

Navigating on the antecedents that influence store patronage, apparel purchase decision and store attachment among the Generation Y cohort

Dr ET Maziriri

*Marketing Division
School of Economic and Business Sciences
University of the Witwatersrand*

eugine.maziriri@wits.ac.za

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8047-4702>

Dr T Chuchu

*Department of Marketing Management
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
University of Pretoria*

tinashe.chuchu@up.ac.za

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7325-8932>
*Corresponding author

Mr NW Madinga

*Section of Marketing School of
Management Studies University of
Cape Town*

nkosivile.madinga@uct.ac.za

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4026-7423>

ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the influence of store reputation, social influence, store atmospherics and store convenience on store patronage and apparel purchase decision on store attachment among the Generation Y female cohort in Johannesburg, South Africa. The aim of the study is to identify which independent variable is the most effective at influencing store patronage behaviour and apparel purchase decision and whether this, in turn, will lead to store attachment. This has been undertaken through a quantitative analysis of participants' responses. Additionally, the premise of this study is that Generation Y whom are obsessed with fashion have a significant purchasing power, yet studies on store attachment on young South African females remain limited. Upon examination of the questionnaire results, it was found that most of the latent variables have a positive relationship with each other. However, store patronage behaviour emerged as having the strongest relationship with apparel purchase decision, suggesting that female Generation Y consumers strongly consider which store they purchase their apparel from. In conducting this study, the results highlight the importance of continued research in the field of store patronage and store attachment as a means of reaching a lucrative segment such as Generation Y female South Africans.

Keywords: Apparel stores, patronage, purchase decision, attachment

In today's contemporary business environment, apparel retailers are interested in determining the different factors that enhance customers to patronise their stores to ultimately become attached. Mokoena and Maziriri (2017:157) "Generation Y female students are faced with an observing procedure of choosing the ideal apparel retail store to be loyal to and from which to purchase dress items".

The hidden conclusions concerning how and why individuals shop has dependably been a point of study. Du Preez and Visser (2003) express that the apparel industry in South Africa is huge, capital driven and particularly concentrated, likewise female shopping behaviour inside the South African clothing setting is an unpredictable no wonder given the multicultural shopper society. Generation Y being the children of the age X have been associated as far as family, school and broad communications into devouring sooner than past ages (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). Generation Y additionally have a noteworthy buying power as per Bakewell and Mitchell (2003) whom are fixated on style (Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017) and are available to new thoughts and ideas identifying with conspicuous shopping behaviour. In any case, Kim and Jang (2014) include that they are likewise status seeking for purchasers. In this manner, in accordance with Valaei and Nikhashemi (2017) Generation Y shoppers are an essential generation cohort for design or fashion related purchases.

Bakewell et al. (2003) further include that female shopping patterns state how females appreciate the shopping procedure, investing a great deal of time and mental vitality into their shopping. It is not unexpected to find that

shopping is viewed as leisure time generally for females. Giovannini, Xu and Thomas (2015) clarifies that for the Generation Y populace, extravagance is an unmistakable and is unquestionably not seen as a benefit but rather more of a right. Due to their high level of self-esteem and exceptionally high level of brand consciousness, Generation Y's who originate from college students and becoming established in the workforce settle on acquiring choices dependent on the supposition of their companions (Giovannini, Xu & Thomas, 2015).

Deducing from the discussion on the significance of apparel consumption among the Generation Y cohort, it is important to take note of that, while many research examines have concentrated on Generation Y customers and students specifically (Thompson, Ellis, Soni & Paterson, 2018; Akpojivi & Bevan-Dye, 2015; Bevan-Dye, Garnett & De Klerk, 2012; Koutras 2006), there is meagre research on studies that have concentrated on the effect of store reputation, social influence, store atmospherics and convenience as well as how these factors directly influence store patronage behaviour and apparel purchasing decision, ultimately leading to store attachment among Generation Y female student consumers. Previous research has examined Generation Y in various contexts by focusing on consumer shopping styles (Mandhlazi, Dhurup, & Mafini, 2013:154), impulsive fashion apparel consumption (Dhurup, 2014), Generation Y students' attitude towards online shopping (Makhitha, 2014) African Generation Y male students' fashion consciousness behaviour (Motale, Bevan-Dye & De Klerk, 2014) and innovation and risk-taking propensity of Generation Y students in South Africa (Koloba & May, 2014).

Along these lines, it tends to be noticed that there is an absence of studies that have determined the antecedents that influence store patronage, apparel purchase decision and store attachment among the Generation Y female student consumers and the fundamental motivation behind this investigation is to fill this gap. This investigation is likewise imperative in that its results might be used to help marketers and retailers to develop and implement strategies that will ultimately make Generation Y female students approach their apparel retail stores.

This article pursues a set structure. To start with, this examination is put into context. Secondly, the theoretical framework underlying this study is displayed, accordingly prompting the development of research hypotheses. Thirdly, the research design and methodology section follow. Finally, the findings, discussion and a conclusion are presented.

