Store attributes as drivers of store choice and loyalty: The female grocery shopper in Botswana

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role that convenience, merchandise, promotion, service, physical facilities and store atmosphere play as drivers of store choice and loyalty in Botswana. A sample of 160 female shoppers whose ages fall between 18 and 64 years residing in two of the largest cities in Botswana being Gaborone and Francistown was used. A structured questionnaire was personally administered to respondents from convenient locations such as shopping centres, the University and College campuses. Results show that convenience is the only store attribute that serves as a significant positive driver for both store choice and loyalty. Merchandise and store atmosphere emerged as significant positive drivers for store loyalty. Contrary to expectations, service yielded a significant negative effect on store choice. This study makes a contribution to the knowledge of female grocery shopping behaviour by studying an extensive list of store attributes in an under-studied context. Additionally, both store choice and loyalty are used for conceptualizing female grocery shopping behaviour while most of the available studies focus on each concept one at a time. The findings of this study could be useful for grocery retailers operating in developing countries as they seek ways to ensure competitive advantage in the retail marketplace that experiences radical change and intense competition.

Keywords: Female grocery shopper; Grocery shopping; Store attributes; Store choice; Store loyalty

INTRODUCTION

Convenience, merchandise, promotion, service, physical facilities and store atmosphere, have emerged as store attributes that grocery shoppers consider important when making decisions to choose (Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999; Tlapana, 2009; Zulqarnain, Zafar, and Shahzad, 2015) or to be loyal to a particular retail store (Hu, 2011; Yalcin and Kocamz, 2003). Knowledge from previous studies provides valuable insights on how foreign retailers in diverse markets can win the patronage of shoppers by using store attributes that are considered to be most important (Carpenter and Moore, 2006). Previous research (Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999; Tlapana, 2009; Hu, 2011; Zulqarnain, et al., 2015) has also demonstrated that the relative importance of store attributes perceived by shoppers vary among countries. However, studies that have focussed on samples of grocery shoppers in developing countries have concentrated on Asia (Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999; Jayasankaraprasad, Aryasri and Prasad, 2010; Hui, 2011; Zulgarnaian, Zafar and Shanzad, 2015), North America (Mesquita and Lara, 2007; Rajagopal, 2008) and South Africa (Tlapana, 2009).

Despite the fact that store attributes have been studied in South Africa, there has been no comparable academic interest in other countries in sub-Sahara Africa. Hattingh, Russo, Sun-Basorun, and Van Wamelen (2012) have

criticised the lack of commitment in uncovering unique differences in shopping patterns and habits across sub-Sahara Africa because it becomes extremely difficult for many companies to translate opportunities that exist in the region into action. Therefore, there is need to expand the geographical focus of studies that investigate store attributes and their effects on the behaviour of shoppers to other under-researched contexts in sub-Sahara Africa especially those that represent great opportunities for retailers. Developments occurring in the retail marketplace have been characterized by an increasing number of retail stores, large retail formats and multiple modern looking shopping centres across (Emongor and Kirsten, 2009; Phambuka-Nsimbi, Makgosa, Themba, and Iyanda, 2015). The large foreign retail formats offer new shopping experiences and increased expectations in store attributes such as product assortment, lower prices, better quality, new product display, superior customer service, extended shopping hours and new convenient forms of payments (Themba and Tumedi, 2012; Sangodoyin and Makgosa, 2014). Specifically, an investigation of the role that store attributes play on grocery shopping behaviour would help retailers in their efforts to design their retail mix, which could facilitate store choice or help to foster store loyalty (Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999; Carpenter and Moore, 2006).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to investigate the role of convenience, merchandise, promotion, service, physical facilities, and store atmosphere on store choice and loyalty among female grocery shoppers in Botswana.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grocery Retailing in Botswana

The decision to study the relationships between store attributes, choice and loyalty in the context of grocery retailing in Botswana was motivated by the recent developments that are occurring in the country because of the influx of foreign retailers. As in other countries in sub-Sahara Africa, the grocery retail sector in Botswana has experienced significant developments with the number of supermarkets, departmental stores and hypermarkets increasing considerably over the past decade (Emongor and Kirsten, 2009). More specifically, foreign retailers to sub-Sahara Africa have brought radical change in the grocery retail sector, in the form of modern and large retail formats, increased store outlets, brands, products as well as promotional activities (Tlapana, 2009; A.T. Kearny Report, 2015; Phambuka-Nsimbi, et al., 2015). Consequently, the consumption of groceries is a key driver of growth in the retail sector within the region. For example, according to the Deloitte report (2015), the grocery retail market in Southern Africa made a contribution of 55% of the total retail sales (US$128.5 billion) in 2013. The size of the grocery retail sector in Southern Africa was also estimated to be as much as 80% of retail trade, with supermarkets occupying between 50 to 60% of market size (Emongor and Kirsten, 2009).

