

# RETAIL STORE IMAGE: A STUDY OF THE CYPRUS CLOTHING INDUSTRY

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to identify (sector-specific) store image attributes and evaluate the strength and importance of the influence of each attribute on consumer purchasing decisions. It examines the impact of various socioeconomic or demographic variables on consumers' evaluation of various store image attributes. 261 Cypriot consumers served as the convenient sample. Using ANOVA and F-test analysis, the t-values for the attributes were not significant at either the .05 or the .01 levels. The correlation between the demographic variables and the various store image attributes were highly significant. This holds much importance for retailers in today's volatile marketplace and relates to the need for retailers to take into account the impact of retail store image and its relationship with store loyalty.*

**JEL:** M31

**KEYWORDS:** Retail; Store Image; Store Attributes; Cyprus; Clothing Industry

## INTRODUCTION

Driven by the need to maximize profit and compete in volatile marketplaces, retailers are deeply interested in collecting critical information from consumers and attempting to layout stores in ways that will attract their target customers. Thus, retail image and store positioning represent the two most important factors that influence consumer perceptions and ultimately, the success of retail stores.

Despite significant academic and commercial research, many uncertainties remain as to how consumer behavior affects store choice (Knee, 2002). Because store image can be expressed as a function of the salient attributes of a particular store that consumers evaluate and weight against one another, store image can also be defined as the combination of a consumer's perceptions about a store according to different (salient) attributes.

To date, many studies have provided a considerable understanding of store image, its attributes, and patronage behavior based on the general population, which has become the basis for retail strategies. This mass-market orientation does not assist local retailers in terms of helping them to focus on a specific market segment and create store image based strategies. There is still vast scope for research, analysis as the retailing environment changes rapidly, leading to changes in the expectations of shoppers, and a realignment of the choice set of stores (Sinha and Banerjee, 2004).

The paper therefore identifies (sector-specific) store image attributes and evaluates the strength and importance of the influence of each attribute on the purchase decisions of consumers in the (Cypriot) retailing industry. To do so, the impacts of various socioeconomic variables on store image attributes were examined. Socioeconomic, or demographic, variables are the most popular basis for distinguishing customer groups because consumer wants, preferences, and usage rates are generally associated with such variables. As Doyle and Fenwick (1974) note, different socioeconomic groups perceive stores differently and store image perception may be related to age and other demographic factors. The various demographic factors considered included: gender, age, education, occupation, and income.

The first section of this paper discusses the main elements of store image and positioning within the literature. The second section goes on to describe and analyze the research undertaken on the retail clothing industry in Cyprus in which a sample of 261 respondents were surveyed to elicit the influence of demographic variables on consumers retail store image evaluation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND

As per Sewell (1974), defining store image is not easy. Store image is a critical component of store choice and loyalty (Malhotra, 1983; Nevin and Houston, 1980; Osman, 1993; Stanley and Sewell, 1976). Originally proposed by Martineau (1958), the concept of store image combines tangible and intangible or functional and psychological attributes. Many researchers, including Ditcher (1985), Keaveney and Hunt (1992), and Zimmer and Golden (1988), subscribe to this view.

Store image is considered one of the most important determinants of success (Amirani and Gates, 1993) in the retailing industry. In fact, a unique store image is one of the retailer's most valuable marketing assets, creating a competitive advantage that is not easily duplicated by other retailers (Rosenbloom, 1983).

The image of a store consists of the way it is perceived by consumers (Zimmer and Golden, 1988). An individual's view is important to the retailer because it can ultimately influence patronage behavior. These views can be used to change consumers' reactions to the store favorably since attributes of merchandising and service can be formed in the viewpoint of consumers.

Store image has frequently been defined as an attitude, or set of attitudes, based upon an evaluation of salient store attributes (Doyle and Fenwick, 1974-1975; Engel and Blackwell, 1982; James et al., 1976) and its measurement almost always involves the identification of a number of attributes which are assumed to collectively make up a store's image (Hirschman et al., 1978; Keaveney and Hunt, 1992).

