Identities and Store Image Formation:
A Study of Retail Consumer Store Choice Behaviour

Subhashini Kaul

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**An Exploration Into Social Identity, Store image
and Some Related Methodological Issues**

Identities and Store Image Formation:
A Study of Retail Consumer Store Choice Behaviour

by

Subhashini Kaul
Doctoral Student (Marketing)
Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad
Email: subhak@iimahd.ernet.in

Abstract

This theoretical paper develops a series of models applying social identify theory to the retail content. The shopper is conceived of as an 'actor' whose self-image and related identities impact store image perceptions. The paper address how identify conflicts are likely to be resolved by a shopper and takes into account the 'ideal' and 'actual' selves. Suggestions are provided as to how retailers could employ 'symbolic cues' to address different operating identities.

**Congruity between Store Image and Social Identity and its impact on
Retail Patronage**

Store Image

Store image has been defined and operationalized in a myriad ways. Martineau, 1958 was among the first to link store image or what he called as personality of the store, to the image that a shopper has of oneself. Martineau suggested that a shopper is unable to differentiate based only on price amongst various grocery stores and would tend to shop at that store which is congruent with the self image. "The shopper seeks the store whose image is most congruent with the image she has of herself. Some stores may intimidate her; others may seem beneath her. A store may be acceptable for one type of goods and not for others." (pg 48)

Martineau defined the "store personality or image---the way in which the store is defined in the shopper's mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes." (pg 47) Examining the profile of customers of two Chicago based retailers, Martineau found that the shopper profiles were distinct in terms of social classes (income classes) though the retailer was unaware of this profile difference amongst his customers and believed the store had appeal for all classes. Martineau in his article lists the functional attributes as including aspects like location, price ranges and merchandise selection and illustrates the psychological attributes that contribute to creation of the store image: Layout and architecture of the store, Symbols (emblems) and colours, Advertising and the store Sales Personnel.

It is often quoted that these are the four elements that Martineau gave as comprising store image. For example Doyle and Fenwick, 1974-75 (pg 40) say 'he (Martineau) went on to describe four elements of image…'. To give another example Hansen and Deutscher, 1977-78 "…he (Martineau) suggested four ingredients of a store's personality…"(pg 60). But a careful reading of Martineau's article indicates that these were intended as illustrative of only the psychological aspects (and not a comprehensive listing either) rather than a store image components listing combining functional and psychological.

Martineau states 'economic factors will always be important…but unless the store image is acceptable to the shopper, price announcements are meaningless.' (pg 48) This does convey the impression that price and perhaps other functional elements do not comprise the store image. But in his definition, Martineau clearly states that both factors need to be examined.

Martineau in his article excluded price which he includes in the functional factors: "…there is a force operative in the determination of a store's customer body besides the obvious functional factors of location, price ranges and merchandise offerings."(pg 47) The focus of his article is clearly to examine the basis of image judgments given that "Different classes and different types of shoppers have different psychological outlooks on the world and different ways of life." (pg 50) When proposing the four *element*s of image, he states "There are many elements---architecture, color schemes, advertising, sales people, and *others*."(pg 51) This indicates that Martineau was only attempting to discuss the 'most important' psychological aspects impacting store image.

A careful reading of the article also suggests that Martineau proposed that these are more salient than functional aspects in determining store image, a view subsequently supported by Sirgy and Samli, and several others. The article also indicates that Martineau was focused on how different classes are likely to interpret cues "Women in modest-income suburbs are likely to describe changes in department stores over the years in terms of the modernization of the physical plant itself…"(pg 51)

This leads us to examine the classification not from the store elements perspective but from the perspective of the consumer orientation to interpretation of the store elements. What elements are seen as functional by one consumer may be emotional/psychological triggers for another. What is important for a retailer then is to obtain information on how cues from the retailing mix elements are perceived, processed and the resultant image created. In effect, this would entail distinguishing between the functional cues which as Martineau indicated, do not contribute much to store image formation, from those symbolic cues which have a much greater impact on store image.

This knowledge can be used to identify segments based on similarity of interpretation orientations and resultant cue processing. To the extent that this information is specific and not limited to broad based overall store image statements i.e. the underlying factors for broad image statements are known, the retailer can then provide/adjust the necessary cues to achieve the desired effect in the minds of the consumers. This process then enables formulation of strategies based on image research.