As noted by Emongor and Kirsten (2009), the grocery retail sector in Botswana was once dominated by small family owned general dealers. Although some supermarkets were operational, they were few in number, relatively small in size and were more visible in major cities. However, the 1990s introduced modern retail formats such as supermarkets, specialty stores, chain stores, department stores, hypermarkets, discount stores, convenience stores, and franchises. For instance, Choppies enterprises Ltd is one of the locally owned supermarkets that has been rated as the fastest growing in Africa based on revenue and has existed since 1986 (Deloitte Report, 2015). The emergence of modern retail formats in towns, cities and major villages in Botswana has led to the establishment of modern shopping malls (Phambuka-Nsimbi et al., 2015). Modern shopping malls in Botswana are characterized by large retail outlets offering consumers a variety of products at competitive prices. The modern shopping malls have also exposed consumers in Botswana to new shopping experiences through the availability of physical facilities such as parking space, banks, rest rooms, food restaurants, entertainment areas as well as new shopping habits in terms of the use of point of sale scanning equipment, convenient modes of payment such as debit and credit cards and the general ambience when buying goods and services (Themba and Tumedi, 2012).

The expansion of global retailers within the grocery sector in Botswana is a result of the government's decision to relax restrictions on the inflow of foreign direct investment (Sangodoyin and Makgosa, 2014; A.T. Kearney, 2015). For instance, until recently, few foreign owned grocery retail establishments operated in Botswana and were mainly

of South African origin (e.g. Spar, Pick n Pay, Checkers, and Woolworths). Although South African retail chains still dominate the market, some major multinational retail corporations such as the United States retail giant Wal-Mart have now established operations in the country (http://corporate.walmart.com).

As foreign retailers exploit growth opportunities that exist in sub-Sahara Africa through their investment, competition has increased significantly (Hattingh, et al., 2012). When the retail environment becomes turbulent and competitive, retailers compete with each other on the basis of store attributes to win the patronage of shoppers (Grace and O'Cass, 2005; Carpenter and Moore, 2006). Shoppers are also confronted with complex decisions in terms of store choice, product or brand choice, choice of payment method and choice of ideal shopping hours as foreign retailers increase their marketing efforts to attract new shoppers while retaining existing ones (Leszczyc, Sinha, and Timmermans, 2000; Thang and Tan, 2002; Yalcin and Kocamaz, 2003). Thus, retailers particularly those that are new in sub-Sahara Africa are likely to increase their potential to succeed if they gain a good understanding of how shoppers respond to modern shopping experiences (Hattingh, et al., 2012).

From a theoretical perspective, this brings about the research question 'how do store attributes affect the behaviour of grocery shoppers as the retail environment of a developing country becomes turbulent and competitive? Research linking store attributes, choice and loyalty provides a good starting point for enriching knowledge of patronage behaviour (Carpenter and Moore, 2006; Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010). Timely and relevant information about the role of store attributes on store choice or loyalty also offers an adequate base for developing a marketing strategy in an increasingly turbulent and competitive environment (Mesquita and Lara, 2007; White and Absher, 2007; Hu, 2011; Prasad and Aryasri, 2011).

Grocery Shopping

Grocery shopping has been defined as a routine purchase decision that attracts a considerable amount of habitual and low involvement behaviour (Thomas and Garland, 2004; Mortimer and Weeks, 2011). However, there is no consensus in the conceptualization of grocery shopping within the literature of retailing. For example, three decision processes have been considered to be critical in the conceptualization of grocery shopping including the timing of the shopping trip, store choice, and the average expenditure in each trip (Leszczyc, Sinha, and Timmermans, 2000). In a study by Hu (2011), shopping frequency, average expenditure on each trip and loyalty were used to conceptualize grocery shopping. Although there are numerous dimensions that are often associated with grocery shopping, the current study focussed on store choice and loyalty. Attracting new customers and retaining existing ones are important retail outcomes in the face of escalating competition (Rhee and Bell, 2002; Thang and Tan, 2002; Hu, 2011). More importantly, the ultimate goal of any business is to establish a loyal customer base in order to ensure increased sales and consistent profitability in the long term (Grace and O'Cass, 2005; Jones and Taylor, 2007).

Grocery shopping has been viewed as a domain for women in most societies (Goodman, 2008; Steiner, 2000), who control almost 80% of the household spending (Chopra, 2014). For example, in a consumer research study conducted by PLMA (2013) in the United States it was reported that three out of four women do more than 50% of the shopping for their households while two out of three do about 75% or more of the household shopping. The study further revealed that an insignificant proportion of about one in four women indicated that they get some help with the shopping from others on a routine basis. However, a relatively lower proportion of 16% agreed that others contribute as much as they do or more to household shopping. Similarly, in another study about grocery shopping trends, conducted in the United States, 76% of the female respondents claimed that they do all or most of the grocery shopping compared to 57% of the male respondents (FMI, U.S Grocery Shopping Trends, 2014). Other studies have also confirmed that there are significant differences between male and female shoppers in grocery shopping (Carpenter and Moore, 2006; Goodman, 2008; Hu, 2011; Mortimer and Weeks, 2011). For instance, women were found to shop more than men in China (Hu, 2011) and the United States (Carpenter and Moore, 2006). It was also found that 17% of all women compared with 10% of men do grocery shopping in a typical day and women account for nearly two-thirds of all grocery shoppers (Goodman, 2008). Consequently, most studies on grocery shopping continue to focus on the behaviour of female consumers (Chopra, 2014; Steiner, 2000), and this is the approach utilized in this study.

