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CHRISTINE DE MEYER-HEYDENRYCH

University of Johannesburg, South Africa

NICOLE CUNNINGHAM

University of Johannesburg, South Africa

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMERS' DECISION ABOUT WHICH INTERNATIONAL CLOTHING RETAILER TO PURCHASE FROM: A SOUTH AFRICAN VALUE AND IMAGE PERSPECTIVE

Abstract:

Many international clothing retailers (e.g., Cotton On, H&M, and Zara) have entered emerging market economies such as South Africa (Tanusondjaja, Greenacre, Banelis, Truong & Andrews, 2015:783; Euromonitor, 2017) due to their benefits such as economic growth, increased consumer spending, large populations, and the rise of Internet shopping. But these international retailers must be aware that emerging market consumers, especially South Africans, exhibit different shopping patterns and have different expectations than their developed country counterparts, which will influence the retailers' marketing strategy. Therefore, to be successful, international clothing retailers need to consider which factors emerging market consumers regard as important when selecting an international clothing retailer. Previous research has indicated that a number of factors influence consumers' purchase intentions with regard to local versus international brands, including value (quality and price, utilitarian, and hedonic), brand (retailer) image, and country of origin (Ergin & Akbay, 2010; Strydom, 2011:12; Mpinganjira, 2014; Scarpi, Pizzi & Visentin, 2014). For this study, the focus is on utilitarian value and retailer image and their influence on South African consumers when they are deciding from which international clothing retailer to purchase. A positivist research philosophy, following a quantitative convenience sampling method, was used to collect 267 self-administered questionnaires. Data was checked for suitability, and a CFA and multiple regression were conducted to test the conceptual model. The study found that retailer image and convenience were the largest predictors of purchase intentions, contradicting previous studies of Scarpi et al. (2014), who had determined that utilitarian value as a whole predicted purchase intentions in the clothing industry. International clothing retailers operating in South Africa should therefore focus their marketing strategies on developing and marketing an image to consumers that shows quality, is convenient (e.g. availability of an online website), and provides value for money.

Keywords:

Marketing, customer value, retailer image, choice of retailer, purchase intentions, emerging markets

JEL Classification: M31

1 INTRODUCTION

Many international clothing retailers have entered the South African marketplace because of high levels of growth in this market. The South African market also remains highly lucrative to international retailers because of the quality of infrastructure and the high number of shopping malls in the country (Ndweni, 2015; Gaddy, 2016). About 7.2 million people aged between 25 and 34 will actively purchase clothing in South Africa by 2022 (Statista.com, 2018). Yet emerging market consumers are known to show different purchasing behaviour from that of their developed country counterparts, and have specific shopper profiles (Tanusondjaja et al., 2015:784). Due to the number of local players in the clothing industry, international clothing retailers need to ensure that they understand how consumers make their choices in order to be successful (Euromonitor, 2017). For this reason, research needs to be conducted on what South African consumers consider when selecting an international clothing retailer from which to purchase. Therefore, this paper aims to determine which of the four identified factors (namely, value through customer service, convenience, money and retailer image) will have the greatest influence on the purchase intentions of South African consumers when purchasing from international retailers. The rest of the paper considers the literature on the clothing industry and previous studies on the clothing industry founded on the bases of value, retailer image, and purchase intentions. The literature review, problem statement, methodology, results, and managerial implications follow in the sections that follow.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section describes previous studies of this topic, and focuses on the underlying marketing theories that underpin the study (value, image, and purchase intentions). The section concludes by describing the global and South African clothing industries.

2.1 Theoretical framework

The overarching theory of the means-end model developed by Zeithaml (1988) is considered for this study. This theory is important because it examines what consumers will consider (i.e., the means) when making purchasing decisions (i.e., the end). In relation to this study, this model assists in examining what factors consumers consider when purchasing from retailers. The means-end model proposes that consumers will decide which product to purchase based on a variety of elements, ranging from simple elements (such as product attributes) to the more complex element of value. From this model, it can be determined that value (e.g., those of price and quality) affects consumers' purchase intentions. The concept of customer value is deeply rooted in consumer behaviour theory, but it can be considered from either an economic perspective (monetary value) or a psychological perspective (emotional value) (Gallarza & Soutar, 2006:438; Strydom, 2011:12). From a shopping perspective, Strydom (2011:16) explains that consumer value can be founded in