The literature reviewed indicated that there are considerable variations among most researchers in terms of the number of relevant store image attributes used in their studies dealing with the determinants of store image. Martineau's (1958) paper has identified layout and architecture; symbols and color; advertising; and sales personnel as the four core attributes of store image. From a review of nineteen previous studies, Lindquist (1974) has proposed nine store image attributes. These attributes are: *merchandise*, which includes factors such as quality, assortment, styling or fashion, guarantees and price; *service*, consisting of staff service, ease of return, credit and delivery service; *clientele*, including factors like social class appeal, self image congruency and store personnel; *physical facilities*, like layout and architecture; *convenience*, primarily location related; *promotion*, which includes sales promotions, product displays, advertising programmes, symbols and colors; *store atmosphere, institutional factors*, that include store projection, reputation and reliability; and *post-transaction satisfaction*, that come with returns and adjustments. Most of the studies thus far have identified similar groupings of store image attributes projecting the similar view that the attribute-groupings contribute to a store's image (Hirschman et al., 1978).

According to Ghosh (1994), store image is composed of eight different elements of the retail marketing mix: location, merchandise, store atmosphere, customer service, price, advertising, personal selling, and sales incentive programs. Consequently, for each retail store a distinct image may exist within consumers' minds. Others have defined store image as the "summation of all attributes of a store as perceived by the shoppers through their experience with that store" (Omar, 1999). In particular, store image represents an important component in consumers' store patronage (Darden and Erden, 1983) and store choice decisions.

As per Davies (1992), store image is situation- specific. With respect to store layout, consumers who shop at different types of stores (e.g., convenience, discount, leisure) tend to have different perceptions of each store (Newman and Cullen, 2002). A gender difference also appears to lead to divergent shopping styles, which again can influence perceptions of store layout and image. However, retailers typically adopt a standardized approach with respect to the layout and other elements of their store based on their own store operations. In making such decisions, however, store operators should instead match the store layout and the merchandise offered to their target customers. Therefore, customers' reactions to the layout and image of a particular store are extremely important and are likely have a significant influence on sales (Newman, 2003).

Several studies have found a positive relationship between store image and store loyalty (Lassk, 2000; Mazursky and Jacoby, 1986; Osman, 1993). Store loyalty is a phenomenon that is currently receiving a great deal of interest from retail management. Retailers can use the positive image of their store to build store loyalty and ultimately store success.

For the purpose of this study, store image is defined as “the way the store is defined in the shopper’s mind” (Martineau, 1958) and recognize that it may vary across different consumer segments (Gilly and Zeithaml, 1985). As Backer, Levy, and Grewal (1992) suggest, retailers therefore should explore how environmental factors, which are part of store image, influence their target customers.

Store image, along with store positioning are factors, which influence consumer loyalty and store success. It has been highlighted that market positioning-based on a combination of price and product differentiation- can provide an important competitive advantage for commercial organizations (Day and Wesley, 1988). This is especially so within retailing, where effective positioning can lead to a variety of trading benefits (Ellis and Kelly, 1992). It is not surprising, therefore, that researchers have striven consistently to provide an improved understanding of store image (Martineau, 1958; Kunkel and Berry, 1968; Lindquist, 1974; Hansen and Deutscher, 1977; Rosenbloom, 1981; Golden et al. 1987). Retailers can use the image of their store to project their positioning strategies.

By identifying the attributes of their store image, retailers can create positioning strategies to differentiate their store in terms of products, price, or services (Wortzel, 1987). The resulting strong market position generally leads to greater customer inflow and subsequently to profitability. Therefore, changes in customer preferences must be identified to formulate matching retail strategies.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Cyprus is a small island on the coast of Mediterranean sea and has four major cities. They are namely Nicosia, Limassol, Pafos and Larnaca. Most of the major clothing retail stores are located on the main streets of these four cities. These main streets are usually high traffic areas and a large number of customers from a wide variety of population segments frequent these streets for their purchases.

The data is collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to be completed in three sections: must know, need to know and useful to know. The first section aimed to ensure that all respondents had purchased clothing from at least one of the retailers in the Cyprus clothing industry. It also measured the intention of the respondent to purchase goods again from the particular retailer. The second section assessed the importance of each of the eight store image attributes. Finally, the third section of the questionnaire comprised of a number of questions, which sought to define the demographic profile of each respondent.

The data is collected using a structured questionnaire that asked for the demographic details of the respondents and their ratings for various store image attributes. Eight previously tested store attributes (Birtwistle et al. 1996) were employed in this study:

1. Internal layout and design,
2. Merchandise fashion and style,
3. Merchandise price,
4. Merchandise quality,
5. Merchandise selection,
6. Professional and friendly staff,
7. Refund, and
8. Reputation.