Store Choice

Store choice has been conceptualised on the basis of a single dimension being the selection of a particular store format (Leszczyc, et al., 2000; Prasad and Aryasri, 2011) or two dimensions being the frequency at which shoppers buy groceries for the households as well as the frequency at which they buy groceries from speciality stores, supermarkets, supercentres, warehouse clubs and internet-based grocers (Carpenter and Moore, 2006). The latter perspective has been utilized in other related studies (Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999; Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010; Hu, 2011). In this current study, store choice is described on the basis of three dimensions being the grocery store format selected, the frequency at which a shopper goes shopping in general and the frequency at which a shopper purchases at a particular retail store.

The decision about where to shop and how frequent shoppers buy from a particular retail store are important aspects of store choice. As noted by previous studies (Leszczyc, et al., 2000; Rhee and Bell 2002), although customers often frequent many retail stores, they typically have a primary store from which they do most of their shopping. For instance, a majority of grocery shoppers in India were involved in cross-shopping that resulted in patronage of multiple stores (Prasad and Aryasri, 2011). However, the supermarket store format emerged as the most selected retail format. Hu (2011) also revealed that consumers form impressions about the type of store to purchase from, which have a significant influence on the frequency at which they shop at that particular store.

Store Loyalty

There is no standard or universally agreed upon conceptualization of store loyalty. Store loyalty has been conceptualized on the basis of two perspectives being behavioural and attitudinal characteristics. Attitudinal loyalty emphasizes a consumer's identification with a particular service provider and preference of a product or service over other alternatives (Jones and Taylor, 2007). Behavioural loyalty pertains to a customer's past purchase activities in the same store, the possibility of future repeat purchases, and frequency of repeat purchase (Powers and Valentine, 2008). Behavioural loyalty was also described in terms of intention to repeat shopping and the habit of shopping at a particular store (Mesquita and Lara, 2007). Emphasising the behavioural perspective, Grace and O' Cass, (2005), have suggested that store loyalty can be achieved through obtaining positive consumers' intentions to continue purchasing at a particular store, stimulating positive word of mouth and repeat patronage. For the purpose of this study store loyalty has been conceptualized in terms of the behavioural characteristics.

Perceived Importance of Store Attributes in Grocery Shopping

The area of which store attributes are perceived as important by grocery shoppers when choosing a particular retail store has attracted a great deal of academic interest. The presence of certain store attributes reflects store image (Hu, 2011), which influences patronage behaviour and the ability of the store to attract or retain shoppers (Thang and Tan, 2002; Hyllegard, Ogle and Dunbar, 2006). For example, Carpenter and Moore (2006) found that cleanliness was the only most important store attribute considered by shoppers in the United States across four grocery retail formats being speciality stores, supermarkets, warehouse clubs, and supercentres. Product selection was considered as the second most important store attribute by shoppers of speciality stores, supermarkets, and warehouse clubs while price competitiveness was the second most important attribute for supercentres. Hu (2011) found that Chinese consumers attach great importance on three attributes being service, price and store environment when making a decision to choose a grocery retail store. A study that focused on South African grocery shoppers described store appearance, merchandise quality, atmosphere, in-store service and accessibility as important attributes that affected the image of convenience stores in Kwa Mashu area (Tlapana, 2009). Moreover, location and service emerged as vital store attributes in the choice of a particular departmental store in Malaysia more than merchandise, price, physical facilities, promotion and store atmosphere (Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999).

Other related studies conducted in developing countries such as India (Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010), Pakistan (Zulqarnain, et al., 2015), Brazil (Mesquita and Lara, 2007) and Mexico (Rajagopal, 2008) consistently studied the degree of importance that grocery shoppers attach to store attributes when making decisions to choose a particular

store. However, the literature lacks consistency in terms of the coverage of store attributes and findings pertaining to the most important attribute in grocery shopping. This provides a compelling reason for expanding knowledge to other contexts that have been rarely studied. It is particularly important because retailers cannot afford to assume that what is perceived to be important in one developing country will be considered important in another country. This view-point was also stressed by Phambuka-Nsimbi et al., (2015) who argued that trends that take place in the retail sector differ significantly across developing countries. Furthermore, Purushottam (2011) reflected that a country's economic environment affects the relative importance of store attributes perceived by shoppers.

Although the coverage of the store attributes differs across studies, attributes such as convenience, merchandise, promotion, service, physical facilities and store atmosphere have been widely used, which provides the basis for using them in the current study. By concentrating on store attributes that have been commonly studied, this study provides a significant step towards minimizing inconsistency, which has a great potential to erode the ability to generalize the most important store attribute that affects store choice or loyalty.

