International Journal of Engineering & Technology, 7 (4.28) (2018) 231-237

International Journal of Engineering & Technology

Website: www.sciencepubco.com/index.php/IJET

Research paper

Assessing the Effect of Visual Merchandising on the Relationship between Store Image and Mall Choice

Anizah Zainuddin[1*], Sarah Batrisyia Ridzwan[2], Rohani Mohd[3], Sarah Irdina Ridzwan[4]

[1]Centre for Marketing & Entrepreneurship Studies, Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Selangor, Malaysia.
[2]Faculty of Dentistry, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia.
[3]Centre for Management & Administrative Studies, Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Selangor, Malaysia.
[4]Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA Campus Tapah, Perak, Malaysia.
**Corresponding author E-mail: niz.zainuddin@gmail.com*

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the choice of consumers in choosing to shop at a shopping mall from a visual perspective. Specifically, this study aims to examine the effect of store image and visual merchandising on consumers' mall choices. 448 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to a major shopping mall at Damansara Utama, Selangor. LISREL software was employed to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs. Structural equation modelling was utilised on checking on confirmatory factor analyses as well as to test the hypotheses of the study. Visual merchandising was found to have a significant and direct influence on consumers' mall choice. Store image was convincingly related to consumers' mall choice. Results showed that store image on mall choice were mediated by visual merchandising. This paper contributes to the literature on consumers' choice mall from the perspectives of visual. Not only is the influence of visual merchandising verified, this study also provides an overview of the motivation behind the choice of mall among consumers.

Keywords: *Store Image, Visual Merchandising and Mall Choice.*

1. Introduction

To survive in the digital age, shopping malls will need to reinvent themselves. Shopping malls can be defined as one or more buildings forming a complex of shops representing merchandisers, with interconnected walkways enabling visitors to work from unit to unit. It is a group of retail and other commercial establishments that is planned and developed owned and managed as a single property, with on-site parking provided. Indirectly, they are the heart and soul of communities, retail institutions and serve as social sanctuary for teenagers as well as adults. In recent decades, the concept of the shopping mall, which has its origins in the U.S has proliferated across the globe. The largest malls in the world now reside in Asia such as in China. Despite its ubiquity, the shopping mall as it's been conceived for the last half century is at a critical inflection point. A storm of global trends is coming together at the same time to cause shopping malls to change the role they play in people's lives.

In Malaysia shopping malls operators and retailers are bring constantly challenged to stay competitive and keep up with changing spending habits and online shopping trends. The exit of the Parkson departmental store (is an Asian-based department store operator with an extensive network) from the Maju Juction Mall at Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman in Kuala Lumpur as reported by New Straits Times (2018) could be a sign that challenging times are ahead for mall operators as well as for retailers in Malaysia. Parkson Holdings Bhd, which operates some 50 stores in the country, announced recently that it was shutting down its store and setting up an outlet elsewhere due to the current economic climate. Moreover, Financial Times in 2018 revealed that true occupancy rates in Klang Valley malls were low as 40 per cent in some areas. It was observed that entire floors in some malls are now unoccupied, a scene larhgely unfamiliar before 2015. The average occupancy rate of shopping malls in Klang Valley's dropped for the second consecutive year, to 78.3 per cent from 79.9 per cent in 2016 (Table 1).

Table 1: Retail Supply in Klang Valley, 2017

Location	No of Malls*	Total Net Floor Area (sq ft)	Average Rental Rate (RM psf pm)**	Average Occupancy Rate (%)
Kuala Lumpur	112	33,538,465	12.29	79.6
Selangor	147	38,838,806	9.16	77.0
Putra Jaya	3	1,957,573	3.72	82.0
Total	262	74,334,844	8.97	78.3

*includes hypermarket malls and arcades
**excludes rental rates of anchor tenants supermarket, department store, Cineplex,bowling alley etc
Source: Henry Butcher Retail/2H2017 Property Market Report, NAP

Discounting the five premier malls in the Greater Kuala Lumpur area such as, Suria KLCC, Pavillion, Mid Valley, Sunway Pyramid and 1 Utama; the retail sector was slowly edging towards a crisis exacerbated by a shift towards e-commerce. As mentioned by Tan Sri Eddy Chen (President of Malaysia Shopping Malls Association) at a seminar titled 'Breathing New Life Into Malls',

Copyright © 2018 Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

'that those planning to build a new mall should conduct a more robust market research'. This is due to the fact that no longer is they primarily about shopping; now, when consumers visit malls, they are looking for experiences that go well beyond traditional shopping.

