

## Factors Affecting Consumers Buying Behavior in Supermarkets

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**Abstract :** *The present study was an effort to explore the factors affecting consumers buying behavior in supermarkets. Since the retail industry is developing and changing with the sharp move in shopping patterns and it is also observed shoppers are becoming more imperative for the retailers. Previous studies in Pakistani supermarkets considered only preferential attributes and conveniences but the present study investigates all the major factors affecting shoppers' buying behavior including store association, awareness, perceived quality, conveniences, product assortments, employee's services, perceived price with the mediation of store loyalty. Questionnaire was used for collecting the data from the 420 shoppers out of which 375 responses were usable with 89.29% response rate. The results of the study revealed that all these factors having significant positive relation with purchase intention with the mediation role of store loyalty. Furthermore, the results of the study can also be used as relevant guidelines for developing superstore formats. This study also suggests retailers, managers, entrepreneurs and business owners to consider these factors and their relationship with the purchase intention of consumers which will affect the overall profitability of the business. Moreover the practical and theoretical implications of the study were also discussed for adding value in the existing body of knowledge.*

**Keywords** - Consumer buying behavior, perceived quality, Perceived price, Store association, Store loyalty

### 1-INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In old times retail stores were recognized as small shops nearby road sides and or in residential vicinities where shoppers purchases merchandises for their household uses (Tiwari, 2009). Nowadays there is significant change in retail industry as small stores are changing into large supermarkets where every retailer strives to attract customers to their store by providing large scale product environment (Leszczyc, Sinha, & Timmermans, 2000). The reason behind this change is that retail industry has grown rapidly over the years and creating competition among the other retailers in order to get competitive edge over the others for enhancing their growth and profitability (Leszczyc et al., 2000). Furthermore, Lee (2009) argued that the retailing industries in developing countries are experiencing drastic transformation in their retail industry with the influx of diverse forms of retailers such as supermarkets, hypermarkets and convenience stores.

Moreover the drastic and dynamic changes were observed, in the last few decades, in retailing industry all over the world (Jinfeng & Zhilong, 2009). These changes were observed for the reason that consumer's preferences and behavior has changed and shifted towards more conveniences, superior services, high quality of products, pleasing shopping environment, perceived price, more value of money, after sale and service, greater varieties of products, large assortments (Shamsher & Hossain, 2012), advanced and flexible methods of payments and reliable channels of distribution (Datta & Herts, 2010). Lee (2009) argued that over the years drastic transformation in the retailing industry is observed in developing countries with the entrance of diverse shape of retailing such as Supermarkets, Hypermarkets and convenience stores. Sinha and Banerjee (2004) further commented that due to their prime locations and excellent customer service superstore are becoming more popular in developing countries.

#### 1.1 Retail Markets in Pakistan

Like, rest of the world Pakistan has also witnessed exponential growth in its retail industry. As Chandio (2013) reported that last few decades have seen significant changes in consumer buying trend over time. However, changes in urban areas are more significant as compared to changes in rural areas of Pakistan; rural areas are still being served by traditional kiriyana stores which offer high level service to the shoppers. Furthermore, it is also observed that there is significant increase in utility stores and general stores as well, but there is rapid change in super store formats, which offers vast range of merchandises, and more varieties of household items under one roof.

In recent times, due to high productivity, high profitability, rapid extension, strong potential growth rate, and diversity in Pakistani retail market and Pakistani consumers and the increasing purchasing power of Pakistani consumers have begun to grasp the attention of researchers and practitioners to investigate Pakistani retail industry and consumer behavior (Chandio, 2013). Numerous superstores are now developing their formats according to the needs and requirements of the consumers and providing vast variety of products in large quantity under one roof with pleasant shopping environment (Imran, Ghani, & Rehman, 2013).