Store Attributes, Choice and Loyalty: The Relationships

Store attributes have been considered as important drivers of store choice or loyalty in grocery retailing. Specifically, location emerged as the only store attribute that was a significant predictor of store choice across all the departmental stores studied in Malaysia (Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999). The effects of other five variables being merchandise, price, physical facilities, promotion and service varied based on a particular departmental store. In addition, although service, price and store atmosphere attracted the highest levels of perceived importance, merchandise, congeniality and advertisement effectiveness were found to be significant predictors of store loyalty in China while store choice was significantly affected by congeniality (Hu, 2011). Other store attributes such as service, price, store atmosphere and salespeople's quality did not reveal any significant effects on either store choice or loyalty. Accessibility, merchandise, promotion, store atmosphere, reputation and in store service were found to significantly contribute to consumer preference of grocery stores in Singapore (Thang and Tan, 2002). However, the effects of physical facilities and post-transaction service on consumer preference of grocery stores were insignificant. There is no consensus with regard to which store attributes affect store choice or loyalty across countries. In particular, Pan and Zinkhan, (2006) noted that there are significant differences in the direction and strength of the effects of store attributes across studies. In this study, the focus is on how convenience, merchandise, promotion, service, physical facilities and store atmosphere influence store choice and loyalty in Botswana. This approach will facilitate a comparison of the predictors of store choice and loyalty.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Convenience is often regarded as a multi-dimensional concept including location, accessibility, opening hours, one stop shopping and availability of parking spaces (Tlapana, 2009; Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010). Grocery stores that were easily accessible or located near bus stops, subway stations or traffic congested areas in Singapore were more likely to be preferred over the less convenient ones (Thang and Tan, 2002). Findings from a study conducted in India by Jayasankaraprasad, et al., (2010) indicated that convenience in terms of store location and accessibility had a significant influence on store choice. Similarly, a study carried out in Malaysia showed that most respondents identified location as an important attribute in choosing a store in all four retail stores that were investigated (Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999). Another study in Turkey by Yalcin and Kocamaz (2003) revealed that there is a positive relationship between convenience and store loyalty. Thus, it was hypothesized that:

H_1: The perceived importance grocery shoppers attach to convenience will have significant positive effects on (a) store choice and (b) store loyalty.

Merchandise covers multiple dimensions such as merchandise quality, price and assortment (Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010; Zulqarnain, et al., 2015). A good merchandise mix increases the ability of a retail store to meet the needs of grocery shoppers (Thang and Tan, 2002). Moreover, merchandise selection, quality and value were found to be

the most influential store attributes in consumer's choice of a supermarket in India (Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010). A study from China by Hu (2011) revealed that respondents displayed greater store loyalty when they perceived that the store offered higher merchandise quality. Thus it was hypothesized that:

H_2: The perceived importance grocery shoppers attach to merchandise will have significant positive effects on (a) store choice and (b) store loyalty.

Promotion which entails such activities as everyday low pricing of products and services, visible products on sale, advertisements and sale promotions can significantly affect a consumer's behaviour (Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010). For example, Jayasankaraprasad, et al., (2010)'s findings indicated that promotional activities such as competitive prices, special sale offers, in-store promotions, redemption of discount coupons have a significant influence on store choice in India. In a study of Malaysian retail stores, Jantan and Kamaruddin (1999) also found that promotion played an important role in customer store preference. In another study that examined different mall sizes in Mexico, it was found that sales promotions attracted higher customer traffic for large retailers while price and sales promotion influenced customer loyalty in small to medium size malls (Rajagopal, 2008). Hence, it was hypothesised that:

H_3: The perceived importance grocery shoppers attach to promotional activities will have significant positive effects on (a) store choice and (b) store loyalty.

Store service often includes friendliness of sales personnel, easy return purchase policy, product knowledge of sales personnel, availability of credit on goods and services (Hu, 2011; Purushottam, 2011). Good store service influences consumers' decisions regarding store choice (Zeithaml, 1988) and translates into stronger preference for the stores (Thang and Tan, 2002). Waiting for a service in a retail environment is an experience that can lead to consumer dissatisfaction (Katz, Larson and Larson, 1991). It was observed that customers terminated the purchase process because check-out lines were too long or sales assistance was inadequate (Grewal, Baker, Levy and Vos, 2003). A study in Malaysia concluded that service plays an important role in both store choice and preference (Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999). In their study Jayasankaraprasad, et al., (2010) also found that in India, customer service had a significant influence on store choice. Hence, it was hypothesized that:

H_4: The perceived importance grocery shoppers attach to service will have significant positive effects on (a) store choice and (b) store loyalty.

Physical facilities have been described in terms of store design and layout, washrooms, store ventilation, elevators and architecture (Tlapana, 2009). Store layout and design were found to be important physical aspects that influence store traffic, overall store atmosphere and consumer purchase decisions (Vrechopoulos, O'Keefe, Doukidis, and Siomkos, 2004). However, in a study conducted in South Africa, Tlapana (2009) found that floor space, ventilation systems and design have no statistically significant relationship with store choice. Following earlier findings, it was hypothesized that:

H_5: The perceived importance grocery shoppers attach to physical facilities will have significant positive effects on (a) the store choice (b) store loyalty.