One of the earliest efforts to 'convert image research to image strategies' was by Reynolds and Gutman, 1984. They examined the different ways brand image was operationalized and reverse-worked their way to understanding how image was defined in different studies. Image according to them has been operationalized in many ways; as:

1. "General characteristics of object (the physical characteristics of object make up the image)
2. Perception (perception of the object is the image of the object)
3. Beliefs and attitudes (attitude to object characteristics combine as the image of object)
4. Personality
5. Linkages between characteristics, feelings and emotions." (pg27)

The authors argue that the last perspective of image is the most appropriate and finally define image as 'stored meanings that an individual has in memory.' (pg29) Unfortunately, in the process of reverse working the authors failed to reconcile the definitions and there is little focus on 'image strategies' as they set out to achieve.

Another and a more recent attempt to develop a common understanding of image was by Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990. They classify image definitions based on the emphasis of the definition into "…five assigned categories [that] include:

1. blanket definitions
2. symbolism oriented
3. meanings and messages oriented
4. personification, and finally
5. those with emphasis on cognitive or psychological dimensions." (pg 111)

They also list down sources of variations in image studies as emanating from "…(1) the names…ascribed to this phenomenon, (2) the formal definitions…(3) the components of brand image, (4) the instruments that have been used to measure it and (5) perspectives on the origin, creation, formulation and manipulability of brand image." (pg 110)

In conclusion, they give several definitions of brand image as being most commonly accepted in literature since 'there is no absolute standard of rightness' (pg 117). These definitions however, do not contribute to reducing the confusion surrounding image.

After this, there have been no other attempts to reconcile image definitions and bring order into this area regarded as critical in marketing. And this confusion about brand image studies is reflected exceptionally well in store image studies. This paper attempts to address certain key issues and in the process one hopes that the confusion regarding image definition and operationalization would be reduced.
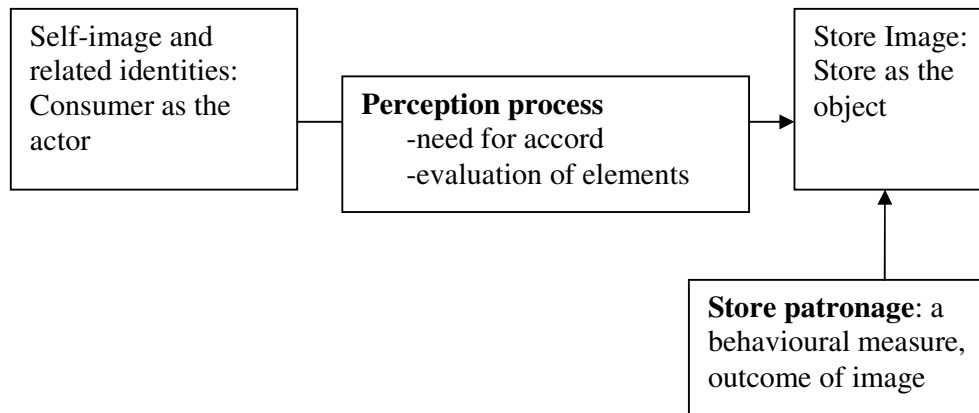
Defining Store Image

Going by present literature, store image is anything from the perception of a store in the mind of a consumer to a reflection of the attitude of the consumer toward the store to complex of associated meanings and symbols. The different definitions and operationalization differences are tabulated as an appendix to this paper.

To understand and put in perspective the several ways that store image can be conceptualized, one would first need to delve into the various entities involved in generation of store image.

Store image has three broad components:
1. the actor: The consumer who perceives the store
2. the activity: The process of perception
3. the object: The store that is perceived

Figure 1: The process of store image formation

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┌────────────────────┐                              ┌──────────────────┐
│ Self-image and     │                              │ Store Image:     │
│ related identities:│      ┌──────────────────┐    │ Store as the     │
│ Consumer as the    │──────│ Perception process│───▶│ object           │
│ actor              │      │  -need for accord │    │                  │
│                    │      │  -evaluation of   │    │                  │
└────────────────────┘      │   elements        │    └──────────────────┘
                            └──────────────────┘              ▲
                                                              │
                                            ┌──────────────────────┐
                                            │ Store patronage: a   │
                                            │ behavioural measure, │
                                            │ outcome of image     │
                                            └──────────────────────┘
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1. The First Component in store image formation: The Actor

The consumer for a store is anyone, who is an existing as well as a potential shopper, essentially all those that comprise the target segment.