Rationale and Importance of Selecting Young Adult Generation Y Female consumers

This section outlines the examination's setting by giving a short foundation about Generation Y female buyers. According to Aliman, Ariffin and Hashim (2018), Generation Y, are known as the Millennials or echo-boomers. Furthermore, Archana and Heejin (2008) consider Generation Y consumers to be individuals born between 1980 and 1994, while Kapoor and Solomon (2011) define Generation Y as youths who were born between 1980 and 1999. Additionally, Inseng (2019) notes that Generation Y (Gen Y) females love shopping. Precisely, females, especially in the Gen Y cohort, tend to shop and spend their money on what they love, such as clothing, shoes, makeup, jewellery and DVDs (Inseng, 2019). Beaudoin, Lachance and Robitaille (2003:23) argue that "regardless of age, females play a significantly greater role in comparison to males in the process of fashion diffusion". From the aforementioned elucidations, it can be observed that Generation Y female consumers hold particular relevance in the retailing environment as well as in academia. The subsequent section is centred on the theoretical framework of the study.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Firstly, the social identity theory is adopted as the theoretical lens in this research. Secondly, the authors identified the Shim and Kotsiopoulos (1992) patronage model as a theoretical model that could serve as a point of departure to investigate the nexus between the variables under investigation. Lastly, the authors also identified the interpersonal attachment theory pioneered by Bowlby (1980) as the theoretical grounding of this study.

The social identity theory (SIT)

"SIT arose after several decades of academic inquiry into the association between the individual and society together with the growth of an individual's personal and social identities" (Baker, 2012:129). The pioneer of SIT was

Henri Tajfel who published several studies concerning group processes. According to Tajfel and Turner (1986:33), "social identity is well-defined as the aspects of a person's self-image that are derived from the social categories to which he perceives himself as fitting". "SIT defines how group affiliations have the ability to stimulate individual behaviours" (Tajfel & Turner 1986:33). Cunniff and Mostert (2012:4) point out that the theory of social identity proposes that, in order for people to achieve positive self-images, they use the process of categorisation. They categorise other people into 'in' or 'out' groups, where they are members of the in-group (Hertel & Kerr 2001:316). In this regard, group identity influences the manner in which individuals react to situations (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991:530) and in the same way, group members influence an individual's attitudes and behaviours (McKinley, Mastro & Warber, 2014:1050). In addition, the SIT assumes that individuals strive for a positive self-concept, which can be reached through a positive social identity (Niens, Cairns, Finchilescu, Foster & Tredoux 2003:109). Subsequently, individuals may reach a positive social identity by comparing themselves or the group they identify with, with other social groups. Therefore, the SIT was used in this study because it is a theory of group membership and it explains that individuals need to conform to a group (Korte 2007:168). Moreover, since one of the variables in this study is social influence, the social identity theory perfectly forms as a theoretical grounding for this study as the researchers seek to explore the proposed relationship between social influence and store patronage behaviour.

Shim and Kotsiopoulos Patronage Model on patronage behaviour of apparel shopping

Shim and Kotsiopoulos (1992a, 1992b) adapted portions of Darden's (1980) patronage model of consumer behaviour to develop the model on patronage behaviour of apparel shopping. Shim and Kotsiopoulos's (1992a, 1992b) studies contribute to our understanding of retail patronage with their innovative inclusion of patronage choice behaviour as the end of patronage process while excluding consumer values from the model. Use of information sources was another construct that the researchers included in the model as an influential factor of patronage behaviour which was also hypothesised to be influenced by personal characteristics. They used linear regression to test the model. Shim and Kotsiopoulos (1992a) examined the relationships among several variables. They were personal characteristics (the exogenous variables which include lifestyle activities, social class and family life cycle), information sources, store attributes, shopping orientations, and patronage behaviour. The results of multiple regression analyses revealed that all four variables were predictors of apparel patronage behaviour of discount stores, speciality stores, department stores and catalogue shopping. Shopping orientations and the importance of store attributes appeared to be the most influential factors in determining patronage behaviour, followed by information sources and personal characteristics. Thus, five significant relationships hypothesised by Darden (1980) were supported in their study: (a) importance of store attributes patronage behaviour, (b) shopping orientations importance of store attributes, (c) personal characteristics shopping orientations, (d) information sources shopping orientations and (e) personal characteristics information sources.

The interpersonal attachment theory

To get a clear understanding of the context of this research, this study will be anchored in the framework of the Interpersonal Attachment Theory which is deemed to provide an appropriate theoretical grounding to this study. The attachment theory describes the innate human need to form affectionate bonds (Bowlby, 1980). Additionally, this theory propounds that attachment to figures is an inborn behavioural system (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2017). Amin & Malin (2012) points out that according to the theory a child shows separation anxiety and distress as soon as a parent or significant other no longer is present. In this case, it would be on the attachment to a store, and if the consumer shows feelings of regret and sorrow when the object is no longer available (Amin & Malin, 2012).

Conversely, Moussa and Touzani (2013:339) argue that many of attachment theory's premises are transferable to the consumer-brand relationship. According to Ismail and Ali (2013:55) the basic underlying premise of attachment theory is "Separation Distress", which refers to the extent to which consumers show their emotions when exposed with real or imagined separation from an object of strong attachment. Thomson (2006) suggests that the attachment theory can contribute to marketing because of the distinctive qualities of an attachment. Therefore, based on the

authors' explanations it can be noted that if the attachment theory is taken into consideration, it can assist retail managers of various retail stores to thoroughly understand what drives Generation Y customers to be satisfied and ultimately to be attached to a store.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

This section is centred on reviewing literature pertaining to the research variables under investigation namely: store reputation; social influence, store atmospherics, store convenience, store patronage, apparel purchase decision and store attachment.

