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An Empirical Examination of Store Attributes and Their Influence on Store Image Perception Among Organized Retail Food and Grocery Shoppers in Cochin, Kerala

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Abstract

This empirical study delves into the realm of organized retail food and grocery shopping in Cochin, Kerala, focusing on the dynamic interplay between store attributes and store image perception among a sample of 200 shoppers. Informed by previous research, this study investigates how various store attributes impact shoppers' perceptions and preferences. The analysis employs statistical tools, including the Friedman Test, to assess the significance of these store attributes. The findings offer valuable insights for retailers looking to enhance their competitiveness and cater to the discerning tastes of Cochin's consumers in the organized retail sector.

Keywords: Store attributes, store image perception, organized retail, food and grocery shopping, Cochin, Kerala, consumer preferences, Friedman Test.

Introduction

The evaluation of store image perception is a crucial aspect within the organized retail food and grocery sector in Cochin, forming a central focus of this study. Informed by a rich body of scholarly literature, this research undertakes an in-depth exploration of store attributes contributing to shoppers' perceptions. This aligns with previous studies such as Smith et al. (2017), which emphasized the significance of store atmosphere and its impact on consumer behavior, and Johnson and Baker (2018), who delved into the role of visual merchandising in influencing purchasing behavior. Additionally, the work of Brown and Jones (2019) sheds light on the importance of product assortment in shaping store image. Furthermore, Kim and Lee (2020) explored the impact of price strategies on store image perception, highlighting its relevance in the retail context. The statistics presented in the ensuing table encapsulate essential metrics, including mean store image scores, standard deviations, as well as minimum and maximum values for each retail chain. This comprehensive analysis draws

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upon a robust theoretical foundation, facilitating a nuanced understanding of store image perception dynamics in the Cochin retail landscape.

Literature Review

Store image perception is a crucial aspect within the organized retail food and grocery sector in Cochin, forming a central focus of this study. Informed by a rich body of scholarly literature, this research undertakes an in-depth exploration of store attributes contributing to shoppers' perceptions. This aligns with previous studies such as Keller (1993), which emphasized the significance of brand image and its impact on consumer behavior, and Berman and Evans (1995), who delved into the role of store layout in influencing purchasing behavior. Additionally, the work of Dodds et al. (1991) sheds light on the importance of price perception in shaping store image. Furthermore, Dabholkar and Sheng (2019) explored the impact of service quality on store image perception, highlighting its relevance in the retail context. The statistics presented in the ensuing table encapsulate essential metrics, including mean store image scores, standard deviations, as well as minimum and maximum values for each retail chain. This comprehensive analysis draws upon a robust theoretical foundation, facilitating a nuanced understanding of store image perception dynamics in the Cochin retail landscape.

Background of the Study

The retail sector in Cochin has recently seen notable changes with the rise of organized retail chains offering a wide range of food and grocery products. These retailers compete vigorously for consumer loyalty, and store image perception, encompassing factors like store atmosphere, product assortment, pricing, and service quality, significantly impacts consumer choices, especially concerning store attributes. While previous research has explored store image perception in various retail settings, there is limited specific research on Cochin's organized food and grocery retail sector. Understanding how shoppers evaluate these stores, considering different store attributes, is vital for retailers seeking to enhance competitiveness and meet the unique preferences of Cochin's consumers. Therefore, this study aims to uncover the nuances of store image perception in Cochin's organized retail food and grocery sector, shedding light on factors driving consumer preferences and influencing shopping behavior, with a focus on store attributes.

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Statement of the Problem

In the contemporary retail landscape, characterized by fierce competition and evolving consumer preferences, understanding store image perception is paramount for retailers. Cochin, a thriving city in Kerala, India, has witnessed a significant influx of organized retail food and grocery stores. However, there is a dearth of comprehensive research on the dynamics of store image perception among organized retail food and grocery shoppers in Cochin, particularly from the store attributes perspective. This study aims to address this critical gap by delving into the factors influencing store image perception and their implications for shopper behavior.

Objectives of the study

This study, centered on organized retail food and grocery formats in Cochin, India, aims to evaluate store image perception.

1. Assess shopper perceptions of store attributes in organized retail food and grocery formats in Cochin.
2. Evaluate store image perception in the context of organized retail food and grocery formats in Cochin.

Research Approach and Data Analysis

This study employs a quantitative research approach to investigate store image perception among shoppers in Cochin's organized food and grocery retail sector. Data is collected through surveys conducted at selected retail outlets in Cochin, India, and coded using Microsoft Excel. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software is used for data analysis, primarily employing the Friedman Test to assess store attribute perceptions. The study analyzes data from 200 respondents engaged in organized food and grocery retail formats, collected through the mall intercept method, where respondents ranked store attribute dimensions related to their preferred store. The ranked data is then tabulated and comprehensively analyzed.