Recent efforts in understanding the specific psychological and sociological aspects of the target consumer have resulted in research delving into the self-concept of an individual. As Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, 1993 state "Recent empirical findings show a greater correspondence between conduct and its relevant identity than with the global self." (pg 212) They also state "There is some evidence that an identity might be guided by an ideal distinct from the corresponding social role." (pg 214) [which according to them guides social identity]."

Thus we can conceptualize self-concept as being divisible and comprises 3 selves: the personal identity (both actual and ideal) and the social identity (both actual and ideal) and public identity (actual and ideal). Table 1 explains how these are different based on 'who' is the perceiver and 'what' is being focused upon (the actual self or the ideal self).

This paper also uses these identities in the sense of the working self-concept. Sivadas and Venkatesh, 1995 define the 'extended' self as consisting of "…self plus possessions and is that part of the self-identity that is defined by possessions…" (pg 406). Instead of limiting the self to only that part as defined by possessions, we can focus on the

'working' self-concept, or that part of the self which is operating in a given context at a particular point in time, in this paper, the context is of store choice.

Table 1: Understanding how identities operate

'What' is the focus	ACTUAL SELF		
	'Who' is the perceiver	**How I see myself**	**How I am portraying myself to others**	**How others see me**
IDEAL SELF	**How I want to be**	Id-PI---A-PI Domain of PI	Id-PI---A-SI	Id-PI---A-PBI
	How I want to portray myself to others	Id-SI--- A-PI	Id-SI---A-SI Domain of SI	Id-SI---A-PBI
	How others want me to be	Id-PBI---A-PI	Id-PBI---A-SI	Id-PBI---A-PBI Domain of PBI

A: Actual   Id: Ideal
PI: Personal Identity   SI: Social Identity   PBI: Public Identity

Identities have been defined differently in different contexts. The definitions used here are taken from the self-concept literature (discussed subsequently) and personal and social identities here are defined as most commonly understood in existing literature. Personal identity in this paper is defined as the bundle of traits and individual difference variables that define to an individual of 'who I am'. Social identity is the bundle of group association derived beliefs about oneself that define to the individual of 'who I am in social terms'. Public identity has been defined differently in various studies and based on a discussion and reconciliation of existing literature, it is defined as those aspects of an individual's self-concept which derives from the actual opinion of generalized 'others', which is made available to the individual either through a process of active feedback

seeking or through the social process of self presentation. The others here can include one or more persons, that is, the public identity can extend anywhere from a one-to-one presentation (for example a romantic relationship and the self presentations involved therein), to a one-to-many presentation (for example an eclectic party gathering where most of the 'others' do not belong to any salient personal/social identity group of the individual.)

Review of self-concept literature

Hem and Iversen, 2002, say that "Self-image has been considered a multidimensional construct including various types of selves, such as actual self, ideal self, social self and sex-role self. The facets of self-image that are most studied are the actual self (how a consumer sees himself) and the ideal self (how a consumer would like to see himself)." (pg 201)

In their article, Haslam et al., 2003 give the distinction between personal and social identity as developed from an early insight by Tajfel. They say that an individual's self-concept can itself be "…defined along a continuum ranging from definition of the self in terms of personal identity to definition in terms of social identity" (pg 85). The continuum as they indicate is of intergroup belongingness and related group behaviour. They define personal identity in the context of employees within an organization as relating to the "…internalized definitions of themselves as individuals…" (pg 84), and social identity as emerging from "…their awareness that they are members of a common group". (pg 84). In their continuum, public identity is not referred to.

According to Lantz and Loeb, 1996, The self-concept is made up of two distinct aspects: the personal identity which includes "…specific attributes of the individual such as competence, talent and sociability" (pg 486) and social identity from past literature is defined as that part of an individuals' self-concept "…which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." (pg 486)

Van der vegt, 2002 defines personal identity as "…those aspects of identity that are more unique and idiosyncratic -- the texture of traits, interests, values, and attitudes that are part

of who one is and which differentiate oneself from others." (pg 440), while social identity refers to "…those aspects of 'who I am' that include the social categories to which one belongs and from which groups one is excluded

–   either without choice (such as gender, race, age)
–   or those to which one belongs by choice (such as religious, political and sexual preferences)…" (pg 440)

Another classification that includes public identity in addition to personal and social identity is given by Cheung, 1997 quoting Triandis' classification of the self into the private self which refers to "…cognitions that involve traits, states or behaviours of the person, the public self [which] refers to cognitions concerning the generalized other's view of the self, and the collective self refers to the cognitions of the self that is found in some collective." (pg 349). Public identity in the paper relates to Cheung's public self and comprises that part which is concerned with how generalized others (in any interpersonal situation not involving the social identity) view the individual.