Store Reputation

According to Berg (2013) store reputation is defined as the overall evaluation of a retail store by consumers. In addition, Kim and Lennon (2013) point out that a retailer's reputation affects consumer buying decisions as consumers are more likely to purchase from established and reputable retailers than from unknown retailers. Furthermore, Kim and Lennon (2013) elucidate that the reputation of the store acts as a schema, which has been developed through past experiences with the retailer. This schema forms the basis for consumers' expectations of future experiences with the store (Kim & Lennon, 2013).

Social Influence

According to Lee, Shi, Cheung, Lim and Sia (2011) social influence is the opinions of others that influence purchasing intent. An individual can be highly influenced by his or her social surrounding including relatives, friends, colleagues and business partners. (Anvar & Venter, 2014). Additionally, Kuhn (2010:70) points out that black Generation Y consumers, who are greatly influenced by the opinion of others, rely on information supplied by peers in the selection of an apparel store. In addition, Olajide, Folake, Olabode and Olayinka (2018) notes that social approval is of great importance to the undergraduate as well as the individual peer group standards and through dress the female undergraduate is affiliated to a social peer group. Moreover, Olajide, Folake, Olabode and Olayinka (2018) have argued that university students have exaggerated the need to wear trendy and fashionable wear that will be accepted by their friends and acquaintances pressure rather than maintain clothing practices that should encourage trust, confidence, comfort, respect and sense of responsibility.

Store atmospherics

According to De Farias, Aguiar & Melo (2014:88), atmosphere in marketing is a term used to describe the conscious design of an area to create the desired effect on consumers and it is the effort to design a shopping environment that produces emotional effects on the individual in order to increase their likelihood of purchase. Mathur & Goswami (2014:121) categorised atmosphere as a term that is used to explain our feeling towards the shopping experience, which cannot always be seen. Therefore, atmospherics form the first impression of the store and influence consumers' perceptions towards a store and impacts on a stores' image and consumers' expectations of the retailer's offerings (Oh, Fiorito, Cho & Hofacker, 2008:237). The atmosphere influences the consumer's assessment of the quality of the store and the store image they form (Panna & Gupta 2015:167). Moreover, Sîrbu, Săseanu and Ghiță (2015:568) point out that the concept of store atmosphere reflects the effort to create an environment that generates emotional-specific effects on the buyer, effects which increase the probability of the buyer to purchase.

Store Convenience

According to Selema and Makgosa (2018) convenience is often regarded as a multi-dimensional concept including location, accessibility, opening hours, one-stop shopping and availability of parking spaces. The convenience of reaching the store reflects the ease of driving to the store, store distance from customers' home, time that is taken to reach the store and the availability of public transport (Wel, Hussin & Omar & Nor, 2012:171). For many shoppers,

convenience is essential, the speed and the ease that consumers can contact retailers (finding the merchandise they seek quickly) powerfully influence their retail choice (Bianchi, 2009:311). The location of the store may be the deciding factor for such consumers (Kimani, Kagira, Kendi, Wawire & Fourier, 2012:60). For example, consumers may select a store at the shopping mall because of the proximity with other stores. Ligas and Chaudhuri (2012:254) stressed that the lack of convenient accessibility affects consumers' level of commitment to the store, which might be reflected in store loyalty.

Store patronage behaviour

Teller, Gittenberger and Schnedlitz (2013) established that the cognitive age of elderly consumers (aged 60+) influence perception and subsequent behaviour related to store patronage. Devadas and Manohar (2012) found that younger consumers (aged 20-24+) have store patronage that is based on shopping malls that are considered to be entertaining. Elderly consumers in contrast to younger consumers tend to base their store patronage on shopping malls that present variety and standards that enhance their quality of life (Khare, 2012; Idoko, Ukenna, & Obeta, 2019).

Apparel purchase decision

According to Djatmiko and Pradana (2016) purchase decision is a result of brand image and product price. Consumer purchase decision is the decision-making process and physical activity individuals engage in when evaluating, acquiring, using or disposing of goods and services (Khuong & Duyen, 2016). Apparel stores retail experiences are considered to have a direct influence on consumers' continuous purchase decision (Nikhashemi, Jebarajakirthy & Nusair, 2019). Female consumers' decision making and spending is not only important for the South African retail industry in general but also more specifically for the local apparel retail sector (Bezuidenhout, Jacobs & Sonnenberg, 2016).

Store attachment

According to Badrinarayanan and Becerra (2018) store attachment is influenced by store prestige, affect and equity. In addition, Badrinarayanan and Becerra (2018) suggested that store attachment in turn influences store patronage. Vilches-Montero, Pandit, Bravo-Olavarria and Chao (2018) posited that loyalty to a store is caused by gender and the consumer's attachment to the store's loyalty program.

