Customer satisfaction levels, store loyalty and perceived important store attributes among sportswear apparel shoppers in Soweto

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine levels of shopper satisfaction with sportswear stores in a particular township, as well as their loyalty to these stores, and the attributes they consider when selecting which stores to shop at. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 489 shoppers who patronise sportswear stores at the malls located in the Soweto township in Gauteng, South Africa. The findings show moderate levels of shopper satisfaction with stores. The results also show that loyalty towards a particular store is strongly related to customer satisfaction levels. The conduct of store staff, brand availability, price promotion and store atmosphere were all found to be factors that shoppers consider when selecting sportswear shops. No significant differences were found in levels of satisfaction, store loyalty and the importance associated with store attributes by customers of different gender, age and income group. The findings in the study are of practical significance in that they can assist mall and store managers to develop effective retail marketing strategies targeted at consumers in urbanised townships.

Keywords: Sportswear stores, customer satisfaction, store loyalty, township, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of apartheid in 1994, the South African retail landscape has changed significantly. Today, the country has one of the most rapidly-developing retail terrains in the world. Terblanche (2002:26) has observed that, apart from uniquely South African spaza shops (i.e. informal convenience shops), South Africa has a growing number of retail institutions that are comparable to the best in the world. One of the notable developments in the sector include the opening of shopping malls in areas that were previously designated for blacks, namely townships. Due to the under-provision of formal retailing as a result of apartheid laws, township residents used to

do their shopping in the main city centres or in shopping malls around places where they worked, which were outside their towns (Ligthelm, 2008). The township retail landscape was therefore largely dominated by small informal businesses offering basic products to a largely low-income consumer market (van Scheers, 2010).

Since 1994, there has been substantial growth in retail infrastructure and facilities in South Africa, particularly within townships. Many large chain retailers have opened stores in the shopping malls that have been established in these townships (Gauteng Provincial Treasury, 2012). Haggard (2015) remarks that the retail market in townships has boomed as a result of strong demand for an improved shopping experience, as well as an increase in the disposable incomes of households. Dannenberg (2013) notes that the saturation in some urban markets has also prompted major retail chain stores to exploit opportunities in townships. Adatia (2010) as well as Tustin and Strydom (2006) have pointed out that such developments in townships attract customers and enable them to enjoy convenient and secure shopping.

Considering the need for business managers to have a good understanding of their target customers' needs, wants and expectations, the need for research on consumers in townships cannot be overemphasised. Such research is indispensable if retailers hope to succeed in these new operating environments. Without the understanding this research provides, it will be difficult for retailers to effectively appeal to their customers. This study aims to contribute to this burgeoning field of research by focusing on perceptions, satisfaction levels and loyalty of customers of sports apparel shops in township malls. Research shows that shoppers make conscious decisions regarding the stores to patronise based on store attributes (Malan, 2011; Mathaba, 2013). Store attributes are retail environment related factors which may excite a consumers' desire to purchase products. Taking into account the caution of Chen-Yu and Seock (2002) against researching different types of stores together, the focus of this study is sports apparel shops only. These authors advise against studying different types of stores simultaneously because attributes that may

be important to customers when selecting one type of store to shop in may be less essential when they are choosing other types of stores. Theodoridis and Chatzipanagiotou (2009) also note that the importance of different store attributes varies as a result of store type as well as consumer characteristics.

Thus, by focusing on sports apparel shops in township malls, the specific objectives of this study are to (a) examine township customers' levels of satisfaction with available sports apparel shops, (b) investigate township customers' loyalty towards sports apparel stores that they shop at, (c) to uncover factors that township shoppers consider in selecting sports apparel stores to patronise, as well as (d) examine if there are differences in levels of satisfaction, loyalty and important store choice factors among customers of different demographic backgrounds.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Satisfaction

The main aim of most retailers is to have satisfied customers who are loyal so as to ensure longevity of business relations (Muhammad, Musa & Ali, 2014). According to Mukerjee (2013), this requires the implementation of a customer-orientated approach to retailing which reflects empathy, tracking of trends, and developing appropriate capabilities centered on the delivery of the desired customer value. Oliver (1997) describes satisfaction as the consumer's fulfilment response, a judgement that a product or service provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment. The level of customer satisfaction with a store is mainly based on results of a comparison between customers' perceived and expected performance of the store (Helgen, Havold & Nesset, 2010). Beneke, Adams, Demetriou and Solomons (2011) describe store satisfaction as the consumers' overall evaluation of their experience of a store they have visited.