Sanders, 1990 distinguishes between self definition and self presentation, and takes self definition as relating to personal identity and self presentation as being in the realm of social identity (pg 662). He indicates that performances with oneself in mind relate to self definition while performances with others in mind relate to self presentation. Cohen, 1975 takes the view that all identities are defined in a social context, "…constructed by reference to others" (pg 95) The concept of self-presentation is best captured by the following statement by Cohen, 1975:

> "The propagation of an identity is a presentation of self designed in accordance with one's expectations of how others will react and respond; it is frequently informed by strategic attempts to evoke desired responses in others." (pg 95)

Using Sanders' criterion, we can say that personal identity relates to self definition while social as well as public identities relate to self-presentation. We can also say that self–presentation relates to social identity when it emerges out of a sense of belonging to a group (or groups) while public identity depends on situational factors defining interpersonal interactions.

While both social identity (SI) and public identity (PBI) are far more **emic** (that is to say they are cultural context specific) than the personal identity, they are quite distinct in their usage here. The perceiver for the PBI is 'others' unlike the social identity where the perceiver of the identity is the individual himself/herself. In simple terms, SI of an individual is own portrayal -can be understood only by asking the individual about his/her portrayal to others, while PBI is other perception-can be understood only by asking 'others' about their perception of the specific individual.

One can now define all the identities is terms of the actual and ideal self as well, defined in this paper as the intended (ideal) and the executed (actual) self. The gap between the intended and the executed can arise from a variety of factors; inability or unwillingness of individual to receive feedback, inability or unwillingness of others to provide feedback and distortions in the feedback process. It can also arise from an individual having different aspirational groups to which he/she would like to belong to but is presently categorized involuntarily (or even voluntarily) in a different group.

Personal Identity

Executed self: refers to how a person is (in behavioural and attitudinal terms) at a given point in time

Intended self: refers to how a person would like to be

Social Identity

Executed social self: refers to how a person is portraying himself/herself to relevant social groups. The paper refers to this as the executed social identity.

Intended social self: refers to how a person would like to portray himself/herself to relevant social groups. The paper refers to this as the intended social identity.

Public Identity

Executed public self: refers to how a person is perceived as carrying out the social norm behaviour as expected of him/her

Intended public self: refers to how the generalized others would like the person to behave in terms of the established norms

This paper restricts itself to the personal and the social identities. Table 2 gives the interaction effects between the two identities and the related propositions in terms of

attitudes and behaviour of the individual. For example; when the working self concept comprises the actual self and the actual social self, the individual is likely to be an active conformist displaying confirmatory behaviour to that identity.

Table 2: Interaction Effects of the Personal and Social identities

		Relevant Social identity	
		Actual self	Ideal self
Personal identity	Actual self	1Passive rebel -tendency to move to ideal self -conflict between actual and ideal may make the person search for ideal social identity while maintaining present identity to extent possible	2Passive conformist -tendency to move to ideal self -since social reinforcement and related pressure form expectations are high, tendency would be to observe all essential norms and display no rebellious behaviour
	Ideal self	3Active conformist - since ideal self corresponds to behaviour, a person would tend maintain status quo, believing that the behaviour displayed by him/her should in ideal terms be displayed by all -opinion leaders	4Utopian condition -similar to cell 3 except that need of individual to influence others would be low.

2. The Second Component in store image formation: The Activity

This paper conceptualizes the perception process as operating at two levels, neither being exclusive of the other:

1) **The Consumer Value perspective**

The consumer is capable of and makes the effort to evaluate each retail mix element, compares the performance of competing stores on each of those dimensions and based on the importance that each element holds for him, he chooses that store which performs the best in providing him with greatest value. This is a rational-cognitive perspective.