product-related dimensions (such as price, functionality, and quality) and consumer-related dimensions (such as retailer image and customer service). Adding to this, Mpinganjira (2014) explains that consumers are motivated to shop for two main reasons: utilitarian and hedonistic. From a value perspective, Collins, Kavanagh, Cronin and George (2014:720) explain that utilitarian value considers the functional benefits of shopping (i.e., the cognitive components), while hedonic value considers the emotions behind the purchase decision (i.e., the emotional components). Lin, Cheng and Tsai (2012:4-7) and Ergin and Akbay (2010:116) indicate that four factors are important to consider when measuring the purchase intentions of consumers' when they select local or international brands. These four factors are perceived quality, perceived value, brand (retailer) image, and country of origin.

Taking the above into consideration, it is evident that value and retailer image play important roles in consumers' purchasing intentions when shopping; but the question remains: Which of these are most important to consumers when deciding from which retailer to purchase? Noble, Griffith and Weinberger (2005:1644) suggest that perceived value is important to consider from a shopping experience and retailer perspective. As mentioned, value can be either utilitarian or hedonistic. As Reimers and Chao (2014:2214) suggest, utilitarian value is most important from a clothing retailer perspective, as the actual clothing item purchased is the main consideration. This is supported by Bazerman, Tenbrunsel and Wade-Benzoni (1998:229), Bohm and Pfister (1996:137), and Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000:63), all of whom state that consumers who purchase clothing want to justify their decision on tangible elements rather than on emotional ones. The concepts of utilitarian value, retailer image, and purchase intentions are discussed in the sections that follow.

2.1.1 Utilitarian value

Utilitarian value suggests that consumers evaluate functional benefits before purchasing (Overby & Lee, 2006:1161). These functional benefits, from a shopping perspective, are that consumers will select retailers that offer the best value in terms of benefits versus costs; and, specifically, that consumers will consider the aspects of value in terms of customer service, convenience and, value for money (Sarkar, 2011:59).

- *Value through customer service:*

Customer service is regarded as all intangible and tangible activities offered by retailers that increase the value and shopping experience of the consumer (Kursunluoglu, 2014:528). Providing consumers with excellent customer service will add value to their experience and will increase their intentions to purchase from the retailer (Bilgihan, Kandampully & Zhang, 2016:104; Ha & Stoel, 2012:198). Customer service is generally designed and delivered by human employees, making it essential to manage this aspect of the shopping experience, as it can easily lead to either positive or negative experiences for consumers (Keng, Huang,

Zheng & Hsu, 2007:351). For this reason, Ryu, Han and Jang (2010:418) emphasise the need for retailers to educate and train employees in the necessity of providing quality customer service at all times, as consumers proportionally relate the value they receive to the quality of the customer service they receive (Bilgihan et al., 2016:104; Lee & Dubinsky, 2017:22). Customer service includes all aspects of service delivery and post-transaction service (e.g., after-sales service); and how the retailer manages this process will influence whether consumers will consider purchasing again from that specific retailer (Kursunluoglu, 2014:529, Strydom, 2011:16). According to Winit, Gregory, Cleveland and Verlegh (2014:104), many consumers perceive the customer services offered by international retailers as superior to those of local retailers. Therefore it is posited that:

H1: *Value through customer service* has a significant and positive relationship with consumers purchasing from international clothing retailers operating in South Africa

- *Value through convenience:*

From a shopping perspective, convenience adds value to consumers, as it saves them time and effort when purchasing, and can be explained by the term “effortless” shopping (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016:24; Chiu, Wang, Fang & Huang, 2014:92). According to Martinez-Lopez, Pla-Garcia, Gazquez-Abad and Rodriguez-Ardura (2014:191), providing customers with value through convenience will increase the chances that consumers will purchase from the retailer. This is particularly true in the light of consumers’ lifestyles: time is in short supply, and they will look for ways to save time and effort while still making a good purchase decision (Reimers & Chao, 2014:2215). Heitz-Spahn (2013:572) adds to this by stating that consumers will select a different retailer if their current retailer does not offer them value through convenience. From a clothing retailer perspective, consumers expect that retailers will make it easy to find and compare specific clothing items, as this can influence consumers’ purchase intentions (Emrich, Paul & Rudolph, 2015:327; Heitz-Spahn, 2013:572; Reimers & Chao, 2013:2215). Based on this, the following is hypothesised:

H2: *Value through convenience* has a significant and positive relationship with consumers purchasing from international clothing retailers operating in South Africa

- *Value for money:*

In a shopping context, this aspect refers to the value that consumers receive in relation to the price they pay for the product or experience. It has always been an essential factor for consumers when purchasing (Rintamaki, Kanto, Kuusela &

Spence, 2006:12; Oosthuizen, 2014:12). Juha (2008), and Saleem, Ghafar, Ibrahim, Yousuf and Ahmed (2015:22) explain that value for money also includes consumers' perceptions of quality in relation to the price they pay for the product, and that it will influence how they view the retailer. Heitz-Spahn (2013:572) adds that providing consumers with value for money is important, as it decreases the risk that consumers face when doing business with a specific retailer; and that can also increase the potential for future purchases. Many price-sensitive consumers will engage in switching behaviour between retailers, making value for money an important element for retailers to consider (Heitz-Spahn, 2013:572; Rintamaki et al., 2006:12). In the clothing industry, retailers are known to sell clothing at various prices and offer sales or discounts (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016:24). In many cases, international clothing retailers' prices are perceived as being higher due to shipping costs and other distribution and marketing costs; but consumers use price as a way to differentiate between retailers (Moneybags, 2015). Ergin and Akbay (2010:116) posit that, if a consumer perceives that they are receiving value for money, they will develop positive purchase intentions towards that retailer. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H3: *Value for money* has a significant and positive relationship with consumers purchasing from international clothing retailers operating in South Africa

2.1.2 Retailer image

Retailers use their image as a way to gain a competitive advantage and differentiate themselves from others (Davies, 1992:15; Lin et al., 2012:4-7). According to Kremer and Viot (2012:529), 'image' refers to a retailer's reputation, and can be determined by the quality and value they offer. Parumasur and Roberts-Lombard (2014:329-330) state that a retailer's image is based on consumers' attitudes and knowledge about that retailer. They also mention that how retailers market themselves greatly influences the retailers' image in the minds of consumers. Collins et al. (2014:720) emphasise that a retailer's image influences a consumer's decision whether or not to purchase from them. Consumers who relate to the image of the retailer will seek that retailer out and pay more for its products. Consumers' past experiences with the retailer greatly influence how they perceive the retailer's image (Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2014:329-330). Strydom (2011:16) explains that a retailer's image will influence how the consumer views the retailer, and will impact their shopping experience.

Consumers examine a retailer's image very closely before making purchase decisions (Diallo & Cliquet, 2016:1184). This is particularly true from a South African perspective. Kgosiemang (2015) and Naicker (2017) state that South Africans believe that international clothing retailers provide better quality products than local retailers. These consumers expect high quality products that are durable and attractive and are sold by trustworthy retailers. Based on this, Ergin and Akbay (2010:116) argue that it

is important for retailers to know which factors consumers consider important, especially from an image perspective, in order to be successful. As a retailer's reputation and image influence purchase intentions (Hosseini, Jayashree & Malarvizhi, 2014:226), the following hypothesis is presented:

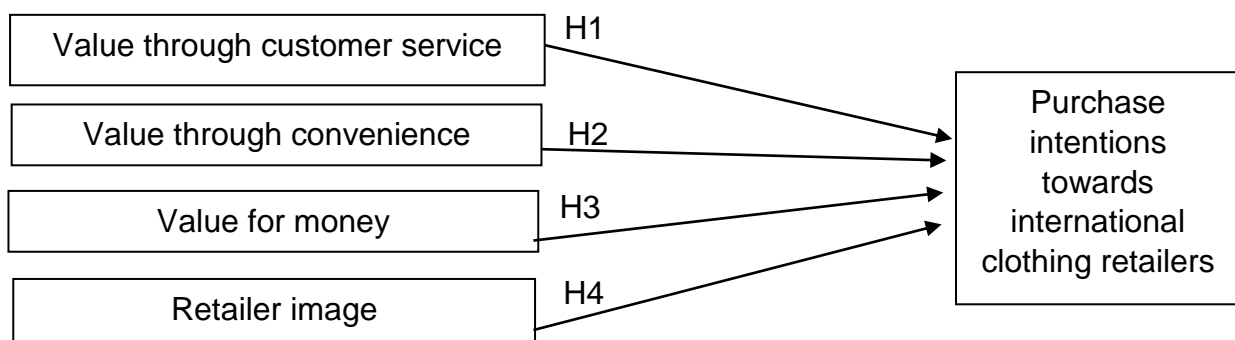
H4: Retailer image has a significant and positive relationship with consumers purchasing from international clothing retailers operating in South Africa

2.1.3 Purchase intentions

Kim and Ko (2012) explain that 'purchase intentions' refers to a consumer's intentions to purchase from a retailer in the future, and can be identified as an attitudinal variable. This implies that 'purchase intentions' refers to a consumer's future attitude toward the retailer. However, Haque, Anwar, Yasmin, Sarwar, Ibrahim and Momen (2015:2) also suggest that 'purchase intentions' refers to the possibility of a consumer purchasing from the retailer.

Although the link between each of the constructs measured in this study and purchase intentions is described in the previous sections, it can be summarised as follows: utilitarian value in terms of i) value through customer service; ii) value through convenience, iii) value for money, and iv) retail image have a large impact on a consumer's purchase intentions (Cheah, Phau & Liang, 2015:763; Hosseini et al., 2014:226). Understanding this becomes vital for retailers to be successful and gain a competitive advantage (Collins et al., 2014:720). Based on this, the conceptual model presented in Figure 1 is suggested for this study.

Figure 1: Conceptual model



Source: Author's own construct

As this study is based in the clothing industry, with a specific emphasis on international clothing retailers operating in South Africa, it is necessary to understand this industry's influence on a global and a local scale. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.1.4 Retail clothing industry

The global retail clothing industry is valued at \$1.4 billion, with expectations that it will reach \$1.8 billion by 2022 (Marketline, 2017; Amed, Andersson, Berg, Drageset, Hedrich & Kappelmark, 2017) with the top clothing retailers being Nike (\$32 billion), H&M (\$19 billion), and Zara (\$14.4 billion) (Euromonitor, 2017). The industry is marked by five trends: i) the growth of micro-fashion; ii) the progression of athleisure; iii) consumers purchasing products that are made sustainably and ethically; iv) the growth of fast-fashion; and v) increased sales over the Internet (Euromonitor, 2017). It is anticipated that international clothing retailers that offer fashionable clothing and offer customer value will be successful in the market (Euromonitor, 2016; Marketline, 2018).

South Africa remains a top choice for international clothing retailers due to the quality of its infrastructure, the large number of shopping malls, and a large growing middle class (Donnelly, 2015; Gaddy, 2016). The emergence in South Africa of international clothing retailers such as Cotton-On, Forever 21, H&M, Top Shop, and Zara has led to consumers having more choice and enjoying greater levels of competition in the market, with Cotton On showing vast growth with 168 outlets nationwide (Douglas, 2016). Bhaduri and Stanforth (2017:177) and De Run, Chan and Khalique (2012) argue that consumers in emerging markets believe that international clothing retailers provide better quality clothing, and so exhibit preferences for these products; this is another driving force behind international retailers' success in the South African market. On the other hand, many South Africans would rather support the 'Proudly South African' campaign and buy from local retailers (Kgosiemang, 2015). Amed, Berg, Brantber and Hedrich (2016) add that these consumers are more discerning and demanding, and do not follow predictable shopping behaviours.

