.000
custsertot	.992	.043	.269	22.854	.000

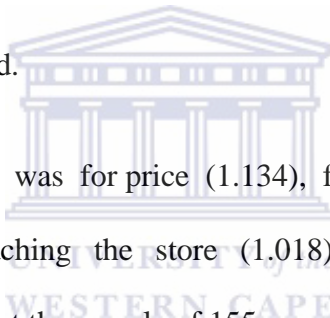
** p< 0.01

Table 4.5 illustrates the results of the regression analysis, regressing the store characteristic variables against store image. Results indicate that the multiple R- value is 0.992, as indicated by the Multiple R. The R-Square value of 0.984 indicates that approximately 98% of the variance in store image choices can be accounted for by these 8 store characteristic variables.

The F-statistic of 1141.531 is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Hence, it may be concluded that the 8 variables explain 98% of the variance in store image choices can be accounted for by these 8 store characteristic variables and that other factors, unaccounted for in the model could impact on store image choices beyond those considered.

Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

Moreover, the highest Beta-value was for price (1.134), followed by general characteristics (1.028) and convenience of reaching the store (1.018) all of which statistically explain the variance in store choice amongst the sample of 155 consumers.



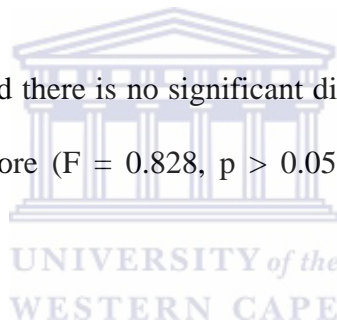
Analysis of variance:

ANOVA: General Characteristics of the Store and Store Choice

Table 4.6.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Sig.
Between groups	3.938	4	.984	.828	.509
Within groups	178.256	150	1.188		
Total	182.194	154			

From Table 4.6.it can be concluded there is no significant difference between stores chosen and the general characteristics of a store ($F = 0.828, p > 0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

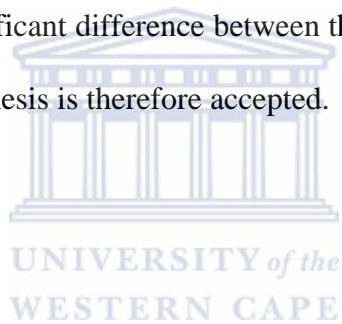


ANOVA: Store location and Store Choice

Table 4.7.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Sig.
Between groups	7.438	1	7.438	.636	.426
Within groups	1789.233	153	11.694		
Total	1796.671	154			

Table 4.7. indicate there is no significant difference between the stores chosen and its location. ($F = 0.636, p > 0.05$). The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

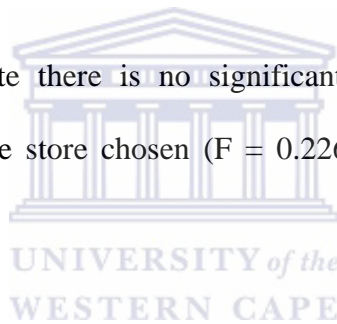


ANOVA: Physical Characteristics of Store and Store Choice

Table 4.8.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Sig.
Between groups	50.710	4	12.678	.226	.923
Within groups	8404.799	150	56.032		
Total	8455.510	154			

The results in Table 4.8. indicate there is no significant difference between the physical characteristics of the store and the store chosen ($F = 0.226$, $p > 0.05$). This implies the null hypothesis can be substantiated.

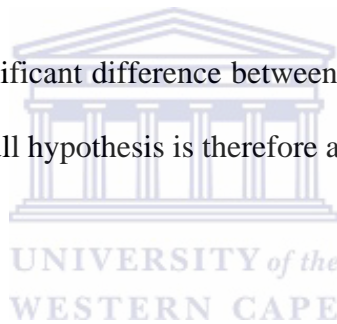


ANOVA: Product Range and Store Choice

Table 4.9.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Sig.
Between groups	16.055	6	2.676	.334	.918
Within groups	1185.081	148	8.007		
Total	1201.135	154			

Table 4.9. indicate there is no significant difference between the stores in terms of their product range ($F = 0.334$, $p > 0.05$). The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