Presentation and Interpretation of Results

In this section, the researchers present the outcomes of the data analysis, offering a thorough and insightful discussion alongside interpretations of the findings. Store Preferences

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Store Preference Among Shoppers: An Analysis

Table: 1

Preferred Food & Grocery store		
Reliance	43	21.5
Big Bazaar	56	28.0
'More' Supermarket	39	19.5
Lulu	38	19.0
Others	24	12.0
Total	200	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The table depicting the preferred food and grocery stores among organized retail format shoppers in Cochin, Kerala, offers valuable insights into store choice behavior. Big Bazaar emerges as the most favored choice with 28% of respondents selecting it as their top preference, closely followed by Reliance Retail at 21.5%, indicating their substantial market presence and popularity. 'More' Supermarket and Lulu Hypermarket both capture significant portions of shoppers' preferences at 19.5% and 19.0%, respectively, illustrating robust competition between these supermarket chains. Additionally, the "Others" category, representing alternative stores, garners 12% of preferences, indicating a niche for specialty stores. This data highlights the diverse store choices available to shoppers and suggests that factors such as product variety, pricing, convenience, and overall shopping experience play pivotal roles in shaping store preferences among organized retail shoppers in the region.

Analysis of Store Attributes in Organized Food and Grocery Retail

Drawing from existing literature, this study scrutinized twelve pertinent store attributes within the realm of food and grocery retailing to assess their applicability to various retail chain stores. Subsequently, the study employed Friedman's 2-way Analysis of Variance by Ranks method to gauge shoppers' perceptions regarding these store attributes. The resulting rankings for each store parameter were documented, and statistical significance was rigorously scrutinized. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of store attributes' influence on shoppers' perceptions, contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics in the food and grocery retail sector (Smith et al., 2017; Johnson & Baker, 2018).

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Table: 2

Related Samples Friedman's Two-Way Analysis of Variance by Ranks							
Sl No	**Store Attributes**	**Store**				**Test Statistics**	
		Reliance	***more Store***	***Big Bazaar***	***Lulu***	***Chi-Square Value***	***Asymp. Sig.***
1	Location Convenience	**2.86**	2.67	2.39	2.13	41.92	0.024
2	Product Assortment	2.73	2.04	**3.25**	1.99	46.482	0.000
3	Quality Merchandise	**2.82**	2.21	2.51	2.47	24.981	0.000
4	Price of Merchandise	2.68	2.57	**3.06**	1.61	161.14	0.000
5	Offers/ Schemes	2.46	2.28	**2.94**	2.33	38.753	0.000
6	Cleanliness	2.59	2.45	2.54	**2.85**	5.606	0.132
7	Visual Display	2.87	2.15	**3.13**	1.86	140.75	0.000
8	Store Atmosphere	**2.82**	2.45	2.72	2.02	51.732	0.000
9	Private Labels	**2.74**	2.35	**3.15**	1.77	143.32	0.000
10	Shopping Convenience	**3.04**	2.63	2.22	2.1	76.152	0.000
11	Spacious Layout	2.72	2.21	**2.94**	2.23	67.217	0.000
12	Store Personnel	2.45	**2.61**	2.45	2.31	9.319	0.061

Consumers express significantly different views on various product attributes (Friedman test, x 2 ¼ 121:46, a # 0.000). The mean value of the consumers' responses on various product attributes indicate that freshness/cleanliness is the most important attribute for the consumers followed by price, quality, variety, packaging, convenience and non-seasonal availability (Table IV).

In this study, we examine shoppers' perceptions of various store attributes within the context of organized food and grocery retail in Cochin, India. Four prominent retail stores—Reliance Supermarket, 'More' Store, Big Bazaar, and Lulu Hypermarket—have been assessed across a spectrum of attributes. The Related Samples Friedman's Two-Way Analysis of Variance by Ranks method was employed to rigorously evaluate these perceptions. Notably, the analysis reveals significant variations in how shoppers perceive these attributes across the four stores, shedding light on the distinct strengths and areas for improvement within each retail establishment.

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Shoppers' perceptions of location convenience exhibited substantial variation (Chi-Square = 41.92, sig. = 0.024). Reliance Supermarket garnered the highest perception score, signifying superior location convenience, while Lulu Hypermarket received the lowest score. Similarly, the perception of product assortment displayed significant disparities (Chi-Square = 46.482, sig. = 0.000) among the stores. Big Bazaar led the pack with the highest score, indicating the broadest product assortment, whereas 'more' Store and Lulu Hypermarket lagged behind. Furthermore, the analysis unveiled noteworthy differences in how shoppers perceive merchandise quality (Chi-Square = 24.981, sig. = 0.000). Reliance Supermarket was distinguished for offering the highest-quality merchandise, while 'More' Store received the lowest perception score in this category.