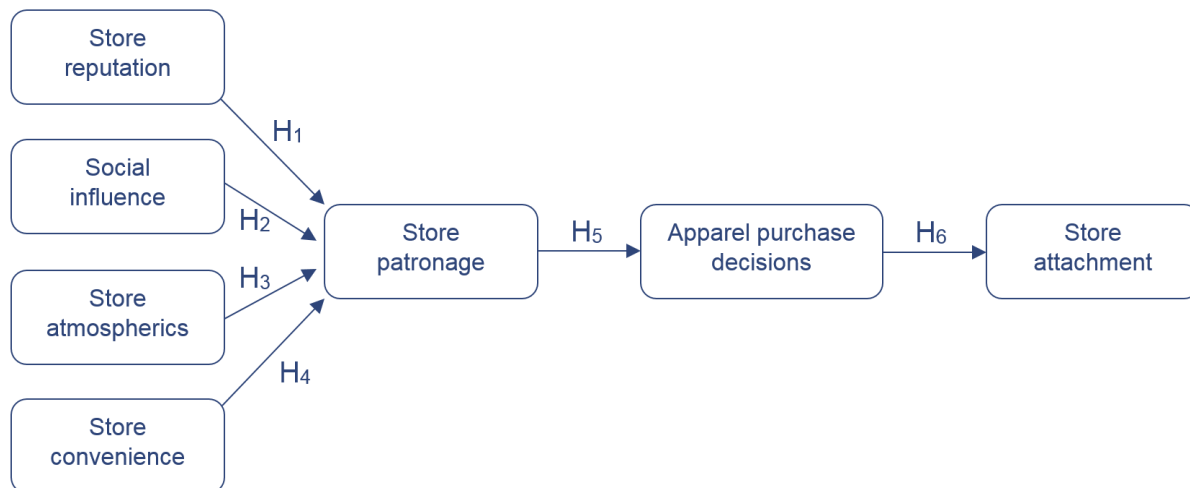
CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

A conceptual model describes the relationship between variables investigated in the study (Maziriri, Mapuranga & Madinga, 2018). In addition, Maziriri, Mapuranga and Madinga (2018) add that a schematic diagram of the conceptual model helps the reader to visualise the theorised relationships between the variables in the model and thus to obtain a quick idea about how you think that the problem can be solved. In this study, the conceptual model suggests that store reputation, social influence, store atmospherics and store convenience are the predictor variables. In addition, the conceptual model also suggests that store patronage and apparel purchase decision are the mediating variables. Moreover, the dependent or outcome variable for the current study model is Store attachment. Based on a synthesis of the converging literature related to the research variables, a conceptual model was proposed to guide the empirical study as shown in Figure 1.

Store reputation and store patronage behaviour

How much consumers really care about retailer reputation is crucial as this affects their purchasing decisions (Page & Fearn, 2005). Ou, Abratt and Dion (2006) investigated the impact of retailer reputation on store patronage

**FIGURE 2:
CONCEPTUAL MODEL**



and found that retailer reputation has an effect on purchase frequency, travel time and expenditure levels showing a positive correlation between store reputation and store patronage. Hence, retailer reputation is an important factor that influences consumer's store patronage (Ou, Abratt & Dion 2006). Deducing from the afore-mentioned clarifications, it can be hypothesized:

H₁. Store reputation has a positive and significant impact on store patronage behaviour

Social influence and store patronage behaviour

There is literature on the nexus between social influence and store patronage behaviour however the literature is still in its infancy, hence the need of the current empirical study, to fill in the gaps in the literature on this relationship. However, it has been noted that social influence plays an important role in the consumption process (Argo, Dahl & Manchanda, 2005). A study entitled "The Influence of a Mere Social Presence in a Retail Context" by (Argo et al., 2005) investigated how social presence impacts consumers' emotions and self-presentation behaviour's. A study by Risselada, Vries & Verstappen (2017) interestingly shows how consumers tend to follow other consumers' opinions without forming their own opinion. Therefore, in conclusion it is evident and to see that:

H₂. Social influence has a positive and significant impact on store patronage behaviour.

Store atmospherics and store patronage behaviour

According to Kotler (1974) atmosphere as a marketing tool has been neglected by businesses. Atmospherics can make customers less aware of their wait because they are either distracted or entertained (Grewal, Baker, Levy & Voss, 2003). It should be noted that there are paucities in studies regarding the relationship between store atmospherics and store patronage behaviour. However, there are close related studies that have tried to elaborate on this relationship. For instance, a study by Sharma and Stafford (2000) suggested that store ambience and design positively affect customers' persuasion as well as customers' positive perceptions of salespeople. Visser, Du Preez and Van Noordwyk (2006) investigated the impact of store atmosphere amongst other factors and results suggested that store atmosphere in itself, had a positive relationship with store patronage behaviour. Therefore, inferring from the literature provided it can be hypothesised that:

H₃. Store atmospherics has a positive and significant impact on store patronage behaviour.

Store Convenience and store patronage behaviour

A study conducted by (Moeller & Heider, 2012) showed that a significant relationship exists between patronage preferences in on-the-go consumption and the variety of products offered as well as the opportunity to consume products without effort. In addition, a study by (Pan & Zinkhan, 2006) entitled "Determinants of retail patronage" found that convenience has a positive impact on store patronage. Drawing from the afore-mentioned discussion it can be noted that:

H₄. Store convenience has a positive and significant impact on store patronage behaviour.

Store Patronage and apparel purchase decision

Consumers face store patronage decisions daily (Thang & Tan, 2003). The literature on the association store patronage behaviour and apparel purchase decision is very limited. However, a study by (Yavas, 2001) investigated the patronage motives as well as product purchase patterns within the context of a mall. Valaei and Nikhashemi (2017) found that brand and self-identity mostly dictate the Generation Y consumers' attitudes towards fashion apparel, but findings also revealed that apparel brand, style, price, and social identity are the most influential factors of Generation Y consumers' purchase intentions for apparel purchase.

H₅. Store patronage behaviour has a positive and significant impact on apparel purchase decision.