Nevertheless, with the growing number of malls, consumers tend to be more selective. They are more likely to choice malls that are more attractive and have a wide variety of stores and merchandise that match their preferences. Mall managers should know the extent to which their malls are attractive to their consumers (1). However, mall attributes that are attractive for some consumers are not necessarily attractive for others. There are many factors that change consumers shopping drives from traditional marketplace to shopping mall. Economic prosperity, lifestyle, retail format and social environment are some of the factors (2). Berman and Evans (3) reveal that each year new malls were built with millions of square feet of retail space were added to existing malls. These, indirectly encouraged many academic studies being carried out in order to disclose what make they visit and what make them not visited the malls. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to assess the effect of visual merchandising on the relationship between store image and mall choice.

2. Theoretical Background

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. In these study, review on mall choice, store image and visual merchandising were explored so that an appropriate variables pertinent to the subject matter were identified.

2.1 Mall Choice

The success or failure of a shopping mall depends on many factors. In order to sustain a business in this competitive retail sector, one have to consider the short and long term strategy planning before establishing a shopping mall. Among the factors that contribute to the shopping mall success are strategic location, good shopping centre design and layout, wide ranging tenant mix, sufficient parking space and efficient promotion and marketing strategy. Shopping mall attributes can be categories into two functions such as functional (location, assortment of products and store layout) and psychological (feelings generated by the functional elements of the store) (4). This attributes play and importance role in the overall mall choice. Kapil & Ghosh (5) proposed a model to understand the factors that account for variations in shopping behaviour across households. The results showed that the relationship between household characteristics and shopping behavior is complex. Shopping may have a recreational aspect for some households. Prashar (6) reveal that functional category gains more attention in the mall choice than the psychological category. He observed that Fisk (7) identified mall attributes includes location accessibility, merchandise suitability, value for price, sales efforts and store service. Study by Berry (8) identified three general factors that predominantly influenced consumer's mall choice regardless of store type such as quality and variety of merchandise, sales staff, and store atmosphere. Lindquist (9) synthesized the framework of mall choice into a set of nine groups such as merchandise, service, clientele, physical facilities, promotion, accessibility, store atmosphere, institutional and post-transaction satisfaction. Arnold et al. (10) extended the accessibility attribute to the ease of mobility through the store and fast checkout. Baker et al.(11) extended the literature on retail store atmospherics for providing an experimental method that can be utilized by retailers to examine the various aspects of store environment and its impact on mall choice. They proposed that the affective states of pleasure and arousal have a positive relationship with customer's mall choice. Table 2 identified some of the previous studies on mall choice.

Table 2: Selected Studies on Mall Choice

Researchers	Year	Mall Choice Attributes
Bloch et al.	1994	Physical Environment, Entertainment, Demographic & Psychographic Characteristics
Roy	1994	Demographic And Psychographic Characteristics
Finn & Louviere	1996	Shopping Centre Image
Bodkin & Lord	1997	Convenience
Bellenger et al.	1997	Demographic And Psychographic Characteristics
Wakefield & Baker	1998	Environment
Terblanche	1999	Perceived Benefits, Functional, Recreational, Socializing, And Convenience
Nicholls et al.	2000	Purchasing Factors And Entertainment
Nicholls et al.	2002	Leisure Driven
Ibrahim	2002	Travel Components That Include Comfort, Reliability Of Transport Mode, Effort, Tension, Distance, And Value
Sit et al.	2003	Mall Image

2.2 Store Image

Retail store image has been shown to play an important role in consumer behavior. Most studies in the past treats store image as the result of a multi-attribute model (12, 13, 14). Martineau (4) once described store image as 'the personality of the store and the manner in which the store was represented in a person's mind and of the experience of shopping there'; it is not just the tangible store benefits that draw consumers to stores, they are also drawn by intangibles such as a more favorable image. Some researchers also argue that store image can be seen from different perceptions. Consumers value a store image through various attributes that exist in a store. This is because store image is considered to have the ability to influence customer perceptions of goods and services offered by retailers (15). The characteristics of store image help the customer differentiate it from that of other stores. Store image include the layout of the store and its products, location, price and value-for-money attribute, customer service as well as the luxury and attraction of the store. According to Kunkel and Berry (16), customers obtain an image of a store after having experienced the store and comparing this experience to their expectations. As a result, the outcome of this comparison induces future revisits and repurchases decisions. Store image can be also described as the integration of tangible and intangible factors from the customer viewpoint (9). It represents the identity of the store and can be consider as one of the factor that influences the initial purchase decision making of customers. Conversely, it is also widely accepted that emotional factors have a significant role in store image formation. To stay relevant in the industry, retailers need to understand what store images customers imagine from their store, and how these images are compared with the ideal images. Previous studies reveal that a favorable store image helped the retailer to develop and manage their market position (17, 18, 19). They argued that competitive advantage can be obtained through products, price or service differentiation (20) which would not easily be duplicated by other retailers (21). However, Sewell (22) revealed that explaining the concept of a store image was not easy.