3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Many international retailers have entered the South African market due to its attractiveness. As noted above, this attractiveness is a result of the growing market, the high quality of the country's infrastructure, and the growing number of shopping malls (Donnelly, 2015; Gaddy, 2016; PWC, 2012:145). The growth of the clothing market can be attributed to increasing levels of sales, which is predicted to reach \$128.3 by the end of 2018 (Statista, 2018). Many South African consumers are also inclined to support international clothing retailers, as they believe them to provide better quality and variety (Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2017:177; De Run et al., 2012). Although this market is seen as lucrative, international clothing retailers need to ensure that they understand what consumers consider important when making purchasing decisions, and adjust their marketing strategies to suit this market (Larkin, 2017; Babin & Harris, 2016:129; Collins, et al., 2014:720). Previous studies by Overby and Lee (2006) and Scarpi et al. (2014), supported by the studies of Chiu et al. (2014), Dhar and Wertenbroch (2000, Cheah et al. (2015), Hosseini et al. (2014), Lin et al. (2012), and Ergin and Akbay (2010:116) have identified factors that influence

consumers' purchase intentions in the retail clothing industry: i) value through customer service; ii) value through convenience; iii) value for money; and iv) retailer image. Survival in this highly competitive marketplace should be the goal of any retailer, but especially for international retailers, as they face more costs when entering a new market (Moneybags, 2017). Tanusondjaja et al. (2015) suggest that retailers need to conduct more research into emerging markets, as it has been shown that these consumers have different purchasing behaviours and shopping patterns than their developed-market counterparts. From a South African perspective, these international retailers will aid the country by encouraging economic growth through foreign investment and employment opportunities for locals, making their success imperative (Deloitte, 2015:6). Therefore this study aims to determine which of the four identified factors will have the greatest influence on the purchase intentions of South African consumers when purchasing from international retailers. Based on this aim, the following secondary objectives are identified for the study:

- To determine whether *value through customer service* influences consumers' decision to purchase from an international clothing retailer operating in South Africa;
- To determine whether *value through convenience* influences consumers' decision to purchase from an international clothing retailer operating in South Africa;
- To determine whether *value for money* influences consumers' decision to purchase from an international clothing retailer operating in South Africa; and
- To determine whether *retailer image* influences whether consumers will purchase from international clothing retailers operating in South Africa.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A positivist research philosophy was used as the basis for this study. A quantitative, descriptive research approach, where data was collected through self-administered questionnaires, underpinned the methodology for this study. By using a non-probability convenience sampling method, any person above the age of 18 who had purchased clothing from an international clothing retailer operating in South Africa was included in the sample. The self-administered questionnaire developed for the study was adapted from the studies of Arora, McIntyre, Wu and Arora (2015), Cunningham (2015), and Son, Jin and George (2013), who focused their studies on utilitarian value, clothing retailers, and their image and purchase intentions. The questionnaire included three sections measuring the constructs on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'), as well as demographic information. The questionnaire included a covering letter explaining the objectives of the study, and the fieldworker explained the respondents' rights if they participated in the study, emphasising that their information would be confidential and anonymous.

SPSS version 25 was used to analyse the 267 questionnaires retained for data analysis. This included using statistical tests of confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the structure of factors for each construct before a multiple regression analysis was performed (Suhr, 2006).

4.1 Factor analysis

Before analysing the data, all the assumptions for factor analysis were tested to ensure that the data was suitable for factor analysis.

- Number of items: Pallant (2007) suggests that, for data to be suitable for a factor analysis, a sufficient number of items and subjects need to be present. In this study, 10 subjects for the 26 items in the questionnaire were present, thus meeting the criteria of between five and 10 subjects per item.
- Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy: According to Pallant (2007), the KMO value should be above 0.6 and Bartlett's test of sphericity should be below the value of $p \leq 0.5$. The KMO value in this study was 0.870, and Bartlett's test of sphericity revealed a significance value of $p \leq 0.000$, which indicates that the data met all the criteria set for sampling adequacy. Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis could be conducted.

The confirmatory factor analysis, using principal components analysis, confirmed the constructs identified in the study as 'value through customer service', 'value through convenience', 'value for money', 'retailer image', and 'purchase intentions'. Eigen values of below 0.3 were suppressed for analysis. Table 1 indicates the variance explained by each of the constructs / factors. From the table it can be noted that 'value through convenience' explains 80.077% of the variance, while 'purchase intentions' only explains 50.022% of the variance. To determine whether these factors and scales are reliable, the data was subjected to Cronbach's alpha analysis. For a scale to be seen as reliable in the social sciences, Cronbach's alpha should be above 0.6 (Pallant, 2007). As indicated in Table 1, all factors showed a Cronbach's alpha value above the 0.6 threshold, indicating that the scale items were reliable.