Store atmosphere refers to the general surrounding created by the use of colour, lighting, music, scent and temperature (Hyllegard, et al., 2006; Nell, 2013). Several studies in developing countries reached a conclusion that although store atmosphere is among the important store attributes, its influence is not very significant particularly in store choice but it appears to be important in influencing store loyalty. For example, in his study conducted in South Africa, Tlapana (2009) found that there was no significant relationship between appropriate lighting and store choice. In a study based on Malaysian retail stores, Jantan and Kamaruddin (1999), eight attributes were investigated namely

location, merchandise, price, physical facilities, promotion and advertising, store atmosphere and service. Store atmosphere did not appear in any of the retail stores as among the attributes that respondents considered to be essential when selecting a store (Jantan and Kamaruddin, 1999). In regard to the influence of store atmosphere on store loyalty, Thang and Tan (2003) showed that store atmosphere has a significant positive effect on overall preference of the store. Similarly, a study in Turkey demonstrated that store atmosphere in terms of lighting and scent significantly and positively affects store loyalty (Yalcin and Kocamaz, 2003). It was hypothesized that:

> H_6: The perceived importance grocery shoppers attach to store atmosphere will have significant positive effects on (a) store choice and (b) store loyalty.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF FEMALE GROCERY SHOPPING

The model presented as Figure 1 proposes that six store attributes — convenience, merchandise, promotion, service, physical facilities and store atmosphere are drivers of store choice and loyalty.

FIGURE 1:
PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF FEMALE GROCERY SHOPPING
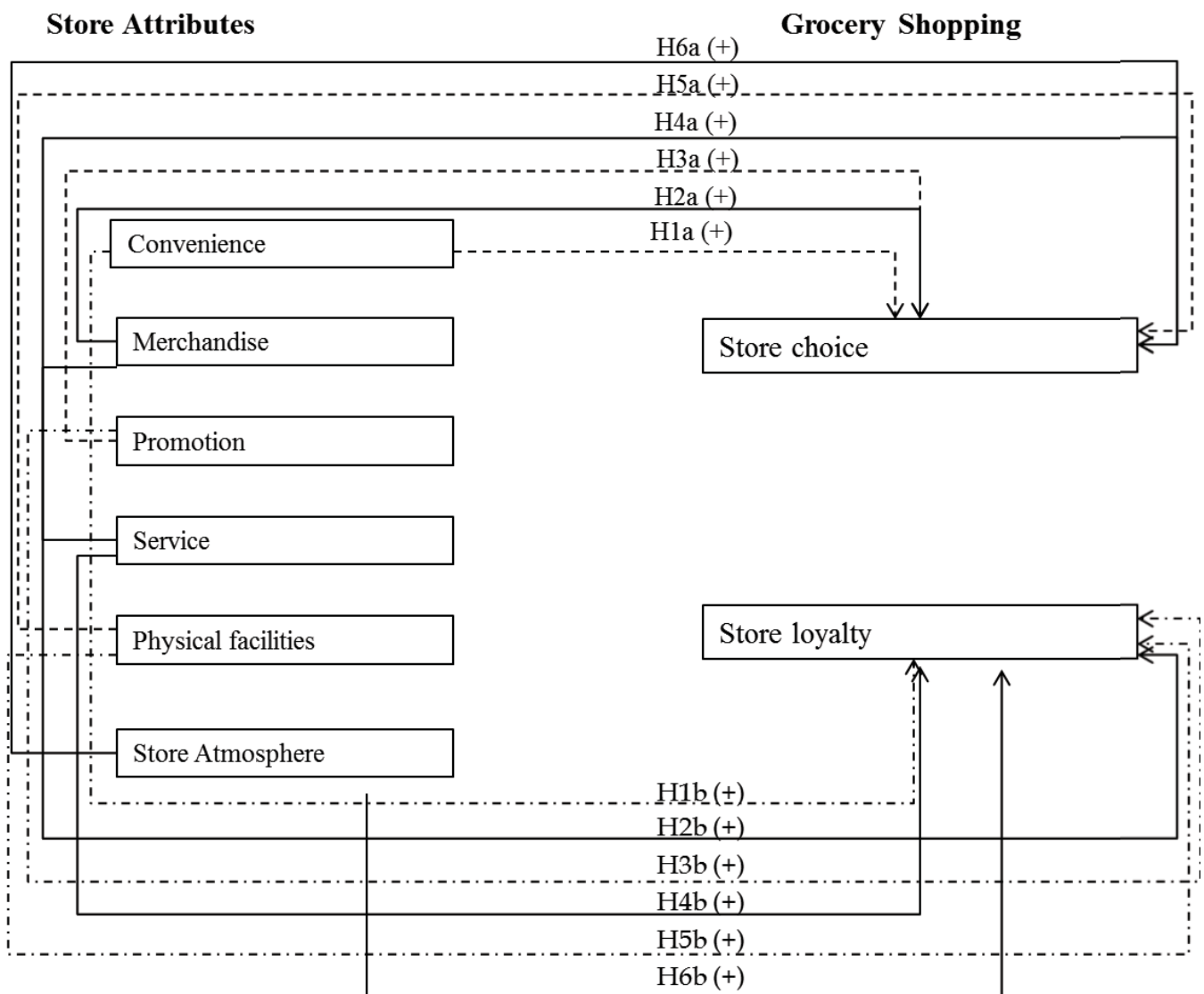
METHODOLOGY