#### 1.2 Research on Consumer Buying Behavior in Pakistan

Numerous studies were conducted on consumer buying behavior in Pakistan. As Pakistan is one of the biggest market of consumers and the opportunities for retailing industry is vigorous. Chandio (2013) studied preferential attributes in consumer buying behavior in retail mega stores of Pakistan and found that economy, size of household, variety of products, availability of products, location, ambience of store and parking space are the major preferential attributes affecting consumer purchase intention and frequency of their visit in mega stores but the other attributes like store awareness, recognition, quality, employee's service,

price and loyalty also have major impacts on consumer buying behavior, these factors were not discussed in the researcher's study as in this study these factors were considered and investigated as a research gap. Furthermore, Moazzam and Badar studied drivers of superstore shopping in Pakistan and found that variety, quantity, quality, display and locations are the major drivers of superstore shopping in Pakistan. Factors like store association, awareness, convenience, assortments, employee's service, price and loyalty are also the drivers of purchase intention but the researcher did not investigate these factors and they are considered the research gap. In this study all the major factors were investigated to fill the research gap and to make addition in the existing body of knowledge.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

1. To find out relationship between store loyalty with different variable of the superstore including store association, store awareness, store perceived quality, store convenience, product assortment, store employee's service and perceived price.
2. To find out relationship between store loyalty as a mediator and purchase intention.
3. To investigate the mediation role of store loyalty in the relationship of its predictors and outcomes.

### **I. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Store Association**

The term retailer association is described as "anything linked to the memory of the retailer" (Pappu & Quester, 2006a). Retailer's associations similar to Brand association have three enviable characteristics which are favorability, strength and uniqueness (Keller, 1993). According to Keller (1993) store association is a broad concept as compared to store image because store image is one of dimensions of store association. When there are higher experiences and exposure to communication there is higher association as compared to when there is low experiences and exposure to communication with retailer (Aaker, 1991).

There is positive relationship between retailer association and retailer loyalty because it shows commitment and quality which helps the consumer to select the specific store among the other stores and it also develops repurchase behavior of the consumer (Jinfeng & Zhilong, 2009). Brand association positively influences brand loyalty (Romaniuk & Gaillard, 2007). Thus the first hypothesis of the study was developed as follows.

H1: There is significant positive relationship between store association and store loyalty.

#### **2.2 Store Awareness**

The term retailer awareness is described as "consumer's ability to recognize or recall that the retailer is a member of the certain retailer category" (Pappu & Quester, 2006a). Retailer awareness is a degree to which retailers are recognized by the consumers (Aaker, 1991). The consumers who are highly satisfied with the retailer may recall easily as compared to the consumers who are not positively satisfied with the retailers. However, the consumers who are strappingly dissatisfied with the retailer may also recall the retailer for their level of dissatisfaction (Pappu & Quester, 2006a). It is up to retailer how much he strengthens his presence in consumers' mind. The strength of retailer awareness is judge by consumers' recognition of the store or recalls the store (Keller, 1993).

According to Keller (1993) store awareness is a constituent of the store knowledge. If the shoppers have the information about the meticulous store, whether this information is actively or passively obtained by them, their store awareness towards certain commodity/service is high (Valkenburg & Buijzen, 2005).

Grewal, Krishnan, Baker, and Borin (1998) argued that the more positive store name or reputation associated with the store, the more positive the shoppers perceptions and loyalty. Strong retailer awareness upsurges the probability that a retail brand will be involved in the consideration set which simplifies the consumer's retail brand choice, making it a habit to select the retail brand (Hauser & Wernerfelt, 1990). Hence, the degree that consumers are aware of retailer, retailer loyalty will increase. Thus the second hypothesis of the study was developed as follows.

H2: There is significant positive relationship between store awareness and store loyalty.

#### **2.3 Store Perceived Quality**

The retailer perceived quality is termed as the "insight of the quality of the retailer as well as the (insight of) quality of products (goods or services) offered by retailers" (Pappu & Quester, 2006a). The concept retailer association and retailer perceived quality occasionally termed as same dimensions (Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000). However, retailer perceived quality and retailer association are two different construct (Pappu & Quester, 2006a). The store perceived quality is also defined as the judgment of consumers about the degree of excellence and superiority of products offered by retailers (Zeithaml, 1988). When the consumer has long term experience related to brand it shows exceptional perceived quality because consumer always make difference and superiority among various brands (Yoo et al., 2000).

