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Customer Buying Preferences Towards Retail Stores

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ABSTRACT

This study dives into why people like certain stores, gathering important insights from various research. It shows that things like how the store looks, how easy it is to shop there, its reputation, the service inside, and the overall feel all play a big role in what customers prefer. Loyalty programs and the store's format are also key factors that build trust and keep customers coming back. The study also looks at how the store's image, including things like atmosphere, product quality, service, and convenience, affects what customers think. Retailer brand matters too, including how much of their products are in the store, the quality, and how visible they are. By understanding all these factors, stores can make better strategies to make customers happy and build strong connections with them.

INTRODUCTION

In the fast-paced world of retail, understanding why we choose to buy what we buy is crucial for the success of stores. This research dives into the reasons behind why people prefer certain retail stores, focusing on five key factors: how convenient the store is, the layout of the store, the products they sell, the overall image of the store, and the service they provide. These factors, also known as independent variables, play a huge role in shaping our experience when we shop.

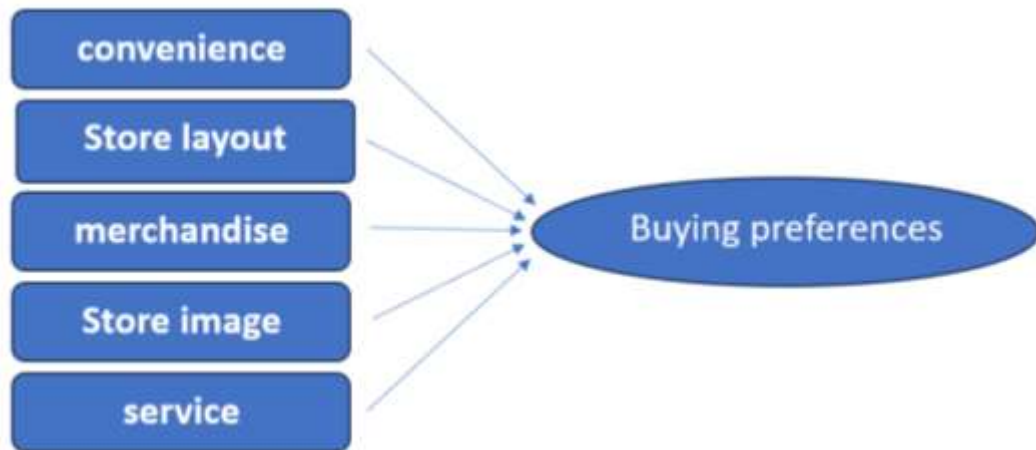
Firstly, we're looking at store convenience – how easy it is for us to get to the store and navigate inside. Think about how important it is to find parking or have a smooth checkout process. Then, there's store layout, which includes how products are arranged in the store. This influences our feelings and decisions while shopping.

Next up is the merchandise – the products the store offers. From variety to quality, what they sell affects our choices. The fourth factor is store image, which is all about how we see the store as a brand. It involves things like the store's identity, how it's marketed, and the feelings it evokes.

Lastly, we're looking at store service – the way store staff interacts with customers. Good customer service can turn a one-time shopper into a loyal customer. The goal of this research is to uncover the connections between these factors and the big question: why do we buy what we buy? By figuring this out, the study aims to help stores adapt their strategies to create a shopping experience that resonates with the diverse needs and desires of their customers. It's like unraveling the mystery behind why we enjoy shopping at some places more than others.

Objectives:

1. To examine the influence of store convenience on consumer buying preferences while selecting retail stores.
2. To investigate the relationship between store layout and customer preferences.
3. To examine the relation between merchandise quality and customer preferences.
4. To interpret the effect of store image on customer buying preferences.
5. To justify the importance of store service on customer buying preferences.

LITERATURE REVIEW:**Fig.1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY****1. Store convenience:**

The influence of **store convenience** on buying behavior is a complex relationship, as indicated by Tirmizi (2009) who found a weak association between impulse buying and store convenience. However, Gupta (2015) suggests that individual shopping value can influence the perception of convenience, which in turn affects satisfaction and loyalty. Lee (2009) further supports this, showing that store attributes, including convenience, can influence consumer behavior. This is in line with Kelley (1958), who highlights the increasing importance of convenience in consumer purchasing. Therefore, while store convenience may not directly drive buying behavior, it can significantly impact consumer satisfaction and loyalty, especially when considered in conjunction with individual shopping values.

H1: Store convenience significantly influences consumer buying preferences in a retail store

2. Store layout:

The influence of **store layout** on customer buying preferences is a well-documented phenomenon. Griffith (2005) found that online store layouts can significantly impact consumer response, with tree structures leading to higher purchase intentions and brand recall. This is consistent with the findings of Štulec (2016) in the food retailing sector, where store layout and visual merchandising were identified as key factors in customer satisfaction. Robinson (2019) further emphasized the importance of visual merchandising in influencing customer perception and buying behavior. Newman (2003) proposed a theoretical model and methodology for analyzing in-store customer behavior, providing a practical approach for retailers to optimize their store layouts. These studies collectively highlight the significant role of store layout in shaping customer preferences and behavior.