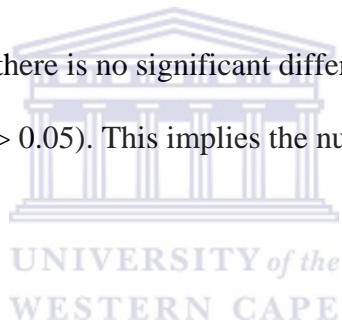


ANOVA: Prices Charged by the Store and Store Choice

Table 4.10.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Sig.
Between groups	23.530	4	5.883	.972	.425
Within groups	907.541	150	6.050		
Total	931.071	154			

The results in Table 4.10. indicate there is no significant difference between the prices charged and the store chosen ($F = 0.972$, $p > 0.05$). This implies the null hypothesis can be substantiated.

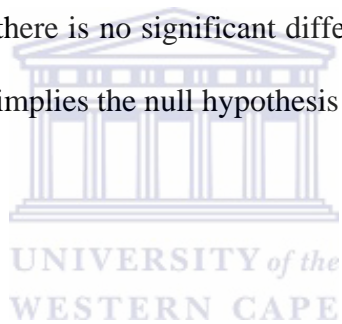


ANOVA: Store Personnel and Store Choice

Table 4.11.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Sig.
Between groups	11.787	4	2.947	.127	.972
Within groups	3471.606	150	23.144		
Total	3483.394	154			

The results in Table 4.11 indicate there is no significant difference store personnel and the store chosen ($F = 0.127$, $p > 0.05$). This implies the null hypothesis can be accepted.

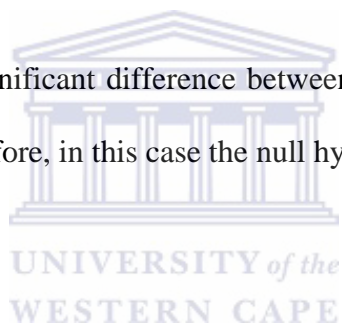


ANOVA: Advertising and Store Choice

Table 4.12.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Sig.
Between groups	49.499	4	12.375	.857	.491
Within groups	2165.856	150	14.439		
Total	2215.355	154			

Table 4.12.indicate there is no significant difference between advertising of the store and store choice ($F = 0.857$, $p > 0.05$).Therefore, in this case the null hypothesis is accepted.

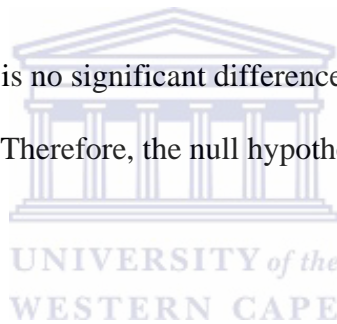


ANOVA: Customer service and Store Choice

Table 4.13.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Sig.
Between groups	73.289	5	14.658	1.337	.252
Within groups	1633.330	149	10.962		
Total	1706.619	154			

From Table 4.13.it is evident there is no significant difference between customer services and the store chosen ($F = 1.337, p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.



Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the most salient findings obtained based on empirical analysis of the data. Chapter five presents a discussion of the findings obtained and contextualises the research findings based on previous research on store image and customer perception.



CHAPTER 5

5.1. Introduction

This is the concluding chapter of the research undertaken, where the results will be discussed and recommendations and conclusions provided. This will in turn provide a concluding view of what the findings are, with regards to the relationships between store image and customer perception - in the context of the sample used in the study. All information from the previous chapters will be used to assist in supporting and validating the information in this chapter.

5.2. Discussion

5.2.1. Descriptive Statistics



The sample consisted of 155 consumers. As viewed in Figure 4.1 the majority of respondents were in the age group 36 – 50 years [(N=59) (38.1%)]. The majority of respondents as observed in Figure 4.2 were female [(N=82) (52.9%)]. With regards to the educational level displayed in Figure 4.3 the majority of the respondents were seen to have completed Grade 12 (Matric) [(N=77) (49.7%)].