If the store offering quality goods and services then the customers will be more loyal to the store which results in frequent purchases (Das, 2014). Good perception of quality increases more customer visits and their retention which enhances profitability of the store (Pappu & Quester, 2006a). Thus the third hypothesis of the study was developed as follows.

H3: There is significant positive relationship between store perceived quality and store loyalty

#### **2.4 Store Convenience**

Store convenience means anything which reduces the consumer's time like travelling to and from the store, facilities which make easy to get products and services in the store. Pervious study states that there is a positive relationship between

convenience and customer satisfaction (Chang & Tu, 2005). The basic criterion for making store choice decision is based on the store location and the distance of the store that the shoppers have to cover for reaching the store (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004). Store convenience is most important for consumers and has major impact on consumers buying decision (Jones, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2003). If the retailer is more convenient then the consumers will be more satisfied because they offer goods and services when and where they need (Pappu & Quester, 2006a).

Thang and Tan (2003) Found that location convenience, accessibility, convenient distance and closeness of store have significant impact on store format choice decision and enhances future purchase intention which positively leads to store loyalty. If the retailer is more convenient then the consumers will be more satisfied and increases loyalty because they offer goods and services when and where they need (Pappu & Quester, 2006a). Thus the fourth hypothesis of the study was developed as follows.

H4: There is significant positive relationship between store convenience and store loyalty.

## 2.5 Product Assortments

Products assortment is breadth and depth of retailer's merchandises supplies available for consumer in stores (Tafesse & Korneliussen, 2012). Store layouts, designs and products assortments are critically important for developing store image towards consumers (Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, & Voss, 2002). Product assortments are extremely important for getting customer traffic in store and it also plays pivotal role in shopping environment, consumer buying behavior and operational efficiencies (Vrechopoulos, O'Keefe, Doukidis, & Siomkos, 2004). Grewal and Baker (1994) also note that product assortments influences shopper's price acceptability, which is positively, leads to purchase intention.

Ailawadi and Keller (2004) States that pleasing product assortments positively satisfied the consumers and persuade them to visit that store more frequently, stay at store for more longer time, purchases more products and crafts unique store image in consumer's mind. Moreover it also creates consumer's perception about the quality of commodities in the store.

The retailers who are offering greater variety of products they are attracting greater number of consumers to them and developing larger product assortments which makes convenience to the shoppers. It also reduces the consumers' time, travel and efforts costs (Dellaert, Arentze, Bierlaire, Borgers, & Timmermans, 1998).

Merrilees and Miller (2001) states that product assortments and store layouts is one of the significant factor of store loyalty, product assortments do not only gratifying consumers but also develop their wants and preferences in purchasing products. If the retailer has large range of products then the customer would feel more convenient in buying and visits that particular store in future (Tafesse & Korneliussen, 2012). Hence, there is positive relationship between product assortments and store loyalty. Thus the fifth hypothesis of the study was developed as follows.

H5: There is significant positive relationship between product assortment and store loyalty.

## 2.6 Store Employee's Service

Store employee service is defined as the confirmation of the requirement in the delivery of a service to the customers by the employee (Chakrabarty, Whitten, & Green, 2008). If the employees of the store are friendly and polite then the customers will be more satisfied and it also helps to retain customer with the store which increases store loyalty and repurchase intention (Jinfeng & Zhilong, 2009).

The frontline employees plays important role in developing positive store image to the consumers and the service quality of employees shows the service quality of the store (Baker et al., 2002). Service quality is a significant attribute of strong retailer names (Arnett, Laverie, & Meiers, 2003). PZB service quality model or service gap model by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) states that service quality as a overall evaluation attitude is measured the degree of discrepancies between the customer's expectations, perceptions and the actual delivery of the service.