When it comes to shopping malls, customers may associate their satisfaction with a mall as a whole, or with specific stores housed by a mall. The focus of this study was

levels of customer satisfaction with specific stores. As an outcome, satisfaction is caused by other factors, and in the case of stores, research emphasises the importance of identifying store attributes that shoppers regard as important in their shopping decisions (Chang, Cho, Turner, Gupta & Watchravesringkan 2015; Shpëtim, 2012). Store attributes are key to understanding customer response to stores (Hamrouni & Touzi, 2011).

Store Attributes

Previous studies indicate that consumers consider varied factors when choosing a store to patronise. Research conducted by Hassan, Muhammad and Abu Bakar (2010), Martinez-Ruiz, Jimenez-Zarco and Izquierdo-Yusta (2010) and Lu and Lukoma (2011) have found that product related attributes (price, product quality), customer service related attributes (reliable and quality services provided) and store related attributes (convenient location and operational hours) have a significant and positive influence on store choice. Focusing specifically on sportswear retailers, Chang et al., (2015) state that sportswear apparel stores need to provide a broad assortment of good quality merchandise that is reasonably priced. Sinha and Banerjee (2004) observe that merchandise variety has been found to play an influential role in the store choice decisions of most consumers. Shoppers are known to prefer a store that offers an assortment of varied and appealing merchandise over one that does not (Dhurup & Oosthuyzen, 2010). Briesch, Chintagunta and Fox (2009) have also highlighted that depth, breadth, and quality of the assortment of merchandise available significantly affects store choice.

Levels of customer satisfaction, which coincide with store choice, are influenced by store attributes. Affordable prices and a varied assortment of good quality products have been found to influence consumers' level of satisfaction (Huddleston, Whipple, Mattick & Lee, 2009; Tanwar, 2013). Rahulan, Troynikov and Watson (2015) report that sportswear apparel consumers prefer shopping where sales assistants are experts and are, as a result, able to fully explain different product attributes and

usage. Retailers who have helpful, courteous and knowledgeable employees tend to have high levels of store satisfaction (Lee, 2015). Chang et al. (2015) have found that dedicated sales assistants and pleasant store atmosphere have a positive impact on satisfaction, which increases the chance that sportswear apparel shoppers will revisit the store. According to Medrano, Olarte-Pascual, Pelegrin-Borondo and Sierra-Murillo (2016) and Pareek (2014), customer communication methods and personal attention are important antecedents of customer satisfaction. Retailers who provide quality service increase the likelihood of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Shpëtim, 2012).

Store loyalty

Oliver (1997) defines store loyalty as the deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronise a store consistently in the future. Consumers express loyalty by revisiting the same store (De Wulf & Odekerken-Schroder, 2003). Shoppers tend to become committed to a store whenever they feel that their needs are being met by the products and services offered (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). Caruana (2002) suggests that loyalty comprises two dimensions: attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. The dimension of attitudinal loyalty is measured by psychological commitment to the store of the targeted group of consumers, while the behavioural loyalty focuses on continual purchases from the same retailer (Bowen & Chen, 2001). Research conducted by Yi and La (2004) reveals that loyal customers tend to maintain both an attitudinal and behavioural tendency towards a preferred store over time. Dimitriades (2006), as well as Grah and Tominc (2015), remark that loyal customers are potentially more profitable to retailers as they commonly become a useful source of increasing number of customers through positive word of mouth (WOM). Scholars such as Rundle-Thiele (2005) and Noordhoff, Pauwels and Schronder (2004) have found that loyal customers are less likely to shop around.

Rowley (2005) has proposed a model of loyalty known as 4C, which divides customers divided into four categories. These are captives, convenience seekers, contented customers, and committed customers. According to the model:

- Captive customers are defined as those who continually buy from the same retailer because there are no other choices;
- Convenience seeker customers are always driven to a store by factors such as the physical proximity, operating hours and convenience;
- Contented customers are those customers with favourable positive attitudes but with passive behaviour and they do not benefit from any other services or products related to the retailer;
- Committed customers always purchase from the same retailer, and these kinds of customers always spread positive WOM to people around them.