Many researchers have described it with different store attributes because they want to create a holistic store image concept (7, 9, 16, 23-33). In addition, Gundala (31) has explained the meaning of the store image as an essential attribute for a store measured and compared by consumers. He states that it is based on the importance of each attribute being measured. Store image formation relies on the perceived importance of store attributes. The value placed on different store attributes varies by target market and

retailer and will influence consumer perception, thereby determining the importance of the store attribute (34-36). Scarpi (37) found out that experiential aspect was actually can be associated with store patronage. He reveals that experiential aspect has a direct positive effect on perceived value, store loyalty, purchase amount, as well as number of items that are purchased. Extending this theory, we suggest that the effect of store image on store choice can also be mediated by other variable. In such we proposed visual merchandising as a mediating variable for the present study.

2.3 Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandising is a crucial retail strategy that maximizes the aesthetics of a product with the intent to increase and maximize sales. A visual merchandiser plays a critical role in the look, feel and culture of a brand or mall. If visual merchandising is done well, it can create awareness whilst simultaneously increasing brand or mall loyalty. The most important function is to draw customers into the shop as well as mall and close the sale. There are various factors that go into the success of visual merchandising; this includes the mall's appearance, including everything from lighting, signage and packaging, uniform and presentation, point of sale material, colours, shapes and various textures. When these elements collectively come together to showcase a mall, it deepens the customer experience, leading to a positive shopping experience and increased sales. The visual merchandising process is often referred to as the "silent sales person" by providing the consumers with information through visual mediums (38). This process is often referred to as the visual merchandising communication process. A great deal of communication between the retailer and the consumer takes place through the use of visual merchandising. The retailer communicates to the consumer by means of their store, the store's interior design, layout, atmospherics and merchandising displays.

Study on visual merchandising in the effect of store image and store choice is rare. Researchers often associate visual merchandising with consumer purchase decision, impulse buying, and retail sales. Visual merchandising is the art of implementing effective designs, ideas to increase store traffic and sales volume and it is a mechanism to communicate to a customer and influence their decisions to buy. It is everything the customer sees both exterior and interior that creates a positive image of a retail business and result in attention, interest, desire and action on the part of the customer (39). It includes the dramatic presentation of merchandise as well as other important features that create the stores overall moods (Table 3). Wanninayake & Randiwela (40) in their study on consumer store choice decision finds out that, the store atmosphere can influence customer attitudes and their perceptions in relation to the overall quality of the store in terms of the uniqueness of the product (41), service levels (42), the purchase price (43) and purchase volume (44). The role of ambience in store choice has also been found significant. Kotler (45) has proposed atmospherics as an important part of retail marketing strategy. It is also found that the shoppers determine the value of the merchandise based on monetary as well as non-monetary costs (46). It was found that recreation (a non-monetary value) was the major drive for visiting a regional shopping centre (47). The shopping experience, as created by the store environment, has also been found to play an important role in building store patronage.

Table 3: Elements of Retail Store Atmospherics

Exterior Atmospherics: Store Front Marquee Entrances Display Windows Size Of The Building Visibility Adjoining Stores Parking Accessibility	Elements of Retail Store Atmospherics	Interior Atmospherics: Flooring Lighting Odour Fixtures Wall Temperature Aisles Trail Room Dead Area Personnel Cleanliness
Store Layout: Floor Space Allocation For Selling Traffic Flow Department Location Space/Merchandise Category Signage		Visual Merchandising: Assortment Theme Ensemble Racks And Shelves Payment Counters

Source: Bajaj et al (39), Retail Management, Oxford Higher Education

3. Research Model

The current research used the modified research model of an integrative theory of patronage preference and behaviour developed by Sheth (48) to examine the influence of store image and visual merchandising on customers' mall choice. According to his model, shopping predisposition refers to the relative shopping preferences of the evoked set of outlet alternatives for a specific product class, purchase situations such as shopping of groceries, clothing, health care, insurance, etc. It is the output of the shopping preference subsystem and, therefore, can be utilized as the criterion construct. He explains and predicts people's shopping mall preferences are limited to those outlets which a shopper considers acceptable to shop. He found out that if the shopper has strong preference for a single outlet within a product class such as shoes, that outlet will acquire potential specialty monopoly powers over that individual's shopping for shoes. He added that shopping motives and shopping options were also influenced mall choice. Therefore, based on the above literature, the following hypotheses were developed in this study:

H1. Store image has a significantly positive influence on visual merchandising.