A survey research design in the form of a structured questionnaire was used in this study. The sample unit consisted of female retail shoppers aged 18 to 64 years who reside in two of the largest cities in Botswana being, Gaborone and Francistown. According to the Population and Housing Census (2011), Gaborone has the highest population of 202 000 with 8 malls in total, each mall comprising numerous retail stores. Francistown is the second largest city in Botswana with a population of 100 079 with 9 malls. The focus on cities is not only unique to this study because previous studies that focused on grocery shopping used samples drawn from cities (Zulqarnain, et al., 2015; Purushottam, 2011; Yalcin and Kocamaz, 2003).

In order to investigate the behaviour of female grocery shoppers in Botswana, the research focused on those who have purchased from grocery retail stores in Gaborone or Francistown in the last 12 months. Previous studies were reviewed for insight about the ideal sample size that could be used in this study. The use of non-statistical considerations when determining sample sizes is common in marketing because sampling frames of grocery shoppers are truly not accessible. For instance, in their study conducted in Malaysia, Jantan and Kamaruddin (1999) had a sample size of 100 with female respondents represented by two thirds of the total sample, (n=67). Tlapana (2009) utilized a sample size of 400 respondents, with female respondents represented by 63.5 % (n =254). A study conducted in Pakistan by Zulqarnain, et al., (2015) consisted of a sample of 150 respondents, where female represented 53% (n=80). Considering that Botswana has a relatively small population compared with some of the countries featured in the selected studies and that this current study is based on female respondents, a targeted sample size of 200 was deemed sufficient for the research.

Data was collected through structured questionnaires, which were administered in person by one of the researchers to female shoppers who were intercepted in one mall in each location, University student centre in Gaborone and two colleges in Francistown in March 2015. Respondents were allowed to participate voluntarily and assured that their participation is anonymous and confidential.

Three (3) items that were used to measure store choice were adapted from Carpenter and Moore (2006). The measures focused on selection of store format, frequency of shopping in general and the frequency of store selection. The frequency of shopping in general and store selection was anchored on five point scale where 1 = never and 5 = always. Six (6) items were used to measure store loyalty and a five point Likert scale where 1 = very unlikely and 5 = most likely was adapted from Grace and O'Cass (2005). A total of 27 items were used to measure the six store attributes selected in this study. The 27 items were drawn from various sources as follows: 5 items were used to measure convenience (Tlapana, 2009; Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010), physical facilities (Tlapana, 2009) and store atmosphere (Thang and Tan, 2002; Hyllegard et al., 2006). Six (6) items were used for service (Mesquita and Lara, 2007; Carpenter and Moore, 2006) while promotion and merchandise (Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010; Zulqarnain, et al., 2015) were each measured by 3 items. The items were anchored on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = not at all important and 5 = extremely important. The questionnaire also included questions on demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, marital status, occupation, education, family size and income.

Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the demographic characteristics of respondents. Reliability tests were performed on the data before applying linear regression analysis. Linear regression analysis was used to examine the effects of store attributes on store choice and loyalty.

RESULTS

Demographic profile of the respondents

A total of 160 useable responses out of the targeted 200 were achieved. As shown in Table 1, female aged between 18 and 30 years had the highest representation in the sample at 75%. The sample was also represented by the single female (n = 122) accounting for 78%. The results show that a majority of the female respondents had acquired a degree (n = 87; 55%). A family size of 4-6 people was common among the respondents, accounting for 48.1% of all the responses. More than half of the respondents had relatively lower earnings within the income bracket of between BWP1, 000 to BWP4, 000.

TABLE 1:

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE OF FEMALE SHOPPERS (N=160)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-30	120	76
30-40	27	17
40-50	10	6
50-64	1	1
Total	158	100
Marital status		
Married	28	18
Widow	7	4
Single	122	78
Total	157	100
Occupation		
Paid employment	16	10
Unemployed	20	13
Self-employed	9	6
Retired	5	3
Student	105	68
Total	155	100
Education		
PLSE level	2	1
JC level	11	7
BGCE level	22	14
Diploma	26	16
Degree	87	55
Postgraduate	11	7
Total	159	100
Family size		
1-3	53	34
4-6	77	49
7 and more	26	17
Total	156	100
Monthly household income (BWP)		
Less than 1000	28	18
1000-4000	87	56
4000-8000	17	11
More than 8000	24	15
Total	156	100

Grocery Shopping among Female Shoppers

The results presented in Table 2 reflect that a majority (83%) of female respondents do their grocery shopping at Supermarkets. Almost half of the female respondents (42%) shop for groceries often. Further results revealed that 41% of the female respondents shop once a month.