Curth, Uhrich and Benkenstein (2014) view commitment as a key determining factor of maintaining customers' relationships with a service organisation. Dagger, David and Ng (2011) suggest that business firms wishing to encourage customer commitment must devote time and invest in their desires, be responsive and put more effort into managing that relationship. Research shows that the higher the level of customer commitment, the more willing the customer is to spread positive word of mouth (Hur, Park & Kim, 2010; Ou, Shih, Chen & Wang, 2011).

Wu (2011) argues that customer loyalty may be achieved in the following two ways: increasing satisfaction, and building switching barriers. While this is so, it is however important to note that only highly satisfied customers are likely to reflect true commitment towards a retail outlet (Lee, Lee & Kang, 2010). Ganguli and Kumar (2008) contend that customer satisfaction plays an important role in influencing whether or not consumers will buy from the same store again. Terblanche and Boshoff (2006), as well as Ibrahim and Najjar (2008), report that satisfaction with overall in-store encounters influences consumers' attitude towards the store. Chen-Yu and Hong (2002), having examined after-consumption responses of apparel, have found that satisfaction increases the possibility of positive future actions,

including brand or store switching reluctance and willingness to spread word of mouth. Accordingly, it is hypothesised in this study that: Customer satisfaction with a sports retail store has a positive influence on loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

Research design and target population

This study employed a quantitative research design, using the survey technique. This research design has the benefit of allowing for the collection of data from a large number of respondents (Zikmund & Babin, 2016). Collection of data from a large number of respondents was important in this study in order to allow for statistical hypothesis testing. The population of interest was black customers of sportswear shops from a particular township. To reiterate, the study was conducted in Soweto in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

Sampling and data collection

As there was no readily available list of sportswear customers from which to draw a random sample, the nonprobability sampling method in the form of convenience sampling was used to select respondents. Willing respondents who were 18 years and above were allowed to participate in the study.

Data collection was done using a self-administered structured questionnaire. A mall intercept survey was employed for this study. This type of survey was chosen because of its low cost and because it is known to yield reliable responses (Wiid & Diggines, 2009). The study made use of multi-item scales to measure store attributes, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The scales used were adapted from past studies. Use of scales adapted from past studies helps enhance validity of measures (Hair, Celsi, Oritinau & Busg, 2013:166). Store attributes was measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = extremely unimportant to 7 = extremely important, and the items used were adapted from those used by Wang and Ha (2011). Customer satisfaction was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, and the items used were adapted from

Ha and Son (2014). Customer loyalty was measured on 5-point scale where 1 = definitely unlikely and 5 = definitely likely, using items adapted from Grah and Tominc (2015).

A draft copy of the questionnaire was pre-tested on a convenient sample of five respondents with the aim of checking questions that were not very clear to respondents and correcting them. The final questionnaires were administered at three shopping malls in the Soweto area, namely Jabulani mall, Protea Gardens mall and Southgate mall. Trained field workers assisted with this. By the end of the data collection process, a total of 489 usable questionnaires were received. The sample size is comparable to that used in other consumer studies focused on store choice, including those conducted by Morschett, Swoboda and Foscht (2005), Carpenter and Moore (2006), and Wirtz, Mattila and Tan (2007). Ethical guidelines, as elucidated by Lutabingwa and Nethonzhe (2006:697) were adhered to throughout this study. These included ensuring informed consent and voluntary participation by respondents, keeping the identity of respondents confidential and anonymous, as well as ensuring professionalism during fieldwork and data analysis.

The sample in this study comprised 51 percent males, and 49 percent were females. In terms of age, 62.6 percent of the respondents were below 30 years of age, 37.4 percent were between 30 and 59 years of age, and only 2 percent of respondents were aged over 59. The majority of the respondents (58.1 percent) were in the lower income group, earning an annual income of less than R100,000 per year. Those earning an annual income between R100,000 and R200,000 were 26.8 percent of the respondents while 9.4 percent were earning an income between R200,000 and R300,000 per year, 1 percent were earning an annual income between R400,000 and R500,000 and only 0.8 percent of respondents earned annual incomes above R600,000

Data analysis

Version 22.0 of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. The main statistical tools used include descriptive analysis, an independent sample t test, an analysis of variance, and regression analysis. Before the main analysis, all multi-item constructs were tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. According to Zikmund and Babin (2016), alpha values of .7 and above indicate satisfactory levels of construct reliability. The results, presented in Table 1, show that all constructs had alpha coefficients greater than .7. The values ranged from .757 to .917, indicating acceptable levels of reliability.