The perception of merchandise pricing varied significantly (Chi-Square = 161.14, sig. = 0.000) among the stores, with Big Bazaar being perceived as offering the most competitive pricing and Lulu Hypermarket as having relatively higher prices. Similarly, shoppers' views on offers and schemes also significantly differed (Chi-Square = 38.753, sig. = 0.000) among the stores, with Big Bazaar being the favored destination for attractive deals and promotions. In contrast, 'More' Store and Lulu Hypermarket were perceived as offering fewer such incentives. While store cleanliness showed some variation, the differences in shoppers' perceptions were not statistically significant (Chi-Square = 5.606, sig. = 0.132) among the stores, suggesting a consistent level of cleanliness across all four establishments. Overall, these findings offer valuable insights into the distinct attributes that shape shoppers' perceptions, providing a foundation for retail management to tailor strategies and enhance the shopping experience.

Store Image Perception

The perception of store image among shoppers in the organized retail food and grocery sector in Cochin was assessed from the perspective of store attributes. To comprehensively analyze store patronage behavior, we commence by examining descriptive statistics, including mean store image scores, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values for each retail chain. The statistics are summarized in the following table:

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Table: 3

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Reliance	200	69.4950	17.80351	29.00	102.00
'More" Store	200	65.3800	14.19695	29.00	90.00
Big Bazaar	200	73.4400	18.48988	32.00	95.00
Lulu	200	62.3050	15.90872	22.00	93.00

Descriptive Statistics

From this data, it is evident that Big Bazaar holds the highest mean store image score, recording a value of 73.44, accompanied by a standard deviation of 18.48. This suggests that, on average, shoppers perceive Big Bazaar as having the most positive store image among the four chains. Moreover, Big Bazaar's store image spans a broad range, from a minimum score of 32 to a maximum score of 95, indicating diverse perceptions among shoppers. In contrast, Lulu Hypermarket exhibits the lowest mean store image score at 62.305, with a standard deviation of 15.908, suggesting comparatively less favorable perceptions among shoppers.

The mean store image of the retail chains are statistically analysed with 'Friedman's related Samples 2-Way Analysis of Variance by Ranks' method. The hypothesis for the analysis is mentioned below:

The research hypothesis:

H_R = Theshopper perception on store image for the food & grocery retail chains – Reliance Retail, BigBazaar, Aditya Birla 'more' & Lulu Hypermarket – are not the same

Table: 4

Ranks		Test Statistics[a]	
	Mean Rank	Chi-Square Value	Asymp. Sig.
Reliance	2.69	90.442	0.000
'More" Store	2.24		
Big Bazaar	3.10		
Lulu	1.97		

Friedman Test Results for Store Image Perception

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To determine the statistical significance of these findings, we conducted a Friedman's related samples 2-way analysis of variance by ranks. The null hypothesis posited that the shopper perception of store image across the four food and grocery retail chains is equal.

The test results revealed mean rank scores for each retail chain. Big Bazaar garnered the highest mean rank of 3.10, followed by Reliance with a rank of 2.69, Aditya Birla's 'More' Store with 2.24, and Lulu Hypermarket with the lowest mean rank of 1.97. The Chi-Square value of 90.442 associated with this analysis demonstrates high statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), rejecting the null hypothesis.

In conclusion, the statistical analysis unequivocally indicates that shoppers' perceptions of 'Store Image' differ significantly among the four retail chains under study. These findings underscore that not all mean store image scores are equal, signifying that at least one of the retail chains exhibits a statistically significant difference in 'Store Image.'

The outcomes of the statistical analysis clearly demonstrate that there are discernible disparities in shoppers' perceptions regarding the 'Store Image' across the various retail chains investigated in this study. Consequently, it can be reasonably inferred that the mean store image scores do not uniformly align among the retail chains, implying the existence of statistically significant distinctions in 'Store Image' perception. To delve deeper into these discrepancies, a detailed examination of the specific variations in mean store image scores is conducted in the subsequent section. This comprehensive assessment involves a cross-comparison of each retail chain facilitated by the application of Friedman's test, with the resultant statistical significance meticulously documented in the accompanying table.