H2: Merchandise quality and variety significantly influence consumer buying preferences in a retail store

3. Merchandise:

The influence of **merchandise** on customer buying preferences in retail stores is a complex and multifaceted issue. Girard (2006) found that product classification significantly influences online purchase preferences, suggesting that the type of merchandise available in a retail store can impact customer preferences. This is further supported by Simonson (1999), who highlighted the role of product assortment in influencing buyer preferences and purchase decisions. The importance of the store environment in shaping customer attitudes and purchase intentions was also underscored by Villiers (2018), indicating that the presentation of merchandise in a retail store can significantly influence customer behavior. However, the specific impact of merchandise on customer buying preferences in physical retail stores was not directly addressed in these studies, suggesting a potential gap in the literature.

H3: consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour are greatly influenced by the variety, quality, and presentation of the merchandise.

4. Store Image:

Store image, encompassing factors such as atmosphere, merchandise quality, service, price, and convenience, significantly influences customer perceptions and preferences (Hosseini, 2012). This, in turn, impacts shoppers' attitudes, perceived value, and purchase intentions (Balaji, 2021). The store image also directly influences relationship quality and retailer brand equity (Shen, 2010). Furthermore, it affects buyers' product evaluation, particularly for durable, semi-durable, and non-durable products (Verma, 2005). These findings underscore the crucial role of store image in shaping customer behavior and preferences at retail stores.

H4: customer purchasing preferences are greatly influenced by store image.

5. Store service:

The influence of **store service** on customer buying preferences is a well-documented phenomenon. Tran (2020) and Et.al (2021) both found that service quality, including problem-solving and communication skills, significantly impacts customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Singh (2012) further emphasized the importance of service quality, with physical aspects, reliability, and personal interaction being key factors. Sharma (2015) specifically highlighted the positive influence of perceived service quality on customer satisfaction and patronage intentions in the convenience store industry, with merchandise availability and courtesy being particularly important. These studies collectively underscore the critical role of store service in shaping customer preferences and behavior.

H5: customer preferences that influence purchase decisions are greatly influenced by customer service variables

METHODOLOGY:

Data Collection:

Data for this study were collected through surveys distributed to a diverse group of retail customers. The survey included questions related to store convenience, layout, merchandise, store image, and service, as well as customers' preferences and buying behaviour.

Analysis of Results:

The collected data were analysed using regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The regression weights, beta coefficients, R² values, and p-values were examined to assess the strength and significance of the relationships between the independent variables (store convenience, layout, merchandise, store image, and service) and the dependent variable (buying preferences).

Hypothesis Testing Using Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R ²	P- Value
H ₁	Store Convenience → Buying Preferences	.927	.860	.000
H ₂	Store Layout → Buying Preferences	.813	.661	.000
H ₃	Merchandise → Buying Preferences	.897	.806	.000
H ₄	Store Image → Buying Preferences	.895	.801	.000
H ₅	Store Service → Buying Preferences	.913	.854	.000

H1: Store Convenience → Buying Preferences

Interpretation: The strong regression weight (.927) and high beta coefficient (.860) indicate a significant and robust positive relationship between Store Convenience and Buying Preferences. The R² value of .860 denotes that 86% of the variance in buying preferences is explained by Store Convenience, highlighting its substantial impact. With a p-value of .000, this relationship is highly statistically significant.

H2: Store Layout → Buying Preferences

Interpretation: The regression weight of .813 and beta coefficient of .661 demonstrate a substantial positive relationship between Store Layout and Buying Preferences. The R² value of .661 signifies that 66.1% of the variance in buying preferences is explained by Store Layout. Moreover, the low p-value of .000 confirms the statistical significance of this relationship.

H3: Merchandise → Buying Preferences

Interpretation: The high regression weight (.897) and beta coefficient (.806) indicate a significant and strong positive association between Merchandise and Buying Preferences. The R² value of .806 illustrates that 80.6% of the variance in buying preferences is explained by Merchandise. The p-value of .000 confirms the statistical significance of this relationship.

H4: Store Image → Buying Preferences

Interpretation: A considerable positive relationship exists between Store Image and Buying Preferences, supported by a regression weight of .895 and a beta coefficient of .801. The R² value of .801 demonstrates that 80.1% of the variance in buying preferences is attributable to Store Image. Additionally, the p-value of .000 signifies the statistical significance of this relationship.

H5: Store Service → Buying Preferences

Interpretation: Store Service significantly influences Buying Preferences, as evidenced by the substantial regression weight (.913) and beta coefficient (.854). The R² value of .854 indicates that 85.4% of the variance in buying preferences is explained by Store Service. Moreover, the low p-value of .000 confirms the statistical significance of this relationship.

Summary and conclusion:

The results of the regression analysis confirm strong positive relationships between store convenience, layout, merchandise, store image, service, and buying preferences. Store convenience emerged as a significant factor, explaining 86% of the variance in buying preferences. The study underscores the critical role of these factors in shaping customer choices in retail stores.

Limitations and future research:

This study is limited by its reliance on survey data, which may be subject to respondent bias. Future research could incorporate more diverse methodologies, such as in-depth interviews or observational studies, to gain deeper insights into customer preferences. Additionally, exploring the impact of external factors, such as economic conditions or technological advancements, on consumer behaviour could further enhance the understanding of retail dynamics.

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