Table 1: Construct reliability.

Construct	Items	Alpha Coefficient
Customer satisfaction with store/s	- I am satisfied with my decision to purchase sportswear at this/these store/s - I made a wise decision to purchase sportswear at this/these store/s - When I finished my shopping and come out of this/these store/s, I feel like I did the right thing - I am satisfied with my shopping experiences in this/these store/s - This/these store/s meets my expectations	.881
Customer loyalty	- I would continue to patronize this store in the future - I would recommend this store to a friend - I am committed to maintaining my purchase at this store in the future - I plan to maintain my shopping habits at this store in the future	.842
Store Attribute		

Sales assistants	- The willingness of sales personnel to help customers - The treatment by the sales personnel towards customers in the store - The personal attention displayed by sales personnel - The ability of sales personnel to respond to customer requests	.917
Store atmospherics	- The fashionability of the store interior - The style of decor in the store - The attractiveness of the decor in the store	.906
Brand availability	- The variety of brands carried by the store. - The availability of exclusive merchandise - The availability of branded labels (e.g. Nike)	.765
Price and promotions	- The availability of gift vouchers - The sales with marked-down prices - The availability of special offers	.757

RESULTS

Table 2 presents this study's findings on levels of customer satisfaction with store(s) where they had purchased sportswear, as well as their loyalty to these stores. According to the results, shoppers were satisfied with the stores (mean = 4.02). An examination of the levels of satisfaction based on different shopper segments showed that there were slight differences in levels of satisfaction between shoppers of different backgrounds. Male shoppers, for example, showed slightly higher levels of satisfaction with the shops than female shoppers. Shoppers of 30 years of age and above showed slightly higher levels of satisfaction than those under 30. Similarly, minor differences in levels of satisfaction were observed between shoppers from the different income groups investigated. Customers who earn less

than R100,000 annually showed a slightly higher level of satisfaction than those who earn over R100,000 and above.

Findings on loyalty to sportswear stores were similar to those reflecting levels of customer satisfaction. The shoppers showed moderate levels of loyalty, evidenced by a mean value of 3.97 on a 5-point scale. The mean for loyalty was however lower than that of satisfaction. This is likely due to the fact that although levels of satisfaction were higher, not all satisfied shoppers had similarly higher intentions to be loyal to the store that they had bought from. Examination of the descriptive statistics (means) of the different shopper segments shows wider differences in loyalty between male and female shoppers. Male shoppers showed slightly higher levels of loyalty to stores than female shoppers. Small differences were observed between shoppers of different age and income groups. The mean for those shoppers who were under 30 years of age, as well as for shoppers whose annual income was less than R100,000, was found to be slightly lower at 3.95, while that of those aged 30 and above, as well as those with annual incomes of R100,000 and above, was 4.02.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics: Background characteristics vs. levels of customer satisfaction and commitment intentions.

	Customer satisfaction		Customer loyalty	
	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Gender				
Males	4.07	.677	4.01	.813
Females	3.97	.701	3.92	.844
Age group				
Under 30	4.02	.700	3.95	.871
30 and above	4.04	.670	4.00	.747
Annual income group				

Less than R100,000	4.03	.680	3.95	.826
R 100,000 plus	4.02	.702	4.00	.828
All respondents	4.02	.689	3.97	.827
Note: The maximum attainable score for customer satisfaction and customer loyalty was 5				

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics (means) on the level of importance attributed to different store attributes by sportswear buyers. The results show that the conduct of store assistants (M = 5.13) seems to be of high importance to shoppers. This was followed in order by brand availability (M = 5.05), price promotions (M = 5.03), and store atmospherics (M = 4.95). An examination of the findings at group level shows that both male and female shoppers placed the highest importance on the conduct of store assistants. This was followed by brand availability and price promotions for both genders The category of respondents under 30 years of age had their highest mean on store assistants, and those in the category of 30 and above had their highest mean on brand availability. The conduct of store assistants was also rated to be the most important consideration by shoppers from the different income segments.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics (means) –store attributes and demographic variables.