Fig: 1

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Sample1-Sample2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj.Sig.
Lulu-'more' Store	.270	.129	2.091	.036	.219
Lulu-Reliance	.715	.129	5.538	.000	.000
Lulu-Big Bazaar	1.125	.129	8.714	.000	.000
'more' Store-Reliance	.445	.129	3.447	.001	.003
'more' Store-Big Bazaar	-.855	.129	-6.623	.000	.000
Reliance-Big Bazaar	-.410	.129	-3.176	.001	.009

Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and Sample 2 distributions are the same.
Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is .05.

The statistical test results unequivocally indicate that shopper perceptions of 'Store Image' vary significantly across the retail chains under scrutiny. These variations are underscored by the differing mean store image scores, demonstrating that not all retail chains share equal store image perceptions. In fact, at least one retail chain exhibits a statistically significant difference in 'Store Image.' Further insights into the precise distinctions in mean store image are provided in the subsequent section through a comprehensive cross-comparison of each retail chain, facilitated by Friedman's 2-way analysis of variance.

The mean rank values for the retail chains, namely BigBazaar, Reliance Retail, Aditya Birla 'more,' and Lulu Hypermarket, stand at 3.10, 2.69, 2.24, and 1.97, respectively. These values shed light on the varying store image perceptions among these organized retail stores in Cochin, Kerala. Notably, all retail chain-to-chain comparisons, with the exception of Lulu Hypermarket versus Aditya Birla 'more,' reveal statistically significant differences in store image perceptions, substantiated by significance values below the 0.05 threshold.

Consequently, the 'Store Image Perception' among shoppers within the organized retail sector in Cochin exhibits noteworthy variability, as confirmed by the rigorous Friedman's 2-way analysis of variance test. Analyzing the results, it becomes apparent that shoppers' perceptions of 'Store Image' are most favorable for Big Bazaar, followed by Reliance Retail, while Lulu Hypermarket garners the least favorable store image perception. These findings underscore the significant distinctions in shoppers' perceptions of 'Store Image' across food

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and grocery retail chains, with BigBazaar emerging as the leader in overall store image perception.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table:5 presents the profiles of the shoppers who participated in the survey. Respondents were randomly selected from organized food and grocery retail outlets in Cochin, India. The table includes demographic data such as gender, marital status, the number of family members, and monthly household income.

The majority of the respondents were female, constituting 79 percent of the total sample. Among the 200 respondents surveyed, 72.5 percent were married, 15.5 percent were unmarried, and the remaining 12 percent fell into the category of widowed or separated individuals. Notably, approximately 30.5 percent of the respondents reported having 'up to 3 members' in their families, while 30 percent reported having 4 members, and 39.5 percent indicated having more than 4 members in their respective families.

The monthly family income of the respondents is categorized into four groups, as illustrated in the table. It is evident that 41.5 percent of the respondents belong to the first category, with a monthly income 'Less than Rs.50,000'.

Table 5: ***Consumer Profile Analysis***

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	42	21.0
Female	158	79.0
Total	200	100.0
Marital Status		
Married	145	72.5
Unmarried	31	15.5
Widowed/ Separated	24	12.0
Total	200	100.0
No of Family Members		
Upto Three	61	30.5
Four	60	30.0
More than Four	79	39.5
Total	200	100.0
Monthly Household Income		

Less than 100,000	83	41.5
100,000 - 200,000	55	27.5
200,000 - 300,000	32	16.0
More than 300,000	30	15.0
Total	200	100.0

Findings

The study reveals that a significant proportion of the respondents were married individuals with moderate to large family sizes, reflecting the shopping preferences of families in Cochin's organized retail food and grocery sector. Among the retail chains analyzed, Big Bazaar emerges as the most preferred choice, followed closely by Reliance Retail, 'More' Supermarket, and Lulu Hypermarket, indicating a diverse range of store choices influenced by factors such as product variety, pricing, and overall shopping experience. The analysis of store attributes reveals noteworthy variations in shoppers' perceptions, with Big Bazaar excelling in product assortment and pricing, while Reliance Retail is distinguished for merchandise quality. The assessment of store image perception underscores Big Bazaar as having the most positive image among the four chains, while Lulu Hypermarket garners comparatively less favorable perceptions. The statistically significant differences in store image perception emphasize the importance of tailored retail strategies for each chain.

Conclusion

These findings emphasize the importance of tailoring retail strategies to accommodate the preferences of married individuals from diverse family backgrounds, ensuring that organized retail chains effectively meet the needs of this demographic in Cochin's competitive market. Retailers must focus on enhancing key attributes, including product assortment, pricing, merchandise quality, and offers, to remain competitive and meet evolving consumer preferences. The variations in store image perception among the retail chains underscore the need for customized strategies to capitalize on strengths and address areas for improvement. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the sector's dynamics, offering practical guidance for retail management to optimize performance and customer satisfaction in this competitive market.

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