H2. Visual merchandising has a significantly positive influence on mall choice.

H3. Store image has a significant indirect influence on mall choice through visual merchandising.

4. Methodology

This study is correlational in nature and was conducted using cross-sectional analysis or transversal study. The population of the study consists of 448 retail shoppers who shop at a major shopping mall at Damansara Utama, Selangor. Shopping malls can be classified into four types of malls namely; neighbourhood shopping mall, community shopping mall, regional shopping mall and super regional shopping mall. Shopping mall at Damansara Utama can be classified as a super-regional shopping mall.

4.1 Instrument Measurement:

4.1.1 Mall Choice (MC)

There are many scales that measure the mall choice. The present study employed measurement used by Jackson et al. (49) in order to measure mall choice. They reveal that customer mall choice is based on their shopping wants and needs. This scale focuses on both wants and needs aspects of mall choice. A total of seven items were measured on a five-point Likert scale with one is strongly disagreeing and five is strongly agreed.

4.1.2 Store Image (SI)

Various store image scales developed by previous researchers was used in this study (7, 9, 16, 23-33). Final scale includes five items such as convenience, facilities, promotion, sales personal and service. Each item was measured on a five-point Likert scale with

one is strongly disagreeing and five is strongly agreeing statements.

4.1.3 Visual Merchandising (VM)

Recently visual merchandising has gained importance as a quick and cost effective way to revamp retail stores. This study used element of visual merchandising introduced by Bajaj et al. (39). In order to spot the underlying structure or dimensions in the variables used in this study (VM), principal component factor analyses with varimax rotation were employed. This is due to the fact that factor analysis is able to distinguish whether a common factor or more than a single factor is present in the responses to the items. This is vital to understand the underlying structure in the data matrix, to identify the most parsimonious set of variables as well as to establish the goodness of measures for testing the hypotheses (50). In assessing the validity of the VM, Principle Components Factor analysis was conducted. Initially, there were 20 items for the scale with different number of items for the three dimensions. The results revealed that only 17 items formed three structures are assortment 6 items, theme 6 items, and ensemble 5 items. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy for the VM scale is 0.906, indicating that the items were interrelated. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates a significant value (approx. chi- square 2954.130, $p < 0.01$) showing the significance of the correlation matrix and appropriateness for factor analysis. In addition, the individual MSA value ranges from 0.687 to 0.932 demonstrate that the data matrix was suitable to be factor analysed. Results of factor analysis with varimax rotation indicated the existence of three factors with initial eigenvalues greater than one which explains 81% of total variance.

4.2 Sample

Data analysis revealed that 448 responses were almost equally divided between male and female respondents (Table 4). As shown in Table 3, the majority of respondents were Malay and Chinese. Among the respondents, 52.7 percent were females and 47.3 percent were males. About 38.2 percent of the respondents had a disposable income of less than RM7, 000 per month, 27 percent between RM7, 100 and RM11, 000, and 23.6 percent above RM11, 001. Although respondents' age varied, the majority of the respondents were between 26 to 45 years old. Majority of the respondents visited malls twice a week (55.6 per cent).

Table 4: Demographic Profile

Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	208	47.3
Female	240	52.7
Race		
Malay	222	49.6
Chinese	165	36.8
Indian	61	13.6
Age		
Below 25 years	82	18.3
26 to 35 years	142	31.7
36 to 45 years	118	26.3
46 to 55 years	90	20.1
56 and above	16	3.6
Marital Status		
Married	314	64.2
Single	175	35.8
Academic Qualification		
Diploma	111	24.8
Advanced Diploma / Bachelor Degree	196	43.8
Postgraduate / Professional Qualification	141	31.4
Occupation		
Government Employee	159	32.5
Private Employee	224	45.8
Self-employed	106	21.7
Monthly income		
Under RM3,000	50	11.2
RM3,001 to RM7,000	171	38.2
RM7,001 to RM11,000	121	27
RM11,001 and above	106	23.6
Visit Malls		
About Twice a week	249	55.6
About Once a month	199	44.4

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

A self-administered survey was distributed in a well-known mall in Damansara Utama using systematic sampling. Shoppers were approached as there entered the mall so that their more lasting impressions from previous visit could be captured. Consequently, only those shoppers who had shopped at the mall before were interviewed. The purpose of this procedure was to capture the responses of shopper who had made a previous decision to re-visit the mall again. Each questionnaire was coded and entered into an SPSS data file. The coded data were crosschecked and corrected. LISREL 9.1 was used for confirmatory factor analyses and hypotheses testing which used a structural equation model analysis. The model fit was evaluated by examining the following statistics: Chi-square statistics, goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), normed fit index (NFI), and comparative fit index (CFI). While GFI, AGFI, and NFI may underestimate the fit for small sample sizes (51), CFI is robust to sample size (52, 53). Therefore, CFI is a more accurate measure of the model fit for this study.