2) The Congruity Perspective

According to Hughes and Guerrero, 1971, "The self-congruity model implies that a person will select that brand…whose image most closely resembles his self-image…" (pg 125) They conclude their empirical study of automobile brand images with a finding that in some cases consumers are challenged by incongruity and exhort "The marketing strategist [to]…identify persons for whom incongruity is a challenge and those who are discouraged by it." (pg 126) Quoting Carl Rogers, Birdwell, 1968 said that "…if an experience is inconsistent with the structure of the self, it is either denied or perceived in a distorted manner." But this is not to say that all dissimilar experiences to the self are perceived negatively. An aggressive shopper would in all probability desire subservient service personnel at the store rather than an equally aggressive staff. This tendency to equate congruity with similarity is reflected even in the operationalization of congruity. Operationally congruity is measured as the degree of similarity between self-image and store-image (????). Though studies have shown that individuals "…were much faster at endorsing the trait adjectives …congruent with their self-concept than when they were not" (Hong and Zinkhan, 1995, pg 349), to account for an appropriate understanding of the linkage between self-image and store-image, this paper proposes that one examine the degree of accord. Accord here refers to the degree of harmony between the self and the store. It is used to indicate not just congruity, which, but also encompasses those incongruous elements that have a positive instead of the usually expected negative impact on store choice. The consumer seeks 'accord' between the self image (emerging from the 'working' self-concept) and the store image. Greater the accord, the higher chances that individual will choose to shop at the store

The Consumer Value Perspective

The consumer value perspective can be examined by gaining an understanding of both, the nature of information processing by the consumer and, the consumer motivation in shopping/visiting a store.

i) Perception and Nature of Information processing:

If we define the process of perception in terms of the cues presented by the retailer and the information processing mode of the consumer, we can better understand the process of store image formation.

Table 3.1 gives the resultant impact of the perception by which cues (either functional or symbolic) are processed by the consumer (either cognitively or affectively). Etic cues are those that are culture invariant.

The process of perception is acted upon not only by the consumer self-concept and the individual related inputs brought to the activity (like involvement, motivation etc.) and the store related cues that get acted upon, but is also influenced by the environment. The process of perception gets defined by how store cues are interpreted by the consumer, but this perception would vary depending on the situational aspects.

Table 3.1: Information Processing resulting in a store image

Processing of cues		Information Processing by consumer	
		Cognitive	**Affective**
Cues as provided by the retailer	**Functional**	Cell One Rational consumer (literature supported) Would PBI and SI operate here? (research needed?)	Cell Two Personal Value fulfilling (research needed) Would PI, SI and PBI operate here? (research needed for functional/affective?)
	Symbolic	Cell Three Emic and Etic cues; Impact on PI, SI and PBI *Symbolic Interactionism* and SI (empirical research needed)	Cell Four Emic and Etic cues; Impact on PI Impact on PBI and SI (research needed for SI)

The perception of cues, irrespective of whether processed individually or processed holistically, results in some attitudes. These attitudes are meaningfully related in the mind of the consumer to form an overall attitude to store which is the store image.

Social identity and cognitive information processing: Symbolic Interactionism

When linking social identity to possessions, Kliene, Kleine and Kernan, 1993, based on their literature review state that according to symbolic interactionism, "the self behaves according to the meaning it derives from continuous encounters with its symbolic environment, which consists of objects and people (including oneself)." (pg 211) They further state that:

> "Social Identity theory (SIT) makes symbolic interactionism tractable in two ways: by focusing on social nature of the activity pattern-product cluster relation, it portrays how people learn self-fulfilling behaviour. Second, by decomposing global self into its distinct identities, it elucidates which facets of a person's self are reflected in various products through activities. This tells us who he/she is. A person's primary guide for enacting a particular identity is its corresponding social role. Identity 'ideals' (what a person would like to be) tends not to be too distant from the norms of their social roles because they (like real identities) derive from those social roles, one cannot flout social expectations and expect to be treated congenially. Society, as reflected by the role prescriptions, constrains the ideal."
> (pg 212)

Schlenker, 1978 states that social identity theory (SIT) derives in part from the symbolic interactionism, which perceives people as symbol users and interpreters. Citing Goffman's work, he says that symbolic interactionism views people as actors who perform roles and in the process use products (or even choose stores) that indicate to others that the individual is performing such roles. Author also says that when studying self-presentation, there is no reason to exclude internal, personal factors. This leads us to examine SI and PI instead of just SI.

According to Share-Pour, 1999 "This (SIT) theory reconceptualizes the social group into cognitive terms. The social identity model assumes that group formation has a dominant cognitive basis. The individual is able to cognitively assess what different groups stand for, is able to perceive differences (though its interpretation may be subject to some bias)

and cognitively chooses which actions to perform given the norms as learnt by him/her over a period of time and through social associations" (pg 181).

ii) Perception and nature of consumer motivation

Consumer motivation can also determine how cues are interpreted. If a consumer walks into a store with a specific product in mind which is needed to solve a certain problem (application), she is more likely to be in a utilitarian-cognitive mode than when she decides to visit a store to spend a few hours browsing and indulging.