Table 1: Confirmatory factor analysis – variance explained and Cronbach's alpha values

Factor	Variance explained	Cronbach's alpha value
Value through customer service	62.219%	0.847
Value through convenience	80.077%	0.751
Value for money	73.900%	0.646
Retail image	61.334%	0.892
Purchase intentions	50.022%	0.858

4.2 Regression analysis

The following assumptions were tested before the data was subjected to multiple regression analysis:

- **Sample size, multicollinearity, and singularity:**
The sample size of 267 for this study exceeded the sample size recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007:123) with their formula of $N > 50 + 8m$, where 'm' refers to the number of individual variables. According to the formula, to meet the assumption this study should have a sample size of 258, which this study exceeded by nine. According to Pallant (2007), multicollinearity should show tolerance values of above 0.10 and a VIF value should be below 10. The analysis showed that tolerance values were above 0.586 and VIF values were all below 1.7.
- **Outliers, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, independence of residuals:**
The P-P plot (normal probability plot) of the regression standardised residual and the scatterplot were consulted for the assumption of outliers. Mahalanobis distances and Cooks distance were also considered. No outliers were identified from the data. Therefore, all the assumptions were met for regression analysis. The results are discussed below.

5 RESULTS

As an additional analysis, the Pearson product moment correlation (shown in Table 2) was used to test the correlations between the factors and purchase intentions identified before testing the conceptual model

Table 2: Correlation of Pearson product moment of independent variables to purchase intentions

		Purchase intentions
Value through customer service	Pearson correlation (r)	.382
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000
Value through convenience	Pearson correlation (r)	.541
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000
Value for money	Pearson correlation (r)	.401
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000
Retailer image	Pearson correlation (r)	.495
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000

Table 2 indicates that *value for money* and *value through customer service* have a significant and medium positive relationship with consumers' purchase intentions to purchase from international clothing retailers operating in South Africa ($p \leq 0.000$ and r

= 0.30 to 0.49; Pallant, 2007). In addition, *value through convenience* and *retailer image* have a significant and large positive relationship with consumers' purchase intentions to purchase from international clothing retailers operating in South Africa ($p \leq 0.000$ and $r = 0.50$ to 1.0 ; Pallant, 2007), indicating that all hypotheses can be accepted.

To test the conceptual model in Figure 1, multiple regression was conducted; the model summary and Anova results are shown in Tables 3 and 4 respectively. Figure 2 below shows the significance values and beta values for the model for each factor's influence on purchase intentions towards international clothing retailers operating in South Africa.

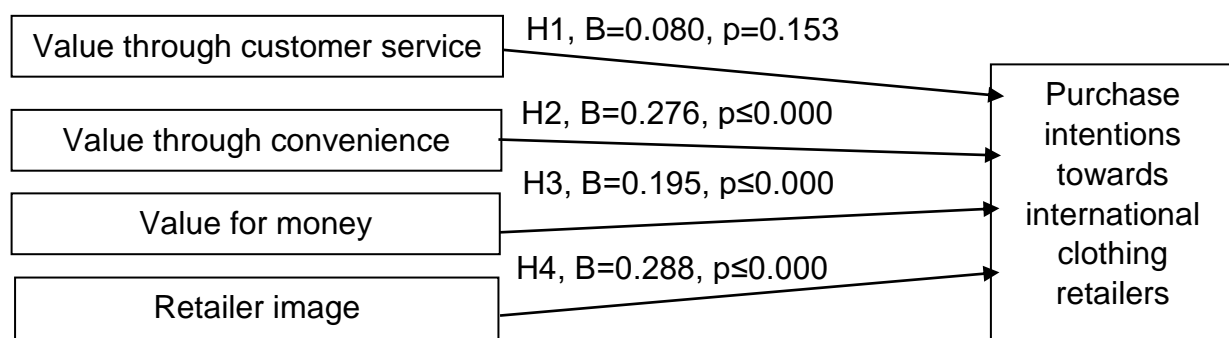
Table 3: Model summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted square	R	Std error of the estimate
1	0.633	0.401	0.392		0.530