5. Results and Discussion

In this study, two types of analyses were run in order to assess the construct validity and reliability. Confirmatory factory analyses were used to test the unidimensionality of each of the five latent variables such as mall choice, store image and the three domains of visual merchandising (assortment, theme and ensemble). Table 5 shows fit measures for each scale. Though at a minimum level, fit measures for all latent variables were acceptable. And all factor loadings were significant at 0.05 level hence all the items measuring the latent variables were kept for further analyses. The reliability analyses were then employed as to assess the internal consistency of each latent variable. The Cronbach's standardized alphas for the five latent variables ranged from 0.698 to 0.876. Cronbach Alphas for all factors in this study were exceeding the suggested level of 0.70 (50), indicating good internal consistency for each latent variable.

5.1 Testing Hypotheses

The hypothesized relationship among the latent variables was tested by path analysis using a structural equation model. The overall fit of the model is given in Figure 1. Although the chi-square statistics suggests that the data did not fit the model ($x2= 632.31$, $p<0.01$), the overall evaluation of the fit was based on multiple indicators. These multiple indicators suggest that the model fits the data at a minimum level, justifying further interpretation. The normed-fit index (NFI) and non-normed-fit index (NNFI) were 0.79 and 0.85 respectively. The comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.85.

Table 5: Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis Results

Scale	x2	p	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	Cronbach's α
Mall Choice	80.06	0.000	0.86	0.79	0.90	0.95	0.876
Store Image	39.57	0.000	0.87	0.70	0.84	0.87	0.814
Visual Merchandising	94.48	0.2736	0.88	0.83	0.88	0.98	
Assortment							0.711
Theme							0.765
Ensemble							0.721

Figure 1: (See Appendix – A)

The model suggested that store image had a positive influence on two of the three domains of visual merchandising (product assortment and ensemble). There was no relationship found between store image and theme. Therefore, H1 was partially supported. Consumers who value the image of the store were more likely to perceived assortment and ensemble as important in their retail activities. These consumers were also more likely to consider that the right mix of products to be sell in retail store as well as the perception of variety within an ensemble of selection choices are actually vital for their attraction to visit store. These findings are consistent with existing literature on the relationship between store image and influence of visual merchandising. Bhalla, S. & Anuraag (38) found in their research that the effect of visual merchandising is positively correlated with store image. The correlations between store image, product assortment and ensemble are very important, consistent with the notion that the store image is actually granted from the consumer's perception of a combination from visual merchandising.

The model also reveals that the same domains such as product assortment and ensemble had a significant positive influence on mall choice. Other variables from visual such as themes did not significantly affect mall choices. Therefore, H2 was partially supported. Consumers who believed that product assortment and ensemble are very satisfying when shopping is more likely to choose a shopping mall equipped with these elements. This result is consistent with (38, 41) studies which acknowledged product assortment and ensemble as the most important predictor variable of mall choice. Visual merchandising offers meaning to consumer's by making shopping effortless. The visual merchandising process is often referred to as the 'silent sales person' by providing the consumers with information through visual mediums, as well as by suggestive selling to a consumer's original purchase (38). This process is often referred to as the visual merchandising communication process where a great deal of communication between the retailer and the consumer takes place through the use of visual merchandising (41).

The mediating effect of visual merchandising in the relationship between store image and mall choice specified in H3 was tested by employing the tests of mediation suggested by Baron and Kenny (53). On the basis of this framework, a variable function as a mediator when it meets the following conditions; independent variable has a significant influence on the presumed mediator (path a); the presumed mediator has a significant influence on the dependent variable (path b); and when path a and path b are controlled, a previously significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables (path c) is no longer significant, with the strongest demonstration of mediation occurring when path c is zero.