Table 3.2 shows how the actor orientation can impact the store evaluation. It also shows how the information processing is linked to the consumer motivations.

Table 3.2: Consumer Information Processing resulting in a store image

		Actor Orientation/Motivation	
		Utilitarian	Hedonic
Nature of Object related cues	Functional	1-cognitive processing -evaluation of store based on how well it performs on solving problems in functional terms	2-emotional processing -evaluation based on appeal of store to intrinsically held values and beliefs
	Symbolic	3- cognitive processing -evaluation based on symbolic interactionism as pertaining to social identity goals	4-emotional processing -evaluation based on sensation experienced at store, based on personal relevance

Hedonic consumption motivation refers to the pleasure seeking orientation of the consumer and is related to processing of objects perceived on the dimension of the pleasure they afford ("…pleasure, arousal, fantasy, feelings, fun", Hopkinson and Pujari, 1999; '…fun, satisfaction, and enjoyment…", Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Such processing is primarily emotional and feeling based, using greater sensory involvement.

The marketer/retailer seeking to address the consumer on the hedonic dimensions would identify cues that are essentially symbolic. Symbolism here refers not to the physical,

functional properties of the store elements, but the abstracted properties that they convey. These abstracted properties are learnt through the process of consumer socialization within the cultural context and are understood by the individual in an emic sense.

Though objects (products, brands, stores) have both hedonic and utilitarian dimensions and should be considered along a continuum, it is useful to consider them at their extremities for the sake of parsimonious modeling. (See Table 3.2) Utilitarian consumption is then primarily associated with problem-solving orientation of the consumer (Cell 1). The task specification is functional in nature, in terms of achieving a specific objective related to problem-solving. The cues provided by the retailer are evaluated cognitively for what they can achieve and how well they can fulfill the pre-defined objective.

Table 3.2 gives the relationship between nature of consumption motivation and nature of cues provided by the retailer and how the resulting interaction impacts evaluation of store:

Cell 4 (Table 3.2) is quite evident; symbolic cues processed on hedonic dimensions of consumption.

Cell 2: This relates to functional cues being processed in hedonic terms. This would happen when a functional benefit offered by a product appeals intrinsically to an individual. Thus we can associate this with the values of the consumer. For example; if a store offers a lower level of service coupled with lower prices and this appeals hedonically to a consumer, one can hypothesize that the reason is the format is in accord with the value system of the individual.

Cell 3: This relates to a symbolic cue being processed in functional terms. To explain this one needs to introduce the concept of social identity. Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, 1993 say 'The emphasis (of Social Identity Theory) is on activities-coherent behaviour patterns directed at achieving identity-related goals. Products are enablers. All products are instrumental, whether rational or hedonistic/cognitive or experiential'. (pg 211)

Referring to the functional theory of attitudes, Schlosser, 1998 refers to several attitude change related studies that have pointed to the necessity of identifying the relevant motives underlying the attitudes. They also refer to several studies that have proposed that

> 'attitude objects themselves (e.g. products) activate certain motivational concerns, or functions, across individuals. Among the identified functions are the utilitarian function and the social identity function.' (pg 346)

Referring to the work by Shavitt, 1990, Schlosser states that the "…utilitarian function pertains to the intrinsic benefits (rewards or punishments) delivered by the products and the social identity function pertains to concerns regarding 'self-other relationships and the expression of the self-concept.' (pg 346) She further argues that appeals that match the operating identity are more persuasive, "…appeals addressing the social identity concern would be more persuasive for social identity products than for utilitarian products." (pg 347) and vice versa.

The Congruity Perspective

According to Kennedy, 1995, cognitive development has broadly been taken as comprising four stages; from age 2 onwards to about 15-16 years old in the U.S. context. Though specific ages may differ across cultures, the development stages will remain the same. The initial two stages, sensorimotor and pre-operational are when the individual responds to and creates meaning of the world. The third stage of concrete development is when there is comprehension of abstractions. In the last stage of formal development, the person is able to make sense of such abstractions, put them in a holistic perspective and uses the entire learning gained from the socialization process to interact with the society. Thus, an adult would tend to store impressions of self as well as objects (the store) in the form of abstract schemas which then would be retrieved in different situations to guide behaviour.

This ability of individuals to lessen cognitive load on oneself by storing perceptions in the form of holistic schema brings us to examine the second perspective on the perception process: the congruity perspective.

Jordan, 1965 traces the evolution of the congruity principle. According to him, early literature indicates that congruity evolved from