Store Patronage behaviour and store attachment

Customer satisfaction with a store is said to be one of the most important predictors of store loyalty (Francioni, Savelli & Cioppi, 2018). A study by (Konuk, 2018) investigated how retailer innovativeness in conjunction with perceived food healthiness can influence store prestige, store trust, and store loyalty. Findings revealed a positive relationship between store prestige, store trust and store loyalty. A study by (Garton, 2018) argues that differential congruence is critical to achieving store loyalty. Findings revealed that retailers need to define their customers, their product and their store in order to achieve store loyalty. In conclusion, it can be hypothesized that:

H₆. Store patronage behaviour has a positive and significant impact on store attachment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study undertook a research approach that is consistent with the positivist paradigm as it attempted to examine the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. Being quantitative in nature, the measurement instrument was compiled from existing scales that were adapted to suit the purpose of the study. Once scale reliability and validity were established, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the model fit, followed by the hypotheses testing. SEM was performed using Amos 25 software, and the descriptive statistics were obtained through SPSS 25 software.

The target population for this study is Generation Y (18-34-year old) females residing in Braamfontein, a region of Johannesburg in South Africa.

Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique was adopted in selecting participants for the study due to the absence of known population size and the difficulty of obtaining a sampling from which to select the respondents.

To obtain reliable results, this study used a sample of 300 participants who are Generation Y (18-34-year old) females residing in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. This sample size met the recommended criteria proposed Boomsma (1982) of 100 and 200 participants necessary for structural equation modelling.

INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

Research scales were operationalised based on prior work. Proper modifications were made to fit the current research context and purpose. A 7-item scale for store reputation was adapted from Ou, Abratt & Dion (2006). In addition, social influence was assessed using a 4-item scale adapted from Zhao, Stylianoua & Zheng (2018), further store convenience was measured using a 16-item scale adapted from Gahinet & Cliquet (2018). Store atmospherics was also measured for the purpose of this study and was measured using a 7-item scale measurement adapted from Walsh, Shiu, Hassan, Michaelidou, Beatty & (2010). A 4-item scale adapted from Rahman, Wong & Yu (2016) was used to measure store patronage behaviour. Apparel purchase decision was measured using a 10-item scale adapted from O'Cass (2000). Lastly, store attachment was measured using a 7-item scale adapted from Das (2014) and Jung & Yoon (2012). All were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to express the degree of agreement.

**TABLE 1:
ACCURACY ANALYSIS STATISTICS**

Construct	Items	Item-to-total correlation values	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Factor loadings
Store Reputation	SR1	0.628	0.845	0.84	0.42	0.644
	SR2	0.670				0.697
	SR3	0.572				0.660
	SR4	0.594				0.683
	SR5	0.593				0.632
	SR6	0.581				0.619
	SR7	0.567				0.604
Social Influence	SI1	0.672	0.852	0.83	0.56	0.796
	SI2	0.740				0.905
	SI3	0.696				0.653
	SI4	0.660				0.615
Store Convenience	SC8	0.556	0.828	0.81	0.59	0.859
	SC9	0.556				0.800
	SC10	0.543				0.637
Store Atmospherics	SA4	0.548	0.853	0.88	0.65	0.606
	SA5	0.703				0.877
	SA6	0.740				0.948
	SA7	0.687				0.746
Store Patronage Behaviour	SPB1	0.675	0.870	0.85	0.59	0.646
	SPB2	0.768				0.770
	SPB3	0.759				0.853
	SPB4	0.679				0.800
Apparel Purchase Decision	APD1	0.629	0.903	0.91	0.53	0.651
	APD3	0.726				0.706
	APD4	0.721				0.677
	APD5	0.798				0.794
	APD6	0.616				0.619
	APD7	0.787				0.851
	APD8	0.617				0.674
	APD9	0.755				0.797
	APD10	0.719				0.765
	Store Attachment	SAT1				0.652
SAT3		0.727	0.760			
SAT4		0.682	0.743			
SAT5		0.616	0.667			
SAT6		0.688	0.713			
SAT7		0.644	0.722			

Respondent profile

In terms of the respondents' demographic profile, 204 out of 300 participants were between the ages of 18 and 20. This age group represents 68% of the study's respondents. Note that all participants in this study were female. 30% of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 25. 1.3 % were between the ages of 26 and 29, and the minority age of respondents were between the ages of 30-34 and they constituted only 0.7% of the study's participants. This shows that the majority (68%) of the respondents were the younger Generation Y between the age of 18-20, and which are referred to as young adults. This could emanate from the fact that most students were surveyed. In addition, it can

be observed that first-year respondents accounted for 42% of the study's participants, while 27.3% were second-year students, 18.3% were third-year students, 2.7% were fourth-year students, and lastly 9.7% were postgraduate students. Furthermore, in terms of allowance, the allowance each respondent receives per month. 19.7% receive less than R500. 29% of the respondent's receive between R500 – R1000. 26.3% of the respondents receive R1000 – R1500 and 25% receive more than R2000. Moreover, the average monthly spending on apparel by the respondents. 28.7% spend less than R300 per month on apparel. 38.3% of the respondent's spend between R300 – R600 per month on apparel. 21.7% of the respondents spend between R600 – R1000 per month on apparel and 11.3% spend more than R1000 per month.

Scale accuracy analysis

The scale accuracy analysis is presented in Table 1 on the previous page followed by a discussion of the measurement scale reliability and validity.

Reliability

According to Nunnally (1978) the reliability of a measure is supported if Cronbach's alpha is 0.7 or higher. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.828 to 0.903 exceeding 0.7 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). In addition, the Cronbach's alpha scores indicated that each construct exhibited strong internal reliability, Lee (2009). Therefore, Cronbach's alpha values of the constructs exceeded the recommended 0.70 thus meeting the required threshold and demonstrating that the constructs used to measure variables are very reliable for all the variables.