(Brady and Cronin Jr (2001); Rust & Oliver, 2000) gave three dimension of service quality that are used to evaluate customer's evaluation about the service quality. The three dimensions are: (1) interaction quality, it shows communication and interaction between staff and customers of the store; (2) service environment quality, it shows the overall environment and atmosphere of the store and the availability of service facilities at the store; (3) outcome quality, it shows the actual service that shoppers or customer received at the store. Courtesy of staff is an important factor for sustaining customer with store which positively affect their loyalty towards store, If the employees are friendly then there are more chances for customer retention (Jinfeng & Zhilong, 2009). Hence, there is positive relationship between store employee's service and store loyalty. Thus sixth hypothesis of the study was developed as follows.

H6: There is significant positive relationship between store employee's services and store loyalty.

## 2.7 Perceived Price

Perceived price is defined as "What you get, for what you pay" in this concept there is understood exchange between money and the benefits offered by retailers in supermarkets (Sirohi, McLaughlin, & Wittink, 1998). When there is good perceived price it means that consumers are getting more value of their money at the store, which is swapping between perceived quality and sacrifice (Zielke, 2006). The price level of merchandises has significant impact on consumers purchase decisions or their buying patterns (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991). Furthermore, researchers have also argued that higher level prices at stores creates an impression on shoppers that the merchandises at store are higher quality products and the store have upscale patterns whereas lower level prices at stores makes impression on shoppers that the retailer has substandard products at store and have poor patterns (Sirgy, Grewal, & Mangleburg, 2000).

Bhatnagar and Ratchford (2004) found that competitive prices had significant positive impact on consumer's choice for selecting particular store format. It is also found that shoppers who are price conscious and sensitive to price select supermarkets

for purchasing household items nearer to their living places (Yilmaz, Aktas, & Celik, 2007). Study also shows that the price of goods and services plays pivotal role in selecting store format and had obvious imprint on consumer buying tendency (Mittal & Prashar, 2011). Perceived price is most influential factor for consumers in shopping from superstores as the customers have perception that the superstores offers highly competitive prices and value deals in order (Dalwadi, Rathod, & Patel, 2010).

Good perceived price makes the consumers more satisfied loyal to the store because they are considering that they are buying the products and services for less as compared to the other competing stores (Pappu & Quester, 2006a). Das (2014) argued that if the prices at the stores are reasonable it will enhances frequent visits to the store which results in increasing store loyalty and future purchase intention. Hence, there is positive relationship between perceived price and store loyalty. Thus the seventh hypothesis of the study was developed as follows.

H<sub>7</sub>: There is significant positive relationship between perceived price and store loyalty.

## 2.8 Store Loyalty and Purchase Intention

Arnett et al. (2003) defined the term store loyalty as strong commitment to repurchase a prefer product or service consistent in future. This definition of store loyalty is similar to brand loyalty which is explained in marketing literature. That is, the brand loyalty is simply related to store loyalty (Koo, 2003). Brand loyalty is the attachment that a shopper has to a brand (Aaker, 1991). Raj (1982) States that store loyalty is the shoppers' propensity to buy certain goods or services for certain time period at a particular store. Researchers defined retailer loyalty as the propensity to loyal to the store and make frequent purchase form that store and consider that retailer as a primary choice over the other retailers (Pappu & Quester, 2006b).

Purchase intention or Consumer buying behavior is termed as consumer's intention or objective towards specific product or commodity (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Purchase intention is also termed as shoppers' cognizant plan or his intent to do an effort for purchasing product in a market (Spears & Singh, 2004). Purchase intention also represents the probability of purchase product and service in future by the customer from the store (Wu, Yeh, & Hsiao, 2011). Dodds et al. (1991) states that increase in purchase intention shows increase in probability of purchasing in future. Study shows that consumer purchase intention is a willingness to buy goods at a definite time or in a definite situation (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014).

Purchase intention is an individual effort to buy product and services (Das, 2014). Purchase intention in the end results in actual purchase behavior (Luo, Chen, Ching, & Liu, 2011). When there is greater purchase intention, there is greater aspiration to buy products and services (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). Decision regarding purchase intention of particular product and service is based on assessing all products and services offered by competitors (Teng, Laroche, & Zhu, 2007).