All constructs were measured on five-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = not important, 5 = very important). All the questions were closed ended questions and were kept short and simple. It was recognized that more people would be willing to complete the questionnaire if it was shorter, and consequently, less time-consuming. Questions on the same topic (e.g. demographic-type questions) were also grouped together to make the questionnaire easier to answer. Emotionally charged words or leading questions that may point towards a certain answer were avoided to minimize bias in the questionnaire.

A convenience sampling techniques was used to collect the research data. Using this nonprobability sampling approach, respondents were selected from the population based on easy availability and accessibility. A total number of 300 respondents were administered with the questionnaire (75 questionnaires per city). The respondents were requested to participate in this study either by filling the questionnaire or answering the questions verbally as the answers were documented by the research assistant who is trained in the process of data collection. The data collected during November – December 2007 in the weekend days. More specifically, each weekend is spend in one city to collect the data. The respondents were interviewed as they were about to leave the clothing retail outlet after their shopping. Such exit interviews were desirable in order to obtain consumer responses reflective of their ‘real’ retailing shopping experience rather than delayed responses influenced by buyer perception or imagination. After a careful scrutiny of the 300 questionnaires, 261 questionnaires were found to be valid and were further analyzed.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The demographic details of the convenience sample are in Table 1. It is observed from the table 1 that female respondents and slightly over than the male respondents. Most of the respondents in the convenience sample are above 35 years of age (49%) and respondents who had graduated the college or studied in the college constitute about 88 % of the total respondents. Considerably large population of the respondents are employees (52%) followed by others (house makers / students / retired). The average incomes per month are highly represented in the bracket of US\$ 1000 – 2000 (40%) followed by US\$ 2000 – 3000 with 31%.

### Importance of Store Image Attributes

In Table 2, an overall analysis of the store image attributes with regard to store choice is done. In ranking the factors, mean values were used. As is demonstrated in Table 2, the respondents placed the greatest importance on price, followed by fashion and style, selection, staff, and quality. Refund, reputation, and internal layout ranked comparably lower in importance in the respondents mind.

Table 1 - Profile of the Respondents

Profile	No. of respondents	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	115	44
Female	146	56
<b>Age (in years)</b>		
Less than 25	55	21
25–35	78	30
Above 35	128	49
<b>Education</b>		
High school	32	12
College study	102	39
College graduation	127	49
<b>Occupation</b>		
Employee	137	52
Business	38	15
Professional	29	11
Others	57	22
<b>Income Level</b>		
Less than US\$1000	34	13
US\$1000–2000	104	40
US\$2000–3000	82	31
More than US\$3000	41	16

*This table shows the demographic details of the respondents. Income figures shown are monthly incomes.*

Table 2 - Ranking of Store Image Attributes

Factor	Mean	Percentage Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Price	3.84	76.7	.696	1
Fashion and style	3.75	74.9	.636	2
Selection	3.38	67.6	.567	3
Staff	3.31	66.3	.615	4
Quality	3.26	65.2	.556	5
Refund	3.14	62.8	.508	6
Reputation	2.77	55.4	.555	7
Layout and design	2.71	54.2	.632	8

*Table showing the mean, percentage mean, standard deviation and ranking of the store image attributes.*

This breakdown clearly shows that “people go by price,” is likely because consumers generally seek value for money and therefore price would be an important attribute for almost all respondents. Dodds et al. (1991) suggested that price levels have an important influence on shoppers’ patronage decisions. Moreover, as the difference between the highest and lowest income groups increases, the number of low-income consumers who are much more influenced by price (Dawson, 1995) also increases. Cameron-Waller (1995) also confirms this, Fernie (1997), who suggest that price is a major factor in store choice across all retail sectors, and that consumers expect products to be of reasonable quality, to be offered a wide variety, and to be provided with good customer service.

The position of fashion and style, the next most important factor in store choice according to our respondents, contradicts the findings of a study by Birtwistle and Shearer (2001). Their study found fashion and style to be the least important attribute. The demographic profile of the respondents sampled may account for this difference in the research findings. This study however, confirm and support the ranks given to the store image attributes of staff, quality, and internal layout and design by Birtwistle and Shearer’s (2001) respondents.