TABLE 2:
GROCERY SHOPPING AMONG FEMALE SHOPPERS

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Choice of Grocery Store Format		
Wholesale	16	10
Supermarket	132	84.3
General Dealer	9	5.7
Total	157	100
Frequency of store selection in general		
Never	0	0
Rarely	12	7.5
Occasionally	37	23.1
Often	66	41.3
Always	45	28.1
Total	160	100
Frequency of Purchase in a particular Retail Store		
Twice a week	42	26.4
Once a week	49	30.8
Once in a Month	65	40.9
Once in six months	3	1.9
Total	159	100

Hypotheses Testing

Prior to testing for hypotheses specified in this study, items inter-correlations and reliability with Cronbach Alpha were assessed for the concepts that were measured using multiple items. As evident from Table 3, all six store attributes being convenience, merchandise, promotion, service, physical facilities and store atmosphere as well as store loyalty achieved acceptable reliability scores which were equal to or more than $\alpha = .70$ (Nunnally, 1978). The Cronbach alpha scores were as follows: convenience ($\alpha = .70$); merchandise ($\alpha = .70$); promotion ($\alpha = .70$); service ($\alpha = .70$); physical facilities ($\alpha = .75$); store atmosphere ($\alpha = .78$) and store loyalty ($\alpha = .81$).

The final corrected item-total correlations for all the variables were higher than the acceptable minimum of .30 (Bryman and Cramer, 1990). To achieve this, three

items were deleted as follows: for convenience – the item 'parking facilities are available' was deleted; the item 'availability of products at lower prices' was deleted under promotion and 'availability of credit on goods and services' was deleted under service. There was no need to delete any other item as variables exhibited an acceptable reliability score of α= .70.

The means representing the perceived importance levels of the various store attributes were interpreted. The results indicate that female shoppers appear to attach great importance to merchandise (Mean = 4.25; SD = .90), which was measured through good quality and assorted merchandise. Convenience (Mean = 3.97; SD = 1.03) and service (Mean = 3.95; SD = 1.10) also achieved high ratings in terms of their perceived importance levels. In particular, female grocery shoppers perceived accessibility and flexible opening hours as more important measures of convenience. The visibility of products on sale was considered to be important as far as promotion is concerned while the friendliness and knowledge possessed by the salespeople as well as ease of return on purchase policy were considered more important for service. However, store atmosphere (mean = 3.75; SD = 1.11) and physical facilities (Mean = 3.56; SD = 1.11) recorded the lowest ratings. For physical facilities, store ventilation was more important while adequate lighting was more important as a measure of store atmosphere. On average store loyalty was moderate with means of the items ranging from 3.71 to 3.85, just below 4, which represent likely on a five point scale. The item that scored the highest represents intentions to say positive things about the retail store.

TABLE 3:
DIMENSIONALITY AND RELIABILITY OF STORE ATTRIBUTES AND LOYALTY

Variables	Cronbach Alpha if item deleted	Corrected item-total correlation	MEAN (SD)
Convenience (α = .70)			3.97 (1.04)
Convenient store location	.65	.46	3.89 (1.04)
Convenient accessibility	.61	.53	4.07 (.98)
Convenient opening hours	.55	.62	4.11 (1.01)
One-stop shopping convenience	.73	.35	3.81 (1.11)
Merchandise (α = .70)			4.25 (.90)
Availability of good quality merchandise	.41	.53	4.27 (.94)
Availability of wider selection of merchandise	.37	.53	4.23 (.86)
Promotion (α = .70)			3.82 (1.12)
Everyday low pricing of products and services	.60	.54	3.51 (1.32)
Visibility/ indications of products on sale (signs)	.66	.47	4.04 (.97)
Frequency of special sale promotional offers	.55	.56	3.90 (1.07)
Service (α = .70)			3.95 (1.10)
Friendliness of sales personnel	.63	.49	4.25 (1.04)
Product knowledge of sales personnel	.60	.55	4.23 (1.00)
Availability of credit on goods and services	.69	.36	3.51 (1.25)
Offering personalized services	.62	.51	3.65 (1.16)
Easy return purchase policy	.68	.36	4.10 (1.06)
Physical facilities (α = .75)			3.56 (1.23)
Store design and layout	.76	.36	3.89 (1.08)
Availability of washrooms/ bathrooms	.66	.64	3.43 (1.42)
Store ventilation	.76	.37	4.28 (.86)
Elevators	.67	.62	2.97 (1.48)
Store is stylish and fashionable (architecture)	.66	.63	3.37 (1.31)
Store atmosphere (α = .78)			3.75 (1.11)
The store has an appealing colour	.76	.50	3.36 (1.16)
The music played in the store	.77	.48	3.15 (1.28)
The pleasantness of scents	.71	.64	3.92 (1.11)
The temperature of the store	.72	.64	4.21 (.90)
The bright lighting (visibility of in store products)	.74	.57	4.12 (1.09)

Variables	Cronbach Alpha if item deleted	Corrected item-total correlation	MEAN (SD)
Store Loyalty (α = .81)			3.76 (.98)
I intend to continue to do shopping at this store.	.79	.54	3.76 (.91)
I intend to use the store for more grocery needs in the next twelve months.	.80	.47	3.71 (.96)
I intend to recommend the store to friends.	.77	.59	3.72 (1.01) I
intend to say positive things about the store.	.77	.59	3.85 (.91)
I intend to consider the store the first choice from which to do shopping.	.77	.60	3.77 (1.04)
I intend to encourage friends/ relatives to do shopping from this store.	.77	.62	3.78 (1.05)

To test for the specified hypotheses, multiple linear regression analysis (enter method) were used. In order to perform these tests, means representing each store attribute with multiple items were computed and used, while for store choice the raw scores of store selection frequency were used.