The theory of reasoned action argues that purchase intention of product and service or brand predicts actual purchase which may results in loyalty (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000). Luo et al. (2011) argued that purchase intention may boost loyalty. Although prior studies examined the impact of purchase intention on loyalty hence, there is positive relationship between store loyalty and purchase intention. Thus the eighth hypothesis of the study was developed as follows.

H<sub>8</sub>: There is significant positive relationship between store loyalty and purchase intention

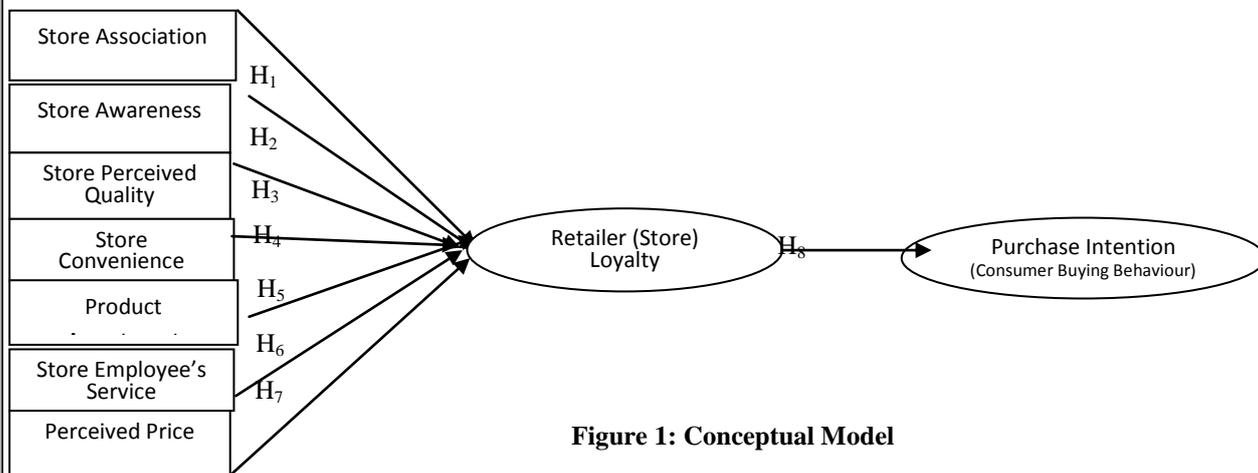


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on social survey and the nature of study was quantitative, time horizon was cross-sectional, interference of the researcher was minimal and the research setting was non-contrived. Shoppers were selected as desired respondents to collect the data in Lahore scattered areas to fill the questionnaire and to take the consumer point of view about choosing the superstore. This research study was conducted in scattered areas of Lahore through distributed questionnaires in different sectors such as private or government, banks, consumer markets, superstores, universities and also general business community. Sample size of the study was 420 out of which 375 samples were useable and remaining 45 were uncompleted and not returned by the respondents the response rate was 89.29%. Convenience sampling technique was used in this study.

Data was collected through questionnaire and the instrument was found through the study of various literature reviews. To measure the variables store association, store awareness, store perceived quality, store convenience, product assortment, store employee's service, perceived price and also the influence of store loyalty on purchase intention structured questionnaire was used including 42 questions. Moreover for getting the responses from the respondents 5 point Likert Scale was used Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. SPSS 16.0 was used for measuring the statistical analysis including descriptive analysis, correlation and regression analysis. AMOS is used to for SEM analysis and Sobel Test is used for proving mediation. Questionnaire which is used in the study was adopted from four articles and its validity and reliability was clearly mentioned in these articles. Following questionnaires were used as a guideline, there items were combined to formulate questionnaire required for this study. Elements of questionnaire along with their references are shown below