In addition, to test the mediating role of visual merchandising on the relationship between store image and mall choice, a decomposition test was conducted besides the above-mentioned structural equation modeling used in testing H1 and H2. This test suggested that there was a significant effect of store image on mall choice ($Z=1.96$, $p<0.05$); while the path from store image to visual merchandising and from visual merchandising to mall choice were not controlled. The following relationships were found in the structural equation model; store image had a significant influence on visual merchandising (specifically on product assortment and ensemble); visual merchandising (specifically, the domain of product assortment and ensemble) had a significant influence on mall choice; and when the path from store image to visual merchandising and from visual merchandising to mall choice were controlled, the path from store image was not found to be significant. Using the framework suggested by Baron and Kenny (53), the above results indicate that visual merchandising functioned as a mediator in the relationship between store image and mall choice. In other words, these results imply that store image had a significant influence on mall choice only indirectly through visual (specifically on the product assortment and ensemble domain). It had no direct influence on mall choice. Therefore, H3 was accepted.

6. Conclusion and Implications

With the availability of shopping malls in every corner of residency areas, the task of retailers becomes tougher. Retailers need to create an exciting mall that not only serves as a place to spend but also as a place to visit frequently. Using modified research model of an integrative theory of patronage preference and behaviour (48), this study examine the influence of store image and visual merchandising on customers' mall choice. The findings are consistent with existing literature (such as (5, 26-33) and provide support to the patronage preference and behavior theory introduced by Sheth (48). Store image was effectively related to consumers' mall choice. However, the influence of store image on mall choice was indirect. Product assortment and ensemble mediated the influence of store image on consumers' mall choice. Moreover, the findings also confirm that product assortment and ensemble had significantly influence on mall choice. The same findings have been reported in the literature (such as (11, 39, 40). Retailer than should making the shopping experience more comfortable, convenient and customer friendly by making it easier for the consumer to locate the desired product category and merchandise. Retail merchandiser should create an impressive image of the mall in the minds of the customers. Communicating the right message about the merchandise by projecting the latest trends, colors and fashion or latest arrivals is necessary. These include, informing about the latest product trends by highlighting them at a focal and strategic areas as visual merchandising act as a communication vehicle, and an opportunity for retailers to sell a variety of merchandise. Combining the creative, technical and operational aspects (ensemble or in totality) of product assortment as an overall image will enhance retail business fortune especially in the mall.

It is recommended that future research use a larger and more representative sample of retail consumers to study their store image and visual preferences on mall choice. A larger sample size will improve the model fit of the structure equation model thus the results could be better generalized.

References

[1] Wong, G., Yu, L. and Yuan, L. (2001), 'SCATTR: An Instrument for Measuring Shopping Centre Attractiveness', International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 76-86.

[2] Jin, B. and Kim, J. (2003), 'A Typology of Korean Discount Shoppers: Shopping Motives, Store Attributes, And Outcomes', International Journal of Service Industry Management, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 396-419.

[3] Berman, B. and Evans, J. (2004), 'Retail Management: A Strategic Approach', Pearson Education Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

[4] Martineau, P. (1958), 'The Personality of the Retail Store', Harvard Business Review, Vol 36, pp 47–55.

[5] Bawa Kapil & Avijit Ghosh, (1999), 'A Model of Household Grocery Shopping Behavior', 10:2: 149–160, Kluwer Academic Publishers

[6] Prashar, A. (2013), 'Drivers of Store Choice in an Evolving Market: An Empirical Study', International Journal of Advancements in

[7] Fisk, G. (1961). 'A Conceptual Model for Studying Customer Image'. Journal of Retailing, 37, 1-8

[8] Berry, L. J. (1969). 'The Components of Department Store Image: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis'. Journal of Retailing, 45, 3-20.

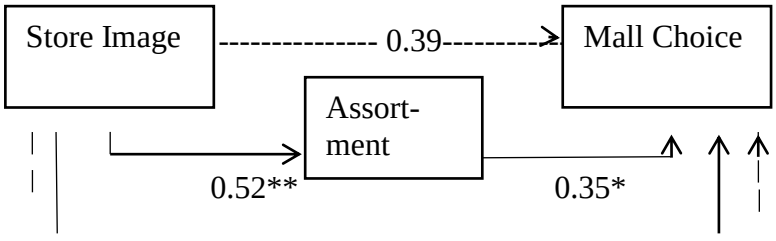
[9] Lindquist, J. D. (1974). 'Meaning of Image: Survey of Empirical and Hypothetical Evidence', Journal of Retailing, Vol 50, pp 29–38.

