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ABSTRACT

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Title : The Effects Of Self-Congruity, Functional Store Image, And Social Responsibility Image On Store Loyalty
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The concept of image of a retail store has received greater attention by researchers since last few decades. Its usefulness as the basis of various customer behavioral outcomes such as loyalty, patronage intention, purchase intention, and repatronage intention are widely acknowledged from previous empirical studies. Meanwhile, in the retailing environment, the intensified competition among retailers which has long become the challenge for success has required retailers to focus their marketing activities on the basis of their marketing mix which is reflected by its image as perceived by customers. In that regard, within the constantly evolving business landscape, the focus of academic research and by practitioners on the concept of store image has undergone rapid growth over the decades and accordingly, is the primary focus of this study. This study was mainly aimed at understanding the perceptions of Malaysian consumers to the image of the store, which in turn examined its effect on store loyalty. Self-Congruity theory was employed as a theoretical foundation for developing the present conceptual model. More significantly, this study investigated the symbolic store image and self-image congruence, functional store image and social responsibility image relationships in addition to shopping orientations and past shopping experience as antecedents. Accordingly, the data for this study was collected from a sample of consumers in the Klang Valley using drop-off and collect technique. Shopping behavior of respondent from 565 usable questionnaires was analyzed. Using structural equation

modeling, the data was analyzed and it provides the empirical findings for the thesis. Specifically, ten of the hypotheses links were supported and two rejected. With some minor modification of the hypotheses links, a plausible model that has a statistical and explanatory power for interpretation of results confidently was established. The findings should provide several key contributions to the marketing and retailing theory as well as retail practitioners. Firstly, it identified atmosphere as the key determinant of functional store image, and legal and ethical aspects as the main influencing factor of social responsibility image. Additionally, actual congruity emerged as the most influential determinant of store image and self-image congruence. Secondly, the findings also suggest that among the three image constructs, functional store image remains as the key determinant of store loyalty while there is no relationship between self-congruity and store loyalty. Nevertheless, the self-congruity relationship with store loyalty was mediated by functional store image and social responsibility image. Interestingly, social responsibility image illuminated its contribution to store loyalty. Notably, shopping orientations and past shopping experience also exhibit a significant positive relationship on image constructs. Two new paths that link between shopping orientations and past shopping experience with self-congruity were supported. Past shopping experience appears to be a stronger determinant of functional store image and social responsibility image. Whilst shopping orientations has a stronger influence on self-congruity. The result also provides strong evidence of the relationship between past shopping experience and store loyalty. The findings in this study form part of the strategic recommendations to retailers in the face of competition. Apart from providing empirical results in understanding the Malaysian retailing industry, the findings also established an empirical foundation for future research.