Table 1 above shows the loading of each item on their particular construct. The least value for each respective item loadings for the research constructs is 0,603. Therefore, all the individual item loadings exceeded the recommended value of 0, 5 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). This indicates that all the measurement instruments are acceptable and reliable since all the individual items converged well and with more than 50% of each item's variance shared with its respective construct (Fraering & Minor 2006).

Composite reliabilities (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct were also computed using the formulae proposed by Fornell and Lacker (1981:22) i.e.

$$CR\eta = (\sum\lambda_{yi})^2 / [(\sum\lambda_{yi})^2 + (\sum\epsilon_i)]$$

Where

CR η = Composite reliability, $(\sum\lambda_{yi})^2$ = Square of the summation of the factor loadings; $(\sum\epsilon_i)$ = Summation of error variances.

$$V\eta = \sum\lambda_{yi}^2 / (\sum\lambda_{yi}^2 + \sum\epsilon_i)$$

Where

V η = Average Variance Extracted (AVE); $\sum\lambda_{yi}^2$ = Summation of the squared of factor loadings; $\sum\epsilon_i$ = Summation of error variances".

As shown from the results shown in Table 2, Composite reliability values ranged from 0.83 to 0.91 which is acceptable as this exceed 0.7 (Hair, Bush & Ortinau 2009). Most of the average variance extracted values were above 0.5 which is consisted with the 0.5 recommended by Fraering and Minor (2006). This indicates that convergent validity was achieved, and this further confirms an excellent internal consistency and reliability of the measurement instruments used. "As such, all pairs of constructs revealed an adequate level of discriminant validity (see Table 2). By and large, these results provided evidence for acceptable levels of research scale reliability" (Chinomona & Chinomona, 2013:20; Chinomona & Mofokeng, 2016).

Discriminant validity

The inter-construct correlation matrix is used to assess the validity of measurement instruments, specifically discriminant validity. Correlations among constructs were evaluated to see if they were lower than 1. The higher the correlation between variables, the lower the validity of those variables. The inter-construct values are required to be below 0.6 and in some cases below 0.85 to indicate discriminant validity. According to Table 3, the highest correlation value was 0.712 and the lowest correlation value was -.014. These correlation values are below 0.85 and, therefore, it can be concluded that there is discriminant validity between all the constructs (Morar, Venter, & Chuchu, 2015).

**TABLE 2:
CORRELATION MATRIX**

Variables	SR	SI	SC	SA	SPB	APD	SAT
Store reputation (SR)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Influence (SI)	.223**	1	-	-	-	-	-
Store Convenience (SC)	.292**	-.014	1	-	-	-	-
Store Atmospherics (SA)	.314**	.167**	.182**	1	-	-	-
Store Patronage Behaviour (SPB)	.460**	.161**	.287**	.253**	1	-	-
Apparel Purchase Decision (APD)	.247**	.255**	.050	.120*	.320**	1	-
Store Attachment (SAT)	.470**	.166**	.303**	.308**	.712**	.274**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING (SEM)

Measurement model evaluation

A confirmatory model development strategy was followed to confirm the dimensional structure of the constructs used in this research as well as the level of internal consistency among the respective indicators. Precisely, a measurement model was specified using maximum likelihood extrapolation (MLE) technique. Initial model estimation was extrapolated at CMIN/DF=2.464 (<3.0); $p < 0.01$. It is imperative to note that the significant chi-square value is disregarded by researchers due to the sensitivity of the index too large sample sizes and many indicators (Malhotra, 2010). To overcome this limitation, Byrne (2010:77) proffers that a more "pragmatic approach is to report on multiple indices that are not based on the central distribution". Therefore, the following indices demonstrated adequate model fit as follows: CMIN/DF 1.711, CFI 0.919, GFI 0.798, NFI 0.827, TLI 0.912 and RMSEA 0.052.