The majority of respondents as seen in Figure 4.4 are married [(N= 59) (38.1%)]. In terms of Figure 4.5, the majority of respondents indicated other specified occupations [(N=39) (25.2%)] while Figure 4.6 indicate that the majority of respondents earned over R50 000 per annum [(N=65) (41.9%)].

5.3. Inferential Statistics

5.3.1. Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the scale. The results for the Store Image Questionnaire is 0.742. This exceeds 0.7 which is regarded as sufficiently reliable.

5.3.2. Factor analysis

The validity of the store image questionnaire was assessed using factor analysis. Table 4.3.illustrated that all scores are above 0.05 indicating that the questionnaire is valid. Hence indicating that the questionnaire is measuring what it supposed to be measuring.



5.3.3. Regression

The results of regressing the store characteristic variables against store image indicate that the F-statistic of 1141.531 is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Hence, it may be concluded that the 8 variables explain 98% of the variance in store image choices can be accounted for by the 8 store characteristic variables and that other factors, unaccounted for in the model could impact on store image choices beyond those considered.

Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

5.4. Comparison of results with respect to biographical factors of store image

The study aimed to determine if a relationship existed between the general characteristics of store image and biographical factors like age ,gender, level of education, marital status, occupation and total income per annum of the respondents. The following was evidenced:

5.4.1. Age

- There is no statistically significant relationship between age and the general characteristics of a store. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

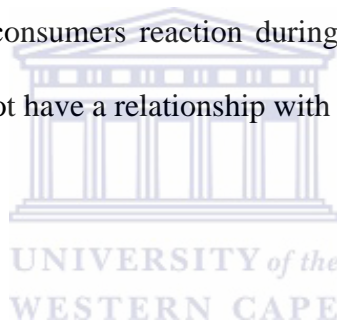
Dhurup (2008) in a study focussing on hyper market store motives and shoppers demographics found that there were no statistical differences noted between age and the motives for shopping. Mochis (2004) arrived at a similar conclusion that shopping motives vary very little with age. However, Cox (2005) on the contrary found that elderly consumers (age > 65) are especially likely to derive satisfaction from certain aspects of the store as they are more likely to enjoy being pampered by salespeople than any other group, are more likely to enjoy shopping for exercise.

In a study by Carrigan (1988) he found that age has no bearing on shopping choices. In contrast findings of Cox (2005) and Bawa and Ghosh (1999) found a high relationship between shopping motives and age. According to Joyce and Lambert (1996) shoppers' age significantly affects perceptions of store image.

5.4.2. Gender

- There is no statistically significant relationship between gender and the general characteristics of a store. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

Dholakia (1997), found that there is no association between the gender of the shopper and the shopping choice. Dhurup (2008) deduced that no significant differences were noted between male and female respondents and their motives for shopping. Mochis (2004) also found that all shopping motives are of equal importance to both male and female consumers. Research conducted by Nguyen (2007) of consumers reaction during service encounters concluded that gender (sex) of the shopper does not have a relationship with the shopping choice.



5.4.3. Level of education

- There is no statistically significant relationship between level of education and the general characteristics of a store. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

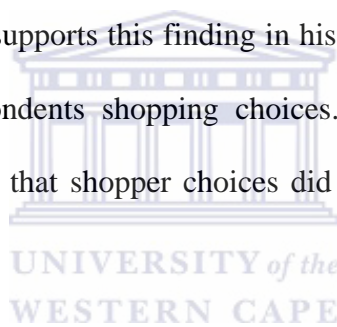
Hausman and Liebtag (2005) found that education levels have no significant effect on store choice. Similarly Dhurup (2008) noted no significant differences between marital status and shoppers motivations for shopping. Since limited research could be identified with respect to the influence of level of education on store choice, further research is warranted. It is possible,

however, that education levels could impact on income potential. This could, in turn, exert an influence on store choice.

5.4.4. Marital Status

- There is no statistically significant relationship between marital status and the general characteristics of a store. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

Studies by Hinson (2012) found ones marital status have no relationship with his/her motivation for store choice. Dhurup (2008) supports this finding in his study which found no relationship between marital status and respondents shopping choices. Previous research undertaken by Groeppel-Klein (1999) also found that shopper choices did not significantly differ in terms of marital status.



