Scale Development: Importance of Apparel Store Image Dimensions

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Diverse and contradictory findings of research on store image could be partially attributed to the complexity of this construct but also to the variety of measuring instruments implemented by researchers. The objective of this study is to develop a scale to measure the perceived importance of apparel store image dimensions. An extensive literature review culminated in an initial item pool. Statistical procedures to purify the scale (EFA and CFA) were implemented on data collected by means of two pilot studies. A final 55 item scale resulted. Ongoing research aims at further refinement of this scale.

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Field notes and interview transcripts were carefully reviewed to validate emergent themes. After several iterations, a consensus was reached.

As a final measure of quality assurance, a research assistant was hired to provide an independent assessment of the dominant motivations and concerns of each respondent. Single-page memos were generated to summarize the essence of each transcript. These results were cross-checked with the team’s theme x case matrix and were used to catch any outlier ideas and idiosyncratic concerns that may have eluded initial detection.

Results

Our results yielded five segments of donors: (1) “Stakeholders” who felt they were part of the community, and were committed to the station whether or not they viewed the programming themselves or not; (2) “Steady Donors” who derive value from the programming, but also feel involved as part of the community; (3) “New and Sporadic Donors” for whom each individual donation is like a vote for / against current programming; (4) “Free Riders” who enjoy the programming but do not donate; and (5) Non-viewers. Our research defines in detail the sources of value each group derives from their involvement, and charts the causes for individuals move from one segment to another, either towards becoming Stakeholders or becoming less involved.

References


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Assessing consumer perceptions of store image is critical to ensure congruence between the image mix desired by the target market and the store’s projected image. Strategic management of store image requires an instrument to continually monitor store image.

Researchers investigated store image from different perspectives but only a few such as Menezes and Elbert (1979), Manolis, Keep, Joyce and Lambert (1994) as well as Dickson and Albaum (1977) endeavoured to develop and test instruments to measure store image. The diverse and even contradictory findings of the existing research could be partially attributed to the complexity of this construct but also to the variety of measuring instruments implemented by researchers. This further substantiates the need to develop a measurement scale based on previous research in the field of store image. It is also widely accepted that empirical validation of the conceptual extensions of theory is a critical element of the scientific process (Chowdhary, Reardon & Srivastava, 1998).

Objectives

Objectives of this research are to (1) develop a scale for the measurement of consumers’ perceptions of the importance of store image dimensions, (2) establish reliability and content validity, (3) assess the fit of the measurement model implied by the architecture of the instrument and the constitutive definition of the theoretical store image construct.

Literature

Specifying the domain and boundaries of a construct is instrumental in guiding scale development and assessment of validity (DeVellis, 2003; Netemeyer, Bearden & Sharma, 2003). Despite the absence of a clear definition of store image it can be deduced from literature that this construct comprises distinct dimensions (and sub-dimensions), including tangible (functional) and intangible (psychological) dimensions. An in-depth review of literature was done, covering seminal work (e.g. Martineau’s, 1958 & Lindquist, 1974-1975) and recent investigations (e.g. Sullivan, Savitt, Zheng & Cui, 2002; Wong & Yu, 2003; Koo, 2003; Grace & O’Cass, 2004). The information disclosed was used to delineate eight dimensions (Atmosphere, Convenience, Facilities, Institutional, Merchandise, Promotion, Sales Personnel, Service) and sub-dimensions (for each dimension) underlying the store image construct. These findings could also enhance the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the store image definition and contribute to domain specification.

Methodology

Churchill’s (1979) framework for scale development and recommendations from literature (DeVellis, 2003; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006; Netemeyer, et al., 2003), were used to identify a four-phase methodology. Only the first three phases are reported here.
Phase one: Domain specification and construct definition. A theoretical model delineating the relationship between store image and other consumer behaviour variables was proposed. Further to this, the Model of the underlying structure of store image was proposed. This model represented the construct definition and served as point of departure for scale development.

Phase two: Generating measurement items and finalising the scale format. A pool of 371 items was generated. These items were judged by subject experts and members of the identified sample population (face validity). A preliminary 232-item scale resulted.

Phase three: Purifying the scale. Two pilot studies were conducted employing convenience student samples (Pilot 1: n=89 and Pilot 2: n=173-two data-gathering sessions: n=72 and n=101). Statistical analysis of data aimed at establishing reliability and addressing scale length.

Results
Pilot study 1: Reliability results (coefficient alphas) for the store image sub-dimensions ranged from 0.56 to 0.85. Coefficient alphas (>0.7), item-total correlations (> 0.3) and inter-item correlations (0.2-0.4) were used as guidelines for acceptance of items (Blankson & Kalafatis, 2004; DeVellis, 2003; Netemeyer, et al., 2003; Nunnaly, 1978). This resulted in a 214-item scale administered in the second pilot study.

Pilot study 2: The first data set (n=72) was subjected to coefficient alphas analysis. Results were: Atmosphere (α=0.77), Convenience (α=0.81), Facilities (α=0.81), Institutional (α=0.64), Merchandise (α=0.78), Promotion (α=0.73), Sales Personnel (α=0.86) and Service (α=0.79). After item elimination (criteria as above), a scale of 198 items resulted. Scale length remained an issue.

Data from both data-gathering sessions were combined and a split sample approach was employed, identifying a development (n=107) and a test (n=66) data set. Reliability analysis was performed on both data sets. The results (development/test data sets) were: Atmosphere (α=0.83/0.72; 6 items), Convenience (α=0.80/0.62; 7 items), Facilities (α=0.86/0.61; 7 items), Institutional (α=0.84/0.70; 6 items), Merchandise (α=0.83/0.64; 8 items), Promotion (α=0.84/0.68; 8 items), Sales Personnel (α=0.88/0.79; 5 items) and Service (α=0.86/0.59; 8 items).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) utilising principle axis factoring was performed on each subscale separately by forcing the extraction of one factor on the development data set. Items loading 0.5 or higher on their designated factors were retained resulting in a 55-item scale. A correlation analysis between the original scale (214 items) and the shortened version (55 items) was performed. Satisfactory values (p<0.001) were obtained supporting the shortened version: Atmosphere (r=0.94), Convenience (r=0.90), Facilities (r=0.90), Institutional (r=0.87), Merchandise (r=0.90), Promotion (r=0.90), Sales Personnel (r=0.94) and Service (r=0.92).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed on the test data set for further refinement of the shortened scale (Hair et al., 2006). Each subscale was submitted to CFA separately to allow for the investigation of individual items. Some of the Goodness-of-Fit Statistics (e.g. RMSEA, NFI, AGFI) were disappointing, but the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) was more satisfactory: Atmosphere (GFI=0.90), Convenience (GFI=0.91), Facilities (GFI=0.87), Institutional (GFI=0.91), Merchandise (GFI=0.85), Promotion (GFI=0.92), Sales Personnel (GFI=0.91) and Service (GFI=0.81).

Taking into account all statistical indicators the 55-item scale was retained for further testing and refinement in this ongoing research. The values indicate that the model may still be substantially improved.

References