After fashion and style, selection was considered the next important factor, followed by friendly and supportive staff. Store personnel who are not helpful to the shopper are considered negative stimulus (Rose et al, 2005). Jones (1999) found that salespeople could make the consumers’ shopping experience enjoyable by providing good customer service and by simply being helpful to the shopper. Surprisingly, the quality of the clothes ranked lower in importance than staff in store choice, followed by refund procedures. This again contradicts the study by Birtwistle et al. (1996). Refund procedures were considered next in importance in this study because the respondents tended to prefer fashion clothing. Well –organized and administered refund procedures was seen to be fairly important in this study since fashion purchases are often perceived to be high risk (Birtwistle and Shearer, 2001).

The reputation and internal layout of the store were perceived as least important in the respondents’ evaluation and in store choice. Retailers spend considerable resources designing store environments and building store reputation because they believe that the environment enhances consumers’ perceptions of the store image. The importance attached to these attributes however; vary depending on the individual consumer group being analyzed. Consumer groups differ in terms of the importance placed on various store attributes. This suggests that not only are store image attributes ranked differently by different consumer groups but retailers with similar market positioning have consumer groups with different criteria influencing where they choose to shop (Birtwistle and Shearer, 2001).

Different socioeconomic groups do not perceive stores in the same way (Doyle and Fenwick, 1974). Therefore, further analysis of how store image attributes are influenced by various consumer segments may help retailers design specific strategies to attract and retain target customers and build store loyalty.

Influence of Demographic Variables on Consumers’ Retail Store Image

*Gender:* Of the total sample of 261 respondents, 191 were men and the remaining 70 were women. As is demonstrated in Table 3, there were no considerable differences in the mean values of male and female respondents with respect to the eight store image attributes.

Table 3 - Gender and Store Image Attributes

Factor	Female (146)		Male (115)		t-value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	
Price	3.65	.55	3.67	.58	.18
Fashion and style	3.60	.65	3.62	.45	1.65
Selection	3.28	.55	3.27	.71	.28
Staff	3.25	.66	3.32	.47	.68
Quality	3.07	.46	3.17	.68	1.26
Refund	3.01	.78	3.02	.69	.88
Reputation	2.97	.78	3.08	.72	.83
Layout and design	2.76	.70	2.82	.71	.51

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation and t-value of gender and store image attributes.

The t-values for the attributes were not significant at either the .05 or the .01 levels. In this study, therefore, the gender of the respondents does not significantly influence the attributes these consumers consider when evaluating store image. This finding is contrary to the work of many researchers (e.g. Chiger, 2001; Marks, 2002; Otnes and McGrath, 2001; and Peter and Olson, 1999). However, direct empirical evidence is not available regarding gender differences in relation to cognition and affect, which are considered to contribute to consumers’ retail purchase decisions and store choice (Burroughs, 1996; Dittar et al., 1996; Youn and Faber, 2000).

*Age and Education:* The respondents were divided into three categories: (A) younger than 25 years of age, (B) 25 to 35 years of age, and (C) 35 years of age or older. A one-way ANOVA and F-tests were

used to determine differences based on age. The F-value was significant at the .05 level for fashion and style, which means that different age groups are significantly different from one another concerning the importance of fashion and style in store choice. Findings indicate that the younger age groups gave this attribute a higher degree of importance than the older age groups. Birtwistle and Shearer, 2001, support this finding. For the other attributes, however, no significant differences were found. Therefore, it can be concluded that people of different age groups differ partially in their evaluations of store image attributes (see Table 4, Panel 'A').

Further analysis shows that the respondents in Group B differ significantly from those of Group C with regard to fashion and style and store reputation attributes. The respondents belonging to Group C were more conscious of these two attributes than the respondents belonging to Group B. Age is rarely used as an independent variable in evaluations of store image. Most research on store image either controls for the effect of age by focusing on a single age group or does not examine age as an influence at all (Areni and Kim, 1994; Grewal and Baker, 1994).

Table 4 - Influence of Age and Education on Store Image Attributes

<b>Panel A: Age</b>					
<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Group A (N = 55) Mean</b>	<b>Group B (N = 78) Mean</b>	<b>Group C (N = 128) Mean</b>	<b>B vs. C</b>	<b>F- ratio</b>
Price	3.76	3.76	3.79	-	.13
Fashion and style	3.66	3.61	3.85	*	*3.55
Selection	3.29	3.22	3.28	-	.17
Staff	3.20	3.25	3.29	-	1.55
Quality	3.15	3.09	3.17	-	1.81
Refund	3.90	3.06	3.19	-	1.65
Reputation	3.02	2.79	3.11	*	2.95
Layout and design	2.88	2.67	2.86	-	.17
<b>Panel B: Education</b>					
<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Group A (N = 32) Mean</b>	<b>Group B (N=102) Mean</b>	<b>Group C (N=127) Mean</b>	<b>F-ratio</b>	
Price	3.75	3.75	3.77	.01	
Fashion and style	3.67	3.76	3.80	.74	
Selection	3.32	3.40	3.42	.19	
Staff	3.22	3.26	3.25	.18	
Quality	3.18	3.28	3.29	.21	
Refund	3.12	3.09	3.13	.14	
Reputation	2.98	2.90	2.88	.43	
Layout and design	2.94	3.11	3.14	.57	