5.4.5. Occupation

- There is no statistically significant relationship between occupation and the general characteristics of a store. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

Westbrook and Black (1985) established that there was no significant association between occupation and store selection. However, studies by Forsythe and Bailey (1996) found that occupational status affects store choice.

5.4.6. Income

- There is no statistically significant relationship between income and the general characteristics of a store. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

Findings by Groeppel-Klein et al. (1999), concluded that store shopping characteristics are not necessarily influenced by income. From an economic perspective, consumption is a function of income as pointed out by Samuelson and Nordhaus (2005). It follows that income earned influence people's perceptions, lifestyles and shopping trends and generally affects store choice decisions. In this case, higher income earners prefers the quieter and less crowded environment Research by Chitando (2013) inferred that income earned influence people's perceptions, lifestyles and shopping trends and generally affects store choice decisions.



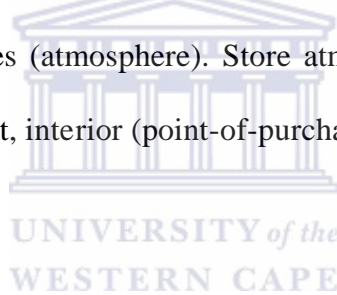
Hyllegard's (2008) study on Spanish consumers' perceptions of US apparel speciality retailers' products and services reported that income influences preference for merchandise and therefore influences the store choice. Cox (2005) found that lower-income consumers are less likely to use price saving tactics than their middle-class counterparts. Berman and Evans (2004) also resonates the view that middle income consumers tend to be conscientious shoppers, compared to low-income consumers.

5.5. Comparison of results with respect to elements of store image

5.5.1. General Characteristics of store

- It can be concluded there is no significant difference between stores chosen and the general characteristics of a store. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

According to Berman and Evans (2001) numerous factors contribute to a retailer's image, for example, customer service, store location, price levels, community service, sales promotion, and attributes of physical facilities (atmosphere). Store atmosphere can be divided into four key elements: exterior, store layout, interior (point-of-purchase displays), and general interior



5.5.2. Store Location

- It is clear that there is no significant difference between the stores chosen and its location. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

In a study conducted by Zimmer and Golden (1988) on consumers' impressions of retail stores, the authors concluded that the location of a store was the third most important factor consumers used when choosing a store to patronize. Hypermarkets are well positioned to meet the one stop shopping needs of customers. Woodside and Trappey (1992) are of the opinion that the location of a retail store is critical for drawing customer traffic, because customers have a preference for a

store that can be accessed with reasonable ease. Gilmore, Margulis and Rauch (2001) found that the majority of respondents in their study expressed the view that the location of a store determines their store choice. Especially for traditional retailers (such as supermarkets), the physical location of the store and the available parking facilities are particularly influential in consumers' store choice (Reutterer and Teller, 2009). Brown (2004) found that convenient location is positively associated with loyalty among traditional supermarket shoppers.

Merrilees, McKenzie and Miller (2007) found a strong relationship between satisfaction with store location and loyalty in a study of Canadian and Estonian shoppers. In an investigation by Jaravaza and Chjitando (2013) on the role of store location in customer store choice, the authors concluded that from ten factors that were examined, only seven are important considerations when choosing a shopping destination. Of the seven factors, four are store location characteristics namely, travelling time, location convenience, nearness to complimentary outlets and store visibility. The other three are ambience conditions, prices, service quality. This trend shows the importance of store location variables in selecting a shopping destination. As much as customers are interested in prices, service quality and ambience conditions, they also take into consideration the convenience offered by the location.

5.5.3. Physical Characteristics

- The results indicate there is no significant difference between the physical characteristics of the store and the store chosen. This implies the null hypothesis can be substantiated.