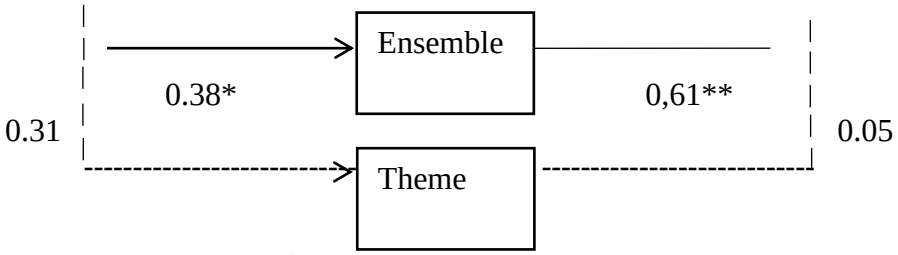
[10] Arnold, S. J., Oum, T. H., & Tigert, D. J. (1983). 'Determinant attributes in retail patronage: seasonal, temporal, regional, and international comparisons'. Journal of Marketing Research, 149-157.

[11] Baker, J., Parasuraman, A., Grewal, D. and Voss, G. B. (2002), 'The influence of multiple store environment cues on perceived

merchandise value and patronage intentions'. *Journal of Marketing*, 65, 120-141.
[12] Osman, M.Z. (1993), 'A conceptual model of retail image influences on loyalty patronage behavior', The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, Vol. 31, pp. 149-66.
[13] Berry, L.L., Carbone, L.P. & Haeckel, S.H. (2002). 'Managing the total customer experience'. MIT Sloan Management Review, 43(3), 85-89.
[14] Van Tongeren, M. (2004). Retail Branding. In R. van Amerongen & H. Christiaans (Eds.), 'Retail & Interior Design'. Rotterdam: Episode Publishers.
[15] Zeithaml, Valerie A. & Bitner, Mary J. (1996) 'Services Marketing', McGraw-Hill, New York, N.Y.
[16] Kunkel, J.H. and Berry, L.L. (1968), 'A Behavioral Conception of Retail Image', Journal of Marketing, Vol. 32, pp. 21-7.
[17] Lockshin Larry and Pierris Kahrimanis (1998), 'Consumer Evaluation of Retail Wine Stores', Journal of Wine Research, 173-184, Volume 9, Issue 3.
[18] Samli, A. Coskun (1989), 'Store Definition, Dimensions,Measurement, and Management', in A.CoskunSamli, (ed.), Retail Marketing.
[19] Sannapu, S., Singh, N., (2012), 'Mall Positioning Redefined: Dual Expectancy Framework', Indian Retail Review, pp27-36.
[20] Wortzel, Lawrence H. (1987), 'Retailing Strategies For Today's Mature Marketplace', Journal of Business Strategy , Vol. 7 Issue: 4, pp.45-56
[21] Rosenbloom, B. (1983), 'Store Image Development and the Question of Congruency, In Patronage Behavior and Retail Management', Ed. Darden, William R. & Lusch, Robert F., New York, Elsevier Science Publishing Co., p. 141-149.
[22] Sewell, S.W (1974), 'Discovering and Improving Store, Image'. *Journal of Retailing*, 50(4), 3-7.
[23] Doyle, P. & Fenwick, I, (1974). 'How Store Image Affects Shopping Habits in Grocery Chains', Journal of Retailing, 50, 39-52.
[24] Bearden, W. O. (1977). 'Determinant Attributes of Store Patronage: Downtown versus Outlying Shopping Areas'. Journal of Retailing, 53, 15-22.
[25] Hirschman, E.C, Greenberg, B & Robertson, D (1978), 'The Inter Market Reliability Of Retail Image Research: An Empirical Examination, Journal of Retailing', 54(1), 3-12.
[26] Keaveney, S.M. and K. A. Hunt, (1992), 'Conceptualization and Operationalization of Retail Store Image: A Case of Rival Middle-Level Theories', Journal of The Academy of Science, 20 (2), 165-175.
[27] Hasty, Ronald W., James Reardon, (1997), 'Retail Management', McGraw-Hill Companies.
[28] Solgaard, H. S., & Hansen, T. (2003), 'A Hierarchical Bayes Model Of Choice Between Supermarket Formats', Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 10(3), 169-180, Strategy, New York.
[29] Jinfeng, Wu and Tian Zhilong (2009), 'Impact of Store Image on Retailer Equity: Evidence from 10 Chinese Hypermarkets', Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services 16(6): 486-494.
[30] Chang, E. & Luan, B. (2010) 'Chinese consumers' perception of hypermarket store image'. Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistic. 22(4), 512- 527.
[31] Gundala, Raghava Rao; (2010), 'Retail Store Image: A Study Of The Cyprus Clothing Industry', International Journal Of Management And Marketing Research, Volume 3, Number 3, Research & Technology, 2(8), 195- 202, Retailing, 56 (1), 77-93.
[32] Lin, L.Y. and Liao, J.C. (2012), 'The influence of Store Image and Product Perceived Value on Customer Purchase Intention', 3(2), 306-321.
[33] Kumar, Amresh & S. L. Gupta & Nawal Kishore, 2014. 'Measuring Retailer Store Image: A Scale Development Study', International Journal of Business and Economics, College of Business and College of Finance, Feng Chia University, Taichung, Taiwan, vol. 13(1), pages 25-38, June.