	Store Assistants		Store Atmospherics		Brand Availability		Price Promotions	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Gender								
Males	5.14	1.629	4.99	1.622	5.10	1.289	5.02	1.444
Females	5.11	1.524	4.91	1.531	5.00	1.304	5.03	1.404
Age group								
Under 30	5.22	1.581	4.94	1.577	5.08	1.319	5.11	1.405
30 and above	4.97	1.555	4.96	1.572	5.01	1.266	4.89	1.450
Annual income group								

Less than R100,000	5.08	1.543	4.87	1.580	5.02	1.32	4.93	1.45
R100,000 and above	5.20	1.620	5.07	1.560	5.11	1.28	5.16	1.38
All respondents	5.13	1.575	4.95	1.574	5.05	1.299	5.03	1.423

An independent sample t-test was conducted in order to find out if there were significant differences in levels of satisfaction with stores, customer loyalty, as well as the perceived importance of store attributes among customers of different demographic backgrounds. The findings, presented in Table 4, show that while there were differences between the groups of shoppers in terms of levels of satisfaction with stores, customer loyalty, and the level of importance attached to different store attributes when choosing stores, the differences were not statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Table 4: Independent sample t-test – customer satisfaction, loyalty and store attributes.

Variable	*t*-test for equality of means					
					95 percent confidence interval	
	t	df	Sig (two tailed)	Mean difference	Lower	Upper
Gender (Males vs. Females)						
Customer satisfaction	1.473	473.701	.142	.093	-.031	.216
Customer loyalty	1.186	475.528	.236	.090	-.059	.238
Store assistants	.257	480.992	.797	.037	-.246	.319
Atmospherics	.546	480.925	.586	.078	-.204	.361
Brands	.791	475.750	.429	.094	-.139	.326
Promotions	.046	480.137	.963	-.006	-.261	.249
Age group (under 30 vs. 30 and above)						

Customer satisfaction	-.401	394.163	.099	-.026	-.152	.101
Customer loyalty	-.652	429.125	.515	-.049	-.195	.098
Store assistants	1.803	388.280	.072	.264	-.024	.551
Atmospherics	-.130	384.115	.897	-.019	-.308	.270
Brands	.541	395.919	.589	.065	-.171	.302
Promotions	1.637	373.450	.102	.219	-.044	.483
Annual income group (under R100,000 vs. R100,000 and above)						
Customer satisfaction	.163	429.100	.871	.010	-.115	.135
Customer loyalty	-.637	439.031	.525	-.048	-.197	.101
Store assistants	-.897	426.747	.374	-.130	-.416	.157
Atmospherics	-1.434	442.840	.152	-.207	-.489	.076
Brands	-.758	447.430	.447	-.090	-.324	.143
Promotions	-1.780	453.286	.073	-.232	-.486	.022

Further analysis was carried out with the data to ascertain whether satisfaction with stores customers had shopped at had some influence on their intentions to be loyal to those stores. The results, presented in Table 5, reveal a significant relationship between the two constructs. Customer loyalty to stores is significantly related to shoppers' satisfaction with the stores (p = .000; β = .683). The adjusted R^2 value was found to be 0.465. This means that 46.5 percent of the variance in customer loyalty was attributable to customer satisfaction with a sports retail store. Accordingly, the hypothesis that customer satisfaction with a sports retail store has a positive influence on loyalty is accepted.