Research on improving the store environment, conducted by Spangenberg, Crowley and Henderson (1996), indicate there is a significant difference in certain physical characteristics of a store. In a study by Martinson (2007) it was concluded that customers are more likely to visit a store when the store is neat and pleasant. Previous research emphasize that the physical features of a retail environment to be important in store choice decision (Reynolds et al 2002: 693). Baker's et al., (1994) study also revealed that the physical environment of a store enhances customer emotions or minimizes negative mood states and more specifically entices customers to stay longer in the store and spend more money than they had originally intended. The role of atmospherics in store choice is found to be significant and an important part of retail marketing strategy (Kotler 1973) where shoppers determine the value of merchandise based on monetary as well anon-monetary costs (Zeithaml 1988:19). Wakefield and Baker's (1998) study revealed that architectural design and interior décor play in determining and desire to stay in an environment. Physical environment plays a particularly important role in the service encounter of the grocery sector (Keillor, 2004).

5.5.4. Products offered

- Results from this study indicates there is no significant difference between the stores in terms of their product range. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted at the 0.05 level of significance.

Jarvenpaa and Todd (1997) found that one-third of the shoppers expressed disappointment with the limited product offerings within any one store. Sinha and Banerjee (2004) found in their

study that more than 70% of the respondents mentioned merchandise quality and variety as strong reasons for store choice. Researchers have been consistent in reporting the importance of merchandise assortment in the evaluation of a retailer's image (Dabholkar, Thorpe, & Rentz 1996; Terblanche & Boschhoff, 2004). Merchandise variety and depth of assortment will to a large extent be influenced by the image the retailers wishes to portray (Terblanche & Boschhoff 2004). Their study is in congruence with the findings of Mahoney and Sternquist (1989) and Thorpe and Avery (1983) where high-quality merchandise and merchandise selection were identified as desirable characteristics in store choice decisions.

5.5.5. Prices

- The results indicate there is no significant difference the prices charged and the store chosen. This implies the null hypothesis can be substantiated

Price seems to be an important determinant in store choice decisions (Athanasopoulos, 2000). Terblanche and Boschhoff (2004) affirm that price has an important bearing on satisfaction primarily because customer satisfaction is the result of a customer's perception of the value received compared to the price paid. Within a hypermarket setting, variety and different brands are well catered for. Apart from offering a wide selection of national brands, private label and no name brands are competitively priced to appeal to both price sensitive shoppers and those who prefer specific brand names. The study by Torres et al (2001) revealed that price was an important criterion considered when choosing a store. Lambert (1979), Lumpkin et al (1985) resonates similar views that an important attribute in store selection is price. Previous studies (Carpenter &

Moore, 2006; Baker et al (1994) affirm that pricing, product assortment and variety, merchandise quality, store environments and atmospherics are important factors determining the choice of format by consumers. Hence, consumers try to find satisfactory products to match the price and choose a store with a competitive price structure (Oates, Shufeldt & Vaught, 1996).

5.5.6. Store Personnel

- The present study conducted, it was concluded there is no significant difference between the store personnel and the store chosen. This implies the null hypothesis can be substantiated.

Studies by Beneke et al., (2008) found that employees personal interaction with consumers was significant in the projection of a stores image. This factor relates to the way in which customers perceive the staff. It would appear that customers cherish an environment in which staff are knowledgeable, friendly and willing to assist. In a study by Van der Vyfer (2008) on the importance of store image dimensions in retail apparel it was found that the expertise of the sales personnel and the courteousness of the sales personnel were seen as the most important attributes by customers in store selection.

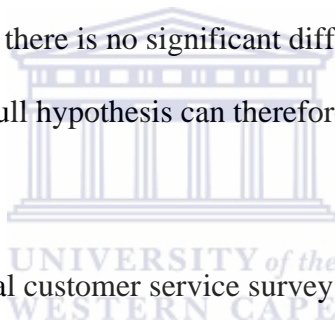
5.5.6. Advertising

- From this study, it is clear there is no significant difference between advertising of the store and store choice. The null hypothesis is accepted.

Otto (1990) conducted a study on the geo-demographic impact of lifestyle, linked to the choice of shops. One of the results indicated that both the consumers used advertisements in choosing which store to patronize. In a study by Van der Vyfer (2008) on the importance of store image dimensions in retail apparel it was found that in terms of advertising the inclusion of brochures in mail store card accounts and spaciousness of in-store displays were rated at the least important attribute in store choice decision.

5.5.7. Customer Service

- It is evident from this study there is no significant difference between customer services and the store chosen. The null hypothesis can therefore be accepted.