Table 4 shows the means and F-ratio of age, education and store image attributes. "\*" indicate the Significance at .05 level.

The respondents were divided into three groups based on their level of education. As is shown in Table 4, Panel 'B', none of the F-values for the attributes was significant. Therefore, the mean values for the various educational groups were not different for any store image attribute. Consequently, people with different educational levels do not differ significantly in their evaluations of store image attributes according to this study.

*Occupation:* For analytical purposes, all the respondents were classified into four groups: (A) employees, (B) businesspeople, (C) professionals, and (D) others (e.g., students, homemakers, unemployed). As is demonstrated in Table 5, Panel 'B', the F-value was not significant for these four occupational groups. Furthermore, the mean value for employed respondents was lower compared with Group D. This means that the former group pays less attention to the price attribute than the latter. There were also significant differences between Groups B and D with respect to reputation and internal layout and design; Group D respondents placed more importance on these attributes than the other groups. This analysis partially

confirms the belief that there are differences among consumers belonging to various occupational groups in terms of their evaluations of store image attributes.

*Income* : As is shown in Table 1, four income groups were identified and the respondents were classified (The average monthly income in Cyprus is around 1000 US\$) viz., A = less than US\$1000, B = \$1000–2000, C = \$2000–3000, and D = greater than \$3000. In turn, it is shown in Table 5, Panel ‘A’, that the F-ratio is significant for all factors except reputation. However, further analysis shows that the respondents belonging to Group A differs significantly from Group D with respect to four of the store image attributes: price, selection, reputation, and internal layout and design.

Table 5 - Influence of Occupation and Income on Store Image Attributes

Panel A: Income							
Attribute	Group A (N=34) Mean	Group B (N=104) Mean	Group C (N=82) Mean	Group D (N=41) Mean	A vs. D	C vs. D	F-ratio
Price	3.68	3.78	3.84	3.99	*	-	2.60
Fashion and style	3.69	3.66	3.76	3.94	-	-	2.20
Selection	3.30	3.29	3.45	3.53	*	-	2.36
Staff	3.21	3.18	3.34	3.44	-	-	2.22
Quality	3.21	3.20	3.29	3.41	-	-	.81
Refund	3.05	3.05	3.24	3.22	-	-	1.37
Reputation	2.71	2.67	2.75	3.11	*	-	*2.44
Layout and design	2.69	2.61	2.73	2.98	*	*	2.49

  

Panel B: Occupation						
	Group A (N=137) Mean	Group B (N=38) Mean	Group C (N=29) Mean	Group D (N=57) Mean	B vs. D	F-ratio
Price	3.70	3.73	3.81	3.90	-	.78
Fashion and style	3.77	3.73	3.79	3.75	-	.07
Selection	3.33	3.39	3.39	3.41	-	.70
Staff	3.23	3.28	3.36	3.38	-	.76
Quality	3.25	3.05	3.33	3.44	-	1.82
Refund	3.11	2.96	3.10	3.23	-	1.74
Reputation	2.96	3.11	3.09	2.99	*	.38
Layout and design	2.72	2.83	2.86	2.88	*	.62

Table showing the means and F-ratio of Occupation, Income and store image attributes. “\*” indicate the Significance at .05 levels.

For these factors, the mean values are less for Group A than for Group D. This means that people with lower income levels perceive these factors as less important. Low-income consumers are not necessarily influenced by price (Newman and Patel, 2004) and such factors mentioned. Significant differences between Groups B and D with respect to selection and internal layout and design were found. Considerable differences were also found between Groups C and D for internal layout and design. In general, Group D finds internal layout and design more important than does Group C. As such, people from different income groups differ significantly when they assign importance to various factors comprising store image.