**Table.1 Elements of Questionnaire**

Elements of Questionnaire	Authors	Year
<i>Store Association</i>	Pappu, Quester	2006
<i>Store Awareness</i>	Pappu, Quester	2006
<i>Store Perceived Quality</i>	Pappu, Quester	2006
<i>Store Convenience</i>	Wang	2006
<i>Product Assortment</i>	Skallerud	2008
<i>Store Employee's Service</i>	Chowdhery	1998
<i>Perceived Price</i>	Chowdhery	1998
<i>Store Loyalty</i>	Pappu, Quester	2006
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	Summers	2006

As all these scales were customized according to the study needs, so reliability was required to be checked for all scales. The overall reliability of questionnaire was 0.967 and the reliability of all the constructs were also fall in acceptable limits.

### III. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**Table.2 Regression Analysis**

Variables	Beta	Std. Error	P
SA AND SL	0.617	0.037	0.000
RA AND SL	0.586	0.040	0.000
SPQ AND SL	0.671	0.036	0.000
SC AND SL	0.947	0.022	0.000
PA AND SL	0.719	0.030	0.000
SES AND SL	0.573	0.034	0.000
PP AND SL	0.823	0.029	0.000
SL AND PI	0.739	0.036	0.000

**SA**-Store Association, **RA**-Store Awareness, **SPQ**-Store Perceived Quality, **SC**-Store Convenience, **PA**-Product Assortments, **SES**-Store Employee's Service, **PP**-Perceived Price, **SL**-Store Loyalty, **PI**-Purchase Intention

The above table shows the regression results in which the  $P < 0.001$  of all variables which means all the hypotheses are accepted and supported. Moreover, the other values were also fall in acceptable limits for the further analysis.

**Table.3 Mediation Analysis**

Variables	Sobel Test	Sign. (Two tailed)
SA, SL AND PI	12.94319542	0.0000
RA, SL AND PI	11.92468327	0.0000
SPQ, SL AND PI	13.79926262	0.0000
SC, SL AND PI	18.52871418	0.0000
PA, SL AND PI	15.59069676	0.0000
SES, SL AND PI	13.02556110	0.0000
PP, SL AND PI	16.63264550	0.0000

The above table shows the value of Sobel Test it shows that Store Loyalty is a full mediator and there is high mediation as all values are  $p < 0.001$ .

### IV. CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Practical Implications

This research gives a broad frame work for local retailers as well as international chains of retailers towards developing result oriented and informed marketing strategies through the analysis of consumer profiles and buying behavior tendency in supermarkets. Furthermore, the results of this study can also be used as relevant guidelines for developing future business plans and making changes or improvements in the current activities of players in the Pakistani retail market.

#### 5.2 Theoretical Implications

Empirical evidence appears to support the view that significant and positive relationship exists between independent variables (SA, RA, SPQ, SC, PA, SES, PP) and dependent variables (PI) and mediating variable (SL). Supermarkets should

improve their store's setting according to the significance of these variable which leads to enhance the overall profitability. The findings of the study also shows that SA, RA, SPQ, SC, PA, SES, PP have significant positive impact on SL and then which results in PI all these factors must be taken into consideration while developing superstores because these are the attributes which encourages the shoppers to go and shop in superstores and affect their buying behavior tendency.

### 5.3 Limitations

1. Implication of the study is limited only to supermarkets and retail industry of Pakistan.
2. Considered only city of Lahore so other cities should be considered.
3. Sample size can be increased to generalize the findings of the study.
4. Survey questionnaire was used in this study to collect data from respondents. Any other method can be used to get more authentic information like direct interviews
5. In this study small sample was used due to time and cost constraint. Due to small size of sample the reliability, validity and generalizability of results are limited.

### 5.4 Future Directions

The future study should also focus on gathering the data from different managerial level of superstores. Factors like lightening, music, atmosphere and other attributes should be taken into consideration in future study. As the data is collected from retail industry of Pakistan, the results of this study can also be applied in manufacturing sector. The generalizations of this study can also be applicable while considering economic factors, like inflation rate, unemployment level and cultural context.

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