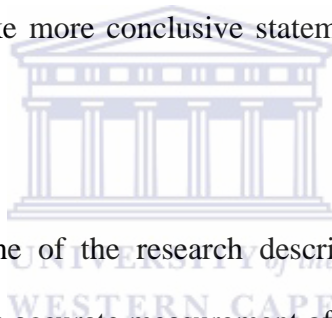


In a recent American Express global customer service survey (2012) it was found that consumers believe service standards have continued to decline over the past three years. Further, two-thirds of those surveyed said they'd abandoned a purchase in store because of poor service. Furthermore, a Norwegian study by Solvang (2007) discovered customer service within the furniture retail business is of great importance. Compared to other retail industries, e.g. the grocery industry, the aspect of service is much more crucial for business success within this sector. In furniture stores, customers depend much more on the service and advice given by staff than in normal grocery stores, which are to a great extent self-service oriented. It is then not surprising that customers' perception of service and the image of furniture stores are closely linked to customer loyalty and satisfaction (Solvang, 2007).

5.6. Recommendations

The study completed will make additional contributions to the body of knowledge on store image and customer perception. In addition, the following recommendations for future research are based on the observations from conducting the present study.

A major limitation of this study is related to external validity as the sample for this study may not be representative of all markets. A similar study be conducted on larger samples comparing various areas or regions, either locally or nationally and amongst different race groups, occupations and languages to make more conclusive statements and to facilitate cross-cultural comparisons.



As perception was the cornerstone of the research described in this study, the halo effect (response bias) might impact on the accurate measurement of store image dimensions.

If a similar study is conducted, a proportionate stratified random sample should ideally be utilised to facilitate generalisation to the entire population. This would enhance the scientific quality of the research.

There are a number of possible directions for future research that could focus on particular variable or inclusive of other variables not elicited in this study.

The shopping malls where the study was conducted do not represent the whole spectrum of shopping malls. Therefore the findings may not be generalised to all shopping malls in the Western Cape.

Instead of only using questionnaires, interviews should be something that could be utilised as a lot of the respondents wrote on the questionnaires providing feedback that could have helped when spoken to on a face to face basis.



5.7. Practical and Theoretical Conclusions

Physical Aspects were found to be the most important predictor of store choice. The effect was considerably stronger than any of the other relationships explored. This reinforces the notion that the physical environment needs to be clean, well-structured and adequately maintained. It appears that customers want to shop in an environment which is deemed safe and healthy. Furthermore, the design needs to be optimised so as to maximise convenience. As grocery shopping is perceived as unglamorous (even a grudge purchase) by many consumers, it would appear that consumers are seeking a hassle free experience. In studies by Beneke (2008) it appears that supermarkets in South Africa should therefore place a premium on their premises, as well as the reception and treatment of their customers. The aesthetic appeal of the supermarket needs to be favourable, the layout of merchandise should be logical and orderly, and a high degree of cleanliness should to be maintained at all times. It may well be worth investing in marketing research in order to ensure that expectations are met, and exceeded, in this regard.

To remain competitive, store based retailers must be prepared to implement changes in their retail mix. A number of recommendations for retailers are apparent. Visually appealing atmospherics should be a priority strategy to attract and retain current customers. In the past, store displays were primarily used for promotional purposes (Hu & Jasper, 2006). Retailers should improve the interior design of the store (style of decor in store; colours used in store; attractiveness of decor in store; and suitable finishing materials used in store) to enhance the consumers' shopping experience. With customer sophistication, retailers have discovered new roles for effective displays, communicating product information and store image, assisting

customers in making purchase decisions and creating a pleasant shopping environment. Product display, store personnel, physical store, price and merchandise quality offered by retailers coupled with colourful decoration and the shop atmospheric effect can have a lasting effect on the shopper and influence patronage. Various aspects of ambiance should therefore be continuously emphasised by retail management.