Table 5: Regression analysis: Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Model	Independent variable	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Standard Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.670	.163		4.12	.000
	Customer satisfaction	.820	.040	.683	20.59	.000
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the estimate	Model	R
	.683	.466	.465	.605	.683	.466

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Ensuring customer satisfaction is one of the core concerns in a business's activities. Managers of shopping malls need to ensure that they attract a mix of stores to their malls that will provide customers with a satisfactory shopping experience. The findings of this study show that the surveyed customers of sportswear stores were moderately satisfied with the store(s) they had bought from. The findings also show positive relations between satisfaction and loyalty for sportswear stores in the area. The positive link found between customer satisfaction and loyalty is in line with arguments presented in past studies that looked at similar concepts, including those conducted by Ganguli and Kumar (2008) and Grace and O'Cass (2005). Similar attributes examined in this study were considered to be important by shoppers, as evidenced by mean values which were all higher than 4.5 on a 5-point scale. The findings in this study reveal that the conduct of staff is the most important attribute considered by shoppers, and that is in line with the results of Hamrouni and Touzi (2011) who noted that shoppers consider a wide range of factors when deciding which stores to patronise. An examination of customer satisfaction, loyalty, as well as store attributes which are considered to be important showed no significant differences in the way shoppers of different demographic backgrounds perceived these. Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff, Terblanche, Elliot and Klopper (2010)

emphasise the importance of marketers examining segments in their market in order to ensure that marketing appeals to the needs and wants of all targeted customers.

The findings in this study have significant implications for managers of malls, as well as for individual stores, particularly those moving into townships to serve previously underserved markets in South Africa. When it comes to satisfaction with stores, managers of malls need to carefully consider the stores that are likely to appeal to customers in their respective areas. Retailers which not only attract customers but also satisfies their needs are likely to enhance traffic volumes to their malls.

Managers of malls and stores need to realise that customer satisfaction and loyalty are outcomes of their needs and wants being satisfied. Before these needs and wants can be satisfied, managers need to have an idea of factors that shoppers consider to be important when choosing stores to patronise. A knowledge of these factors can enable managers to put measures in place and devote resources to areas that are likely to impact satisfaction and loyalty. Managers need to appreciate that while assessing performance of their individual stores on the basis of factors that may be important to customers is a good idea, they first need to identify factors that shoppers consider to be important. This study contributes to this knowledge, and specifically illuminates the need for managers to pay special attention to conduct of store staff towards shoppers. The findings show that shoppers look for staff that show high levels of readiness and willingness to serve them, who treat them well and give them personal attention. Shoppers also value sales personnel that are knowledgeable about products and services on offer, and who can respond well to customer requests. Managers can ensure that they recruit staff with good interpersonal skills and provide ongoing training on good customer service. Store managers and staff in township malls need to realise that the fact that they may dealing with many customers who may not be in high income groups does not mean that service standards can be lowered. The notion that 'the customer is king' needs to be embraced, irrespective of the social standing of the customers.

When it comes to product availability, sportswear shops in malls are known to carry branded products. Managers of such stores in townships need to realise that customers who visit their stores have similar expectations as those from high socio-economic neighbourhoods when it comes to expected products. The findings in this study show that customers expect sportswear stores in township malls to carry a variety of brands, including exclusive merchandise that cannot be found elsewhere. Keeping in mind that there are many customers in the neighbourhoods that surround such malls from lower income groups, one way in which such stores can appeal to customers is by making use of price promotions. The findings in this study show that the availability of gift vouchers, marked-down prices and special offers were considered important by the respondents in their selection of sportswear stores to buy from. While store atmospherics had a lower mean than the other factors examined, managers need to take this factor into consideration when trying to appeal to shoppers. The mean value shows that shoppers do regard the décor and overall attractiveness of stores as an important factor.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study set out to examine the levels of shopper satisfaction with sportswear shops in a particular township, their store loyalty and important factors that influence their store choice. From the findings, it can be concluded that levels of shopper satisfaction and loyalty are rather moderate. It can further be concluded that customer loyalty to stores is positively related to shopper satisfaction with those stores. As for important factors that shoppers consider when deciding on which stores to shop at, the most important factor is the conduct of staff, followed by brand availability. Price promotions as well as appealing store atmospherics are also considered important by shoppers.

While the findings in the study have significant implications for managers, they are not without limitations. These limitations offer opportunities for further study. The main limitations of the study include the fact that the sample was drawn from a limited geographical area, namely Soweto. In addition, non-probability sampling in the form

of convenience sampling was used in selecting respondents, and future studies should consider drawing samples from many townships and using large sample sizes drawn using probability sampling methods in order to enhance the generalisability of findings to the wider population. Future studies can also expand the target population by focusing on other types of retail shops, and not just sportswear shops, as was the case in this study. Such studies can ascertain whether there are differences in customers' perceptions based on type of retail stores.

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