Correlation Between Store Image Attributes And Demographic Variables

The results in the tables 6 and 7 also indicate the coefficients of correlation between store image attributes and demographic variables. A significant positive relationship between income and four factors, namely, price, fashion and style, selection, and internal layout and design was found, as well as, a negative correlation between age and three factors—fashion and style, reputation, and internal layout and design. The significant negative relationship between age and fashion and style suggests that younger respondents are more fashion conscious.

Finally, although the gender of the respondents was related to selection, it was not significant. The consumer profile in this Cypriot clothing industry reflects that gender does not significantly influence the selection of store attributes. This interesting finding may be attributed to the social and cultural fabric, which underlies the Cypriot consumer market. Therefore, this analysis demonstrates clearly that the one demographic factor that significantly influences consumers' perceptions of store image attributes is income.

Table 6 - Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Correlations			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part
(Constant)	-3.654	.761		-4.799	.000			
Price	.087	.082	.067	1.058	.291	.136	.066	.059
Fashion and style	.145	.091	.101	1.581	.115	.139	.099	.088
Selection	.385	.098	.240	3.935	.000	.162	.241	.219
Staff	.316	.099	.214	3.208	.002	.180	.198	.179
Quality	.086	.113	.052	.759	.448	.123	.048	.042
Refund	.231	.114	.129	2.021	.044	.150	.126	.113
Reputation	.569	.104	.348	5.472	.000	.220	.326	.305
Layout and design	.128	.084	.089	1.519	.130	.180	.095	.085

Table shows the regression coefficients of store image attributes, t values.

Table 7 - Correlations

		Income								
		Level	Price	Fashion	Selection	Staff	Quality	Refund	Reputation	Layout
Income	Pearson Correlation	1	.136*	.139*	.162**	.180**	.123*	.150*	.220**	.180**
Level	Sig. (2-tailed)		.028	.025	.009	.004	.048	.015	.000	.004
	N	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261
Price	Pearson Correlation	.136*	1	.314**	-.065	-.157*	.121	-.120	.220**	.223**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.028		.000	.294	.011	.050	.052	.000	.000
	N	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261
Fashion	Pearson Correlation	.139*	.314**	1	.139*	-.121	.307**	.013	-.056	.122*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	.000		.025	.052	.000	.833	.365	.049
	N	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261
Selection	Pearson Correlation	.162**	-.065	.139*	1	.065	-.010	-.169**	-.260**	.127*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.294	.025		.295	.876	.006	.000	.040
	N	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261
Staff	Pearson Correlation	.180**	-.157*	-.121	.065	1	.367**	.378**	-.272**	-.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.011	.052	.295		.000	.000	.000	.984
	N	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261
Quality	Pearson Correlation	.123*	.121	.307**	-.010	.367**	1	.336**	-.279**	.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.048	.050	.000	.876	.000		.000	.000	.120
	N	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261
Refund	Pearson Correlation	.150*	-.120	.013	-.169**	.378**	.336**	1	-.078	-.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.052	.833	.006	.000	.000		.209	.628
	N	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261
Reputation	Pearson Correlation	.220**	.220**	-.056	-.260**	-.272**	-.279**	-.078	1	.093
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.365	.000	.000	.000	.209		.132
	N	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261
Layout	Pearson Correlation	.180**	.223**	.122*	.127*	-.001	.096	-.030	.093	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000	.049	.040	.984	.120	.628	.132	
	N	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261	261

Table showing the correlation and sigma (2-tailed) values of the store attributes. "\*" indicates Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) and "\*\*\*" indicates Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

An important implication of this study for retailers relates to their need to take into account the serious impact of store image and its relationship with store loyalty and store choice. Store satisfaction transforms

the implications of the image of the store and store image influences store loyalty through store satisfaction. This signifies that store loyalty is built through store satisfaction and that satisfaction is built among other things by store image. Consequently, retailers must ensure that the image of their store is as positive as possible in the eyes of its consumers; in other words, they must meet the expectations of customers regarding the store's image and personality.

Shopping for clothing involves making decisions about one's appearance and this reflects the attitude of the customers towards fashion in general and stores in particular (Tatzel, 1982). As per Belk (1988), clothing is linked to how consumers view themselves as part of their extended self, which ultimately increases one's total well being. Choice of clothing is considered a form of communication influenced by social norms, self-expressions and technology (Beck, 1985). If clothing retailers wish to meet the needs of their consumers, it is very important for them to create customer satisfaction.