Table 4: Anova summary of the model

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49.312	4	12.328	43.793	0.000
	Residual	73.755	262	0.282		
	Total	123.068	266			

Figure 2: Model results from the multiple regression for the conceptual model



The results of Tables 3 and 4 and Figure 2 show that 40.1% of the variance of purchase intentions is explained by the four factors, and is statistically significant at $p \leq 0.000$. Figure 2 indicates that 'retailer image' (beta = 0.288, $p \leq 0.000$), followed

closely by 'value through convenience' (beta = 0.276, $p \leq 0.000$), are the largest predictors of purchase intentions. 'Value for money' (beta = 0.195, $p \leq 0.000$) also makes a significant contribution to purchase intentions, while 'value through customer service' does not.

6 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results from the Pearson product moment correlation indicated that all four factors showed a significant and medium or large positive relationship to with consumers' purchase intentions to purchase from international clothing retailers operating in South Africa, indicating that international retailers should consider each of these factors in their marketing strategies. But, considering these factors together, it is noted that 'retailer image' is the largest predictor of purchase intentions, followed by 'value through convenience' and then 'value for money'. Previous studies by Chiu et al. (2014:3), Overby and Lee (2006:11620), and Scarpi et al. (2014:259) have indicated that, when combined, 'value for money', 'convenience', and 'customer service' are the largest predictors. This study has contradicted their findings, and illustrates the necessity of conducting more research on emerging market consumers.

Arising from the specific results of the study, the following managerial implications and recommendations are made:

International clothing retailers operating in South Africa must focus on their *image* as a retailer in order to attract consumers to purchase from them, as this was found to be the largest predictor of purchase intentions. This can be achieved by:

- Developing a marketing strategy that communicates what the retailer stands for. As Euromonitor (2017) identified in their retail trends report, consumers demand clothing that is made sustainably, and they want to support ethical retailers. These elements must be included in the marketing of the retailer to attract consumers.
- Creating an image that portrays that the clothing sold by the international retailer is durable, functional, attractive, and of good quality. This links to the 'value for money' aspect: consumers in South Africa want to feel that their money is well spent and want to reduce their risk when purchasing from international retailers. This is particularly true of retailers selling their products over the Internet, when consumers want to decrease the purchase risk (Heitz-Spahn, 2013:572). As Bhaduri and Stanforth (2017:177) suggest, international retailers are often seen as providing better quality products than local retailers. International retailers can draw on this fact in their marketing strategies, and emphasise the quality aspect of their products.
- For both brick-and-mortar stores and online retailers, the atmosphere and image created within the store should resonate with the consumer. As Parumasur and Roberts-Lombard (2014:329) suggest, consumers will select a clothing retailer with an image that matches their image and personality. This is an important aspect for international retailers to consider in their marketing strategy, as it has

been found that consumers are willing to pay more for products if they resonate with the retailers' image and brand (Brand Strategies Guide, 2014). Retailers therefore need to conduct research into local consumers, and identify that with which these consumers resonate. It is predicted that, by 2022, 41.3% of South Africans between the ages of 25 and 34 will drive the sales in this market (Statista.com, 2018). Specific research into this age group and their image is important so that retailers can resonate with this group in the future.

- Consumers share their experiences through social media, and want to create a social image based on the stores they support and the products they purchase. For this reason, as Ngubane (2015) mentions, retailers need to ensure that they offer products and engage on social media about products in the store that are trending, as consumers want to have the newest and trendiest fashions.
- Although these international clothing retailers have their own image, local (i.e., South African) consumers and their culture must be considered. Retailers therefore need to conduct research into whether any elements of their image might be offensive to local consumers, and adapt their marketing strategies to the local market. Again, the statement by Tanusondjaja et al. (2015:784), that emerging market consumers exhibit different shopping behaviours and shopper profiles, needs to be considered by international retailers operating in South Africa. They must adjust their marketing strategy to match local consumer expectations and cultures.
- As part of their image, international clothing retailers operating in South Africa need to consider the technology offered to customers (e.g., online website, easy comparison of prices and products); the aesthetics of the store; the efficiency of the sales staff; and the service offered in the store (Strydom, 2011). International clothing retailers therefore need to ensure that they provide high levels of service, train employees in customer service, and design a shopping experience that will satisfy consumers.