Furthermore, staff should adopt a friendly disposition, and possess the required store knowledge through internal training programmes. Store personnel need to be not only efficient but also helpful and personable (Hawkins et al., 2007). The retailer would benefit by investing in training sales personnel in fashion-related skills, specific merchandise and product knowledge, and general interaction with consumers. The competence of the store staff, the friendliness and the speed at which they deal with the shopper, availability of spacious walkways, trolley-provision and check out time are crucial to the success of the marketer within the mall (Du Preez & Van der Vyver, 2010). Sales personnel should be coached on the importance of fashionability and attractiveness of sales personnel, because the way they present themselves impacts on how the consumers perceive the store. It is prudent for management to emphasize quality products with reasonable prices that are affordable to the majority of the population. With the global economic crisis affecting the economy including South African consumers, offerings of products with more value for money will definitely be advantageous to the consumer especially in the light of high price inflation experienced in the food and grocery prices over the past year.

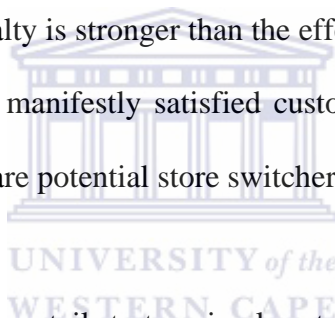
The current market place has become more competitive as customers continually expect retailers to match or exceed their expectations (Wong & Sohal, 2003). Store Choice can be linked to

important values (e.g. environmentally friendly products), preferred brands or personal situations, by accentuating personalised services and customer-oriented lay-out and design, by providing clear and understandable information (e.g. with respect to warranties) and by building a permanent relationship with the customer (e.g. by establishing preferred customer memberships). Retailers can make the store more personal by introducing social cues that are relevant to customers' lifestyle and values. Facilities such time saving services such as ATM, restaurants, prepared food does provide benefits to hypermarket customers. Available facilities enhance the one-stop shopping experience of hypermarket customers.

Williams et al. (1978) found shopping motives vary with age and marital status whereas Cox et al. (2005) established that several shopping pleasures vary with the age of the customer. Based on previous research, marketing management may be predisposed to ensuring that women enjoy their shopping experience and may target advertising and promotional activities more towards women than men. (Minahan & Beverland, 2005) inferred that younger males today are more accustomed to shopping and seem to gain more enjoyment out of it. The generation gap between young and mature male shoppers may be challenging traditional shopping motivations.

The context of consumer buying behaviour implies that the consumer may evaluate their own opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour by comparison with others in the society. Once the consumers have selected the brand and retail outlet, they must complete the transaction. This process involves what is normally called purchasing the product (Ghose & Lowengart, 2001). Convenience stores need to simplify the actual purchase as much as possible. This involves strategies as simple as managing the time spent in line at the checkout register.

Retailers can attempt to provide good service, for example through the ‘people greeter’ situated at store entrances and electronic checkout facilities to minimise lengthy queues at till points. Many businesses appear to overlook the fact that the actual purchase act is generally the last contact the consumer will have with the store on that trip. Although first impressions are important, so are final ones. Management should motivate customers to make an explicit evaluation of their store. Management can encourage customers to elaborate on their store choice by activating the motivation and the ability of the consumers to evaluate the choice. This can be achieved, for instance, by reminding customers of past patronage or emphasising store policies that guarantee customer satisfaction. If this explicit evaluation results in manifest satisfaction, the effect on store loyalty is stronger than the effect resulting from latent satisfaction (Bloemer & Ruyter, 1997). Thus, manifestly satisfied customers are the true loyal customers, while latently satisfied consumers are potential store switchers.



In essence, retailers should have the retail strategy in place targeting an ideal customer, knowing what products they are buying and what forms of advertising will be most effective in reaching this important target group (Tlapana, 2009). Retailers need to understand the location within which the store operates and provide best service levels, pricing policies, merchandise assortment, store environment and store image. Retailers should seek to sell products/services that satisfy the buyers’ needs. A retail strategy can help provide day- to-day operational direction.

To conclude, the findings of this study were highlighted, as well as what steps should be undertaken to improve such research in the future.

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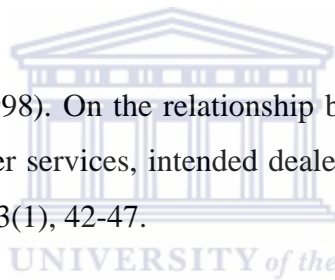
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