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis presented in Table 4 show that convenience is the only store attribute that has positive and statistically significant effects on both store choice (B = .26; t = 2.39; p = .02) and loyalty (B = .19; t = 2.58; p = .01). The results indicate that female shoppers who perceived convenience to be an important store attribute were more likely to depict higher levels of store choice and loyalty. Thus, H1a and H1b were supported. Merchandise (B= 21; t = 2.83; p = .01) and store atmosphere (B = .14; t = 1.81; p = .07) recorded positive and significant effects on loyalty while their effects on store choice were insignificant. The results suggest that female shoppers who perceived merchandise and store atmosphere as important were more likely to display high levels of loyalty. Thus, H2b and H6b were supported while H2a and H6a were not. Further results indicate that promotion and physical facilities did not have any statistically significant effects on store choice and loyalty. Thus, H3a, H3b, H5a and H5b were not supported. Contrary to expectations the results show a negative relationship between service and store choice (B = -.28; t = 2.05, p = .04), while the proposed effect on loyalty was insignificant. This means that H4a and H4b were not supported.

TABLE 4:
STORE ATTRIBUTES, CHOICE AND LOYALTY

Hypotheses	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables					
		Store Choice (a)			Store Loyalty (b)		
		B	t	Sig.	B	t	Sig.
H1	Convenience	.26	2.39	.02	.19	2.58	.01
H2	Merchandise	.04	.41	.69	.20	2.83	.01
H3	Promotion	.06	.70	.49	.07	1.10	.27
H4	Service	-.28	-2.05	.04	.12	1.28	.20
H5	Physical facilities	-.05	-.40	.69	-.03	-.337	.74
H6	Store atmosphere	.14	1.30	.20	.14	1.81	.07

Notes: Standardized Beta (B)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results demonstrated that a typical female shopper in Botswana chooses to shop for groceries monthly or twice within a week in a supermarket and had moderate store loyalty. The female grocery shopper perceived store merchandise as the most important store attribute, which was followed by convenience and service. These findings correspond to numerous previous studies that indicated that the importance of store attributes vary across developing countries (Tlapana, 2009; Yalcin and Kocamaz, 2003; Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010; Purushottam 2011; Hu, 2011; Zulqarnain, et al., 2015). Although store merchandise emerged as the most important store attribute, it is convenience

in terms of accessibility and flexible operating hours that positively and significantly shaped the frequency at which female grocery shoppers choose a particular retail store. The female grocery shopper would frequent a particular retail store even when she was aware that levels of customer service in terms of friendly and knowledgeable salespeople as well as ease of returning goods were poor as represented by a significant and negative effect that was linked to frequency of store selection. This is contrary to previous studies that have confirmed a positive and significant effect of service on store choice in other developing countries (Jayasankaraprasad, et al., 2010; Purushottam, 2011). The store loyalty that the female grocery shopper exhibited was most likely to increase when a retail store is perceived to be offering more convenience, good mix of quality merchandise and good store atmosphere. These findings are consistent with those in past studies that have shown that some store attributes play an important role in shaping store loyalty in other developing countries (Yalcin and Kocamaz, 2003; Mesquita and Lara, 2007; Rajagopal, 2008).

This study contributes to the literature on retail marketing by providing comprehensive information in terms of the relative importance of store attributes and their effects on store choice and loyalty in the context of grocery retailing in a developing country. This study also provides insights on matters of targeting and positioning in grocery retailing. An understanding of the role of store attributes as triggers of aspects of grocery shopping behaviour would help marketers in developing effective marketing strategies that meet the needs and wants of the female grocery shopper. For instance, although store merchandise was the most important attribute, it is convenience that positively and significantly affects store choice. As a result, retailers should be particularly cautious of the location of their stores, ensure accessibility and convenient opening hours. The same goes for foreign investors looking to expand into the grocery retail business in Botswana. Efforts to retain customers, should bundle convenience aspects together with merchandise and store atmosphere. One of the unexpected outcomes of the study was how service quality had a negative and significant impact on frequency of store selection. This is an opportunity for retailers to improve their service quality that could translate to increased customer satisfaction, customer retention and competitive advantage.

There are some limitations worth mentioning as they could affect the generalizability of the findings. A relatively small convenience sample of female shoppers was used as such findings cannot be generalized to the entire population. In the future, a larger sample which is more representative should be used which will help in further exploring the role of store attributes and demographics. In conclusion, this study reflects the role of retail store attributes in influencing female grocery shopping behaviour in the context of a developing country in an era of rapid change and intense competition in the retail sector.

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