Another significant predictor of purchase intentions is providing consumers with *value through convenience*. As stated by Kesari and Atulkar (2016:24) and Chiu et al. (2014:92), this specifically means making it easy for consumers to shop and saving them time during the shopping process. It is suggested that international clothing retailers operating in South Africa:

- provide convenience by offering consumers the opportunity to purchase from the retailer's website. As Strydom (2011) and Deloitte (2015) mention, South African consumers are enthusiastic about the use of technology when shopping. Although some barriers, such as Internet speed, still hamper the ease of use, many South Africans have started purchasing their clothing on websites such as Zando and Spree. As part of this strategy, it is necessary to provide information on the proper sizing and clothing specifications to allow the consumer to purchase the right item of clothing from the outset, to eliminate the frustration of having to return clothing;

- ensure that all similar clothing is placed together with correct and visible pricing and sizes, to save consumers time when they are searching for a specific clothing item and size in the store;
- ensure that enough space is provided in the store for movement between product items, to reduce the frustration of moving between aisles;
- have an easy return policy so that consumers can return clothing items with ease; and
- ensure that products that are advertised are available in stores or on the website.

A final predictor of purchase intentions identified in this study is to provide consumers with *value for money*. Based on this, international clothing retailers operating in South Africa should consider:

- providing consumers with a benefit or loyalty programme that can save them money or give them access to special / exclusive products. Just offering lower prices is not sufficient, as competitors can, in many cases, compete in the short-term with lower prices. Therefore retailers need to provide value through their loyalty programme with additional offers such as free clothing alterations, and delivery of products;
- Using discounts or sales or special offers at times when it will suit and add value to the consumer. For example, a 'winter sale' before the winter season starts will attract customers and drive purchases of winter clothing that are currently in fashion, which will add to the retailer's image. In many cases, retailers offer sales at the end of the season to get rid of unsold stock (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016:24). Although this can drive sales, consumers wanting clothing to match their social status and those wanting to wear fashionable clothes will not want to participate in these sales.

7 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

As with any study, this study is not without its limitations. Firstly, it did not consider the aspect of country of origin for consumers selecting a clothing retailer. Previous studies have found that this factor does influence consumer decision-making; for example, clothing from China is deemed to have a lower quality than that originating in Europe (Moneybags, 2015). In this study, respondents were requested to identify an international clothing retailer operating in South Africa from which they have previously purchased. According to the researchers, therefore, consumers were considering retailers they would purchase from, and not those they would not purchase from, negating the negative effect of some country-of-origin elements. This study also did not consider specific brands and the influence of brand names on purchase intentions. In addition, this study only considered the utilitarian value (i.e., cognitive elements) of shopping motivations, not the hedonic value (i.e., emotional elements). The study also did not separate international retailers with brick-and-mortar stores only from those

that only sell online. The study also used a non-probability convenience sampling method in only one area of the country; so the results cannot be generalised to the larger population.

It is therefore suggested that future research focus on other elements that can influence value and shopping behaviours, such as including the hedonic aspects and the country of origin. In addition, the study should be expanded to other areas of the country and other emerging markets to identify whether the same patterns can be identified in those areas. A study should be conducted to determine whether different factors emerge when comparing brick-and-mortar stores and those retailers operating solely online.

8 CONCLUSION

The focus of this study was to determine whether value through customer service, convenience, value for money, and retailer image influenced consumers' purchase intentions when selecting international clothing retailers in South Africa. These dimensions were selected based on the previous work by Chiu et al. (2014:3), Overby and Lee (2006:11620) and Scarpi et al. (2014:259), among others. This study is important, as it argues that emerging market consumers are different from those in developed countries in terms of their shopping behaviour (Tanusondjaja et al., 2015:784), and therefore that retailers need to adapt their marketing strategy when entering the emerging market and take into account what consumers are considering when purchasing from international clothing retailers. This study specifically found that retailer image, value through convenience, and value for money are the largest predictors of purchase intentions by consumers selecting an international clothing retailer operating in South Africa.

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