[34] Faircloth, J.B., Capella, L.M. & Alford, B.L. (2001), 'The effect of brand attitude and brand image on brand equity'. Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 9(3), 61-75.
[35] Newman, Andrew J.: Darshika Patel, (2004), 'The marketing directions of two fashion retailers', European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 38 Issue: 7, pp.770-789.
[36] Osman, M.Z. (1993), 'A conceptual model of retail image influences on loyalty patronage behavior', The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, Vol. 31, pp. 149-66.
[37] Scarpi, Daniele; (2006), 'Fashion Stores Between Fun and Usefulness', Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal , Vol. 10 Issue: 1, pp.7-24.
[38] Bhalla, S. & Anuraag, S. 2010. 'Visual merchandising'. New Delhi: McGraw Hill.
[39] Bajaj et al, (2010), 'Retail Management, Oxford Higher Education', ISBN-13: 978-0-19-806115-1 ISBN-10: 0-19-806115-3 Baker, J., Grewal, D. and Levy (1992), 'An experimental approach to making retail store environmental decisions'. *Journal of Retailing*, 68, 445-60.
[40] Wanninayake & Randiwela (2007), 'The impact of visual merchandising on consumer store choice decisions in Sri Lankan supermarkets', 7th Global conference on Business & Economics 10, 13-14.
[41] Hefer, Yolande and Cant Michael, (2013), 'Visual Merchandising Displays: Wasted Effort Or Strategic Move? The Dilemma Faced By Apparel Retail Stores', http://hdl.handle.net/10500/20057
[42] Baker, J., Parasuraman, A., Grewal, D. and Voss, G. B. (2002), 'The influence of multiple store environment cues on perceived merchandise value and patronage intentions'. *Journal of Marketing*, 65, 120-141.
[43] Areni, Charles S.; & David Kim, 1993, 'The Influence of Background Music on Shopping Behavior: Classical Versus Top-Forty Music In A Wine Store'. Advances in Consumer Research Volume 20, Pages 336-340.
[44] Milliman, Ronald E.; (1982), 'Using Background Music to Affect the Behavior of Supermarket Shoppers', The Journal of Marketing, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Summer, 1982), pp. 86-91.
[45] Kotler, Phillip (1974), 'Atmospherics as a Marketing Tool', Journal of Retailing, 49 (Winter), 48-61.
[46] Zeithaml, Valarie A.; (1988), 'Consumer Perceptions of Price, Quality, and Value: A Means-End Model and Synthesis of Evidence', Journal of Marketin, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Jul., 1988), pp. 2-22.
[47] Terblanche, N.S. (1999), 'The Perceived Benefits Derived from Visits to A Super Regional Shopping Centre: An Exploratory Study, South Africa Journal of Business Management', Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 141-6.
[48] Sheth, Jagdish N. (1983), 'An Integrative Theory of Patronage Preference and Behavior in Petronage Behavior and Retail Management', Eds, William R., Darden & Robert F, Lusch, New York NY, North Holland 9-28.
[49] Jackson, Vanessa & Stoel, Leslie & Brantley, Aquia, 2011. 'Mall attributes and shopping value: Differences by gender and generational cohort', Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Elsevier, vol. 18(1), pages 1-9.
[50] Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J., Anderson, R.E. & Tatham, R.L. (2006). 'Multivariate data Analysis'. (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall.
[51] Bollen, Kenneth A.; & Rick H. Hoyle, 'Perceived Cohesion: A Conceptual and Empirical Examination, Social Forces', Volume 69, Issue 2, 1 December 1990, Pages 479–504.
[52] Bentler, P.M. (1990). 'Comparative fit indexes in structural models'. Psychological Bulletin, 107, 238–246.
[53] Baron, R.M. and Kenny, D.A. (1986), 'The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 6, pp. 1173-82.

Appendix – A





x2= 632.31(457df, p<0.01), GFI=0.65, NFI=0.79, NNFI=0.85 CFI=0.85
-----Dotted arrow indicates insignificant paths
The critical rations for significant Z values are 1.96 at p<0.05 (*), 2.58 at p<0.01(**)

Figure 1: Mediating role of Visual Merchandising on the Relationship between Store Image and Mall Choice