In this, rapidly changing retail environment of today, constant monitoring of the store's image and appropriate adaptations to consumers in the target market is required. This should ultimately result in store loyalty. The strong impact of consumer proneness on satisfaction emphasizes that retailers cannot lose sight of the importance of consumer demographic characteristics in shaping store loyalty. Consumer relationship proneness refers to the *stable* tendency of a consumer to engage in relationships with retailers and can therefore be considered a part of the consumer's personality. Arons (1961) proposed a connection between a store that is 'agreeable' from the customer's point of view and the number of times the customer will visit the store within a given period. Based upon this connection, retailers must attempt to attract those consumers who possess a relatively stable and conscious tendency to engage in relationships with retailers in their particular product category.

Evaluating consumer attitudes toward their store's image therefore, can help retailers understand how to improve their retailing mix. By analyzing this process, retailers from any sector can take practical steps by formulating specific strategies for retailing success. However, a strategy designed to build an image based on these attributes alone is not enough. Customers must continue to perceive that the store really possesses these promised attributes based on their actual experiences with the store. After all, a retail store cannot sell its products unless the customer is in the store. Store Image analysis based on targeted market niches allows its modifications to better satisfy target customers wants. This also allows for the prioritization of managerial effort by identifying the relative importance of image attributes compared to other variables.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research paper intends to identify the (sector-specific) store image attributes and evaluate the strength and importance of the influence of each attribute on the purchase decision of Cypriot consumer in the clothing retail industry. Store image is considered one of the most important determinants of success (Amirani and Gates, 1993). However, understanding the right attribute that might be perceived by the individual consumer is also important to the retailer because this attribute can ultimately patronize the behavior. The retailer would benefit from identifying one or two important attributes as it facilitates the formulation of retailer strategies.

The collected data is analyzed using regression analysis. Eight store attributes are taken as independent variables and four demographic variables as dependent variables. The data is further subjected to one-way ANOVA and F-test. "t-values" for the attributes were used to assess the significance at both .05 and .01 levels. The data analysis shows that the respondents placed more importance on price followed by fashion and style. As regards to other dependent variables, gender has not shown any significance. Age showed some significance. Education did not show any significance and finally occupation showed some levels of significance. The current study identifies income as the most significant attribute in the selected

factors. This will help the retailers across Cyprus to design their strategies and other store related attributes to create and sustain customer loyalty.

**LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Product–market segmentation criteria was employed in this study, such as socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, but segmenting consumers according to the levels of their consumer relationship proneness may also be useful in determining whether this proneness influences store loyalty. Furthermore, this study investigated consumers of a clothing retail sector, as such; additional studies should determine and consider any differences between the composition and importance of store image attributes for different retailers in the same sector and in other sectors.

**APPENDIX**

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is made up of two sections. The first section is about your experience as a shopper. The second section asks questions about you, which will help us to classify the information you have given us. It should take you about 5 minutes to complete the whole questionnaire. We reassure you that ALL the information in this survey is confidential and completely anonymous.

Thank you for taking part and giving your time to complete this survey.

1. Did you buy any clothing from this retailer now? Yes No

2. Do you buy clothing from this retailer often?

This is the first visit  I visit once in few months   
 I visit often (say once in two months or so)

3. Do you wish to visit this clothing retailer again when you want to buy clothing?

Yes  No

**4. Please rate the extent to which you think the following attributes are important to you while you shop for your cloths.**

Store Image attributes	Not important	Somewhat important	Does not matter	Important	Very important
Layout and design of the shop interiors					
Dresses sold in the shop are fashionable and stylish					
Prices of the dresses in the shop					
Quality of the dresses sold in the shop					
The shop should have a wide range of merchandise					
The sales staff are professional and friendly					
The shop should have a good refund policy					
The shop is popular and many of my friends know about the shop					

5. Your Gender: Male  Female

6. Your Age: Less than 25 years  25 – 35 years  Above 35 years

7. Your Education: High school  Went to College  College Graduate

8. Your Occupation: Employee (both private and public services)   
 Business person   
 Professional (Doctor / Engineer / Advocate / Accountant etc)   
 Others (please tick this box if you do not identify with the above)

9. Please indicate your average monthly income:

Less than USD 1000 (500 CYP)   
 USD 1001 – 2000 (501 to 1000 CYP)   
 USD 2001 – 3000 (1001 to 1500 CYP)   
 More than USD 3000 (more than 1500 CYP)   
 Thank you for your time

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