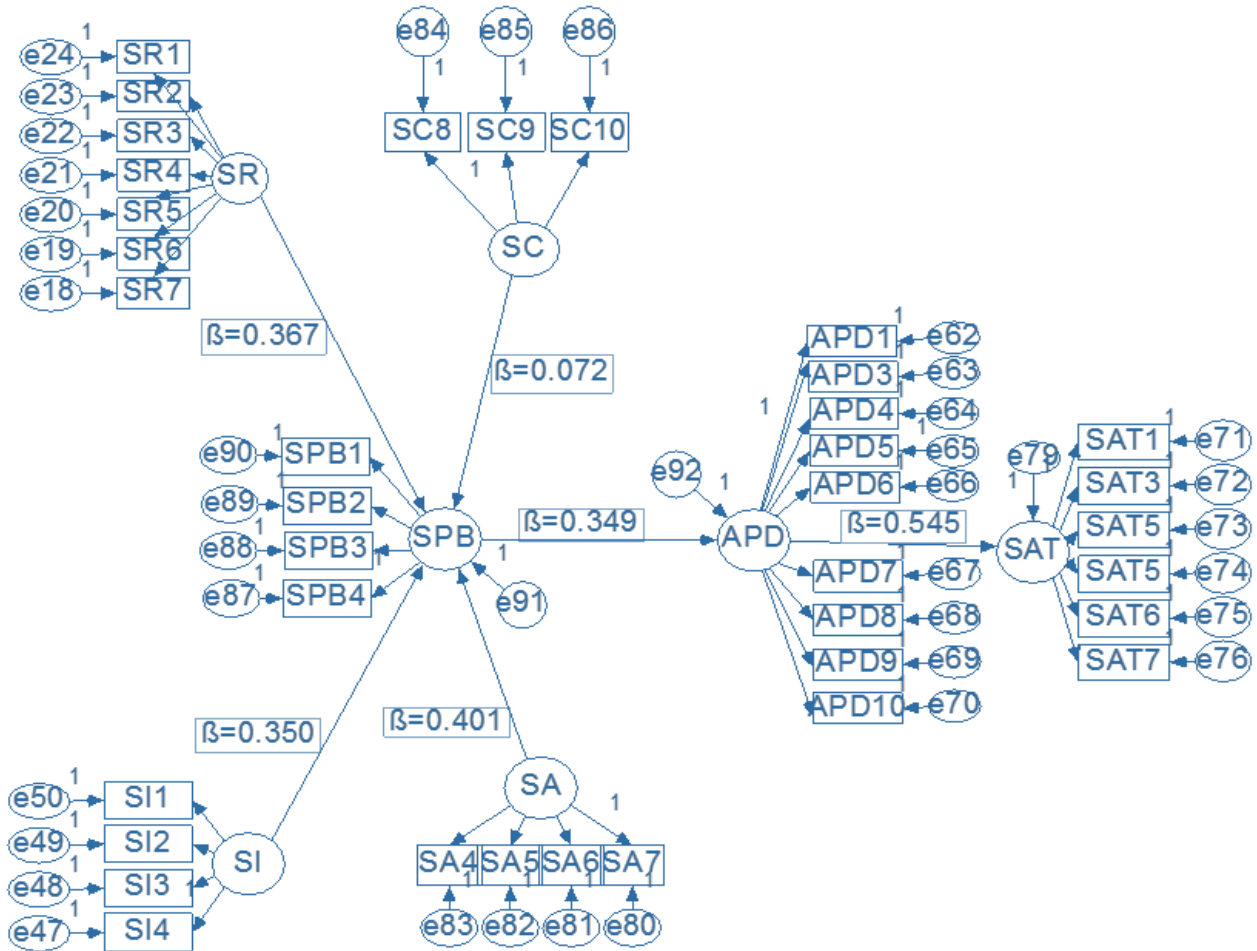
STRUCTURAL MODEL ASSESSMENT AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Results of the structural model analysis indicated that all the structural model fit statistics were within the tolerable ranges: $\chi^2/df = 1.711$; CFI=0.919, IFI = 0.920; TLI = 0.912; RMSEA = 0.052. A good fit is normally deemed to exist when NFI, GFI and CFI were all greater than 0.9, Chang and Chen (2009). Moreover, figure 3 depicts a structure model. A structural model examination aims to evaluate the strength and direction of relationships among constructs in a model (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins & Kuppelwieser, 2014).

STRUCTURAL MODEL

This section presents an illustration of the structural model that was used for path analysis. This was to establish whether to reject the proposed hypotheses or not.

**FIGURE 3:
STRUCTURAL MODEL**



HYPOTHESES RESULTS

The table below presents the results of the tested hypotheses

TABLE 3: HYPOTHESES RESULTS

Constructs	Hypotheses	Path coefficient values	P value	Result/Decision
SR → SPB	H1	0.367	***	Supported and significant
SI → SPB	H2	0.350	***	Supported and significant
SA → SPB	H3	0.401	***	Supported and significant
SC → SPB	H4	0.072	0.134	Supported but not significant
SPB → APD	H5	0.349	***	Supported and significant
APD → SAT	H6	0.545	***	Supported and significant

DISCUSSION OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

The results obtained following the test of H_1 confirmed that there is a positive relationship between advertising on Store Reputation and Store Patronage Behaviour, referred to as an independent variable in the study. A path coefficient of 0.367 at $p < 0.001$ level of significance suggesting that Store Reputation has a positive influence on Store Patronage Behaviour. These results are in line with the works of (Ou, Abratt & Dion, 2006) who explain that the likelihood that consumers will shop at a preferred store increases as the perception of the store becomes more positive.

The results obtained following the test of H_2 confirmed that there is a positive relationship between Social Influence and Store Patronage Behaviour with a path coefficient of 0.350 at $p < 0.001$ level of significance. This finding has ample support from previous empirical research studies such as that conducted by (Evans, Christiansen & Gill, 1996) who highlighted previous research done by Midgley, Dowling, and Morrison (1989) who's findings revealed that clothing purchases are affected by social referent influence, however this influence can vary by characteristics of the consumer.

The results obtained following the test of H_3 confirmed that there is a supported relationship between Store Atmospherics and Store Patronage Behaviour with a path coefficient of 0.401. This relationship is also significant at $p < 0.001$. These results imply that the store's physical environment may induce a Generation Y female consumer to patronise an apparel retail store.

The results obtained following the test of H_4 confirmed that there is a positive relationship between Store Convenience and Store Patronage Behaviour, referred to as an independent variable in this study. A path coefficient of 0.072 was realized after testing this hypothesis, meaning that store convenience was influenced female Generation Y consumers' in-store patronage. However, this was not a very important factor. This finding is in line with the works of (Berry, Seiders & Grewal, 2002) to some extent that suggested that consumers use convenience as a basis for making purchasing decisions.

The results obtained following the test of H_5 confirmed that there is a positive relationship between Store Patronage Behaviour and Apparel Purchase decision. A path coefficient of 0.349 was realized after testing this hypothesis, meaning that female Generation Y consumers consider which store they purchase their apparel from. Furthermore, this influence is supported by a 99% level of significance between the two constructs. This finding substantiates the fact that the process in which consumers select a specific store to shop at has been found similar to the process consumers use for brand choice (Zulqarnain, Zafar & Shahzad, 2015).

The results obtained following the test of H_6 confirmed that there is a positive relationship between apparel purchase decision and store attachment. A path coefficient of 0.545 was realized after testing this hypothesis, meaning that female Generation Y consumers consider being loyal or attached to apparel stores that they have made an apparel purchase decision from.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The framework developed in this study will make a positive contribution to the body of knowledge and the growing literature on; store reputation; social influence, store atmospherics, store convenience, store patronage, apparel purchase decision and store attachment. In addition, this study contributes to developing a profile on the buying behaviour of Generation Y consumers within the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Therefore, the findings of this study will contribute as marketing strategy guidelines for marketers seeking to reach this segment and will be of value to South African marketers, as well as international advertisers seeking to target this market segment.

This current study investigated how store reputation, social influence, store atmospherics and store convenience influences Generation Y females store patronage to apparel stores, leading to store attachment thereafter. Generation Y consumers form an important segment in the generation cohort for fashion-related purchases and contribute nearly 70 percent of their money towards fashion and apparel goods (Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings obtained in this study provides practical implications for retail managers and marketing managers. More precisely, the findings may add value to fashion apparel retailers by assisting them in understanding better, underlying factors which enhance store patronage behaviour, purchase decisions of the consumers and ultimately store attachment. Marketers need to expand their marketing effort and campaign as well as promotional activities, this will keep marketers connect to the Generation Y cohort. However, marketers within the fashion apparel industry are advised to categorise their target market based on the researched factors of this study in order to satisfy each segment accordingly. The reason being is that each generation portrays different shopping behaviours. Furthermore, this study clearly shows that store reputation, social influence, store atmospherics and store convenience are pertinent factors in explaining store patronage behaviour and store attachment among Generation Y consumers.

LIMITATIONS

The current study contains some limitations. Firstly, the data collected is based on responses from only female and university participants. While women may be the prime consumers of apparel, men also purchase apparel items. More so, non-university consumers may respond differently to store patronage, apparel purchase decision and attachment of apparel stores. Another limitation relates to the use of a single method of data collection, which is a quantitative approach. Perhaps if a mixed method approach was used, the results could be more insightful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The alarming results of this study cannot be overlooked and may be availed as opportunities for retailers. Apparel retailers ought to consider putting their endeavours in improving their store reputation as well as considering that Generation Y female students are highly influenced by store atmospherics, social influence and store convenience to patronise their stores, to make apparel purchase decisions and ultimately to be attached to stores. Furthermore, in order to make apparel purchase decisions, apparel retailers need to give adequate data to a customer to feel good in deciding which apparel products to purchase. Berman and Evans (2013:202) also pointed out that point of purchase ads, product displays, and knowledgeable sales personnel can provide customers with the information they need. Hence, fashion retailers, together with marketers, can foster greater involvement with apparel products as the consumers obtain all information regarding apparel products.

Consumers with a high level of apparel involvement are likely to wear innovative and trendy clothing and are risk-takers (Halepete 2006:234). Subsequently, it very well may be noticed that if Generation Y female understudies are profoundly included with various apparel products and stores, they will have a greater knowledge of apparel and the stores that offer these apparel products. Truth be told, their trust in the choice of clothing items and stores will be expanded.

It is imperative for apparel retailers to have a reasonable comprehension of the requirements, needs and inclinations for the Generation Y female cohort so that they can respond accordingly for their satisfaction. Apparel retailers can utilise biographical information as a reason for segmenting this market. Information such as age, year of study and monthly allowance received can assist them in recognising precisely who their clients are, which advertising media will appeal to them and finally, how long will they study at their institution of higher learning. Apparel retailers have to alter their current marketing strategies or adapt them to respond to continuous changes in needs.

Furthermore, retail store managers must provide a good service to consumers in order to build positive shopping experiences for apparel products purchasing. For example, apparel retailers can capitalise on some of the predictor variables identified in this study such as store atmospherics and store reputation. These variables influence consumers' patronage behaviour, apparel purchase decisions as well as store attachments. For example, apparel retailers can create a pleasing store atmosphere, which will increase consumer's preferences in their store. Realising what atmospheric variables impact on customers' feelings may assist retailers in gathering appropriate marketing strategies to make and keep up a positive shopping experience among customers (Yalcim & Kocamaz 2003:275).

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the limitations of the study was that it utilised only Generation Y female student consumers within the University of the Witwatersrand. This limits the possibility to generalise the results to include Generation Y female student consumers in South Africa. Another limitation concerns the use of a single method of data collection. This study employed a quantitative research approach. Future research may consider both a qualitative and quantitative research design using triangulation methodology, where a qualitative design could be used in generating rich ideas and explanations.

It would probably be worthwhile to utilise both qualitative and quantitative paradigms to supplement each other. A qualitative design may be helpful in making follow-ups to the responses provided in the quantitative design. Consequently, the quantitative responses are validated by these follow-ups. Ultimately, this paper demonstrates and highlighted the influence of store reputation, social influence, social media influence, store atmospherics and store convenience on store patronage behaviour and apparel purchase decision and how such can affect store attachment by female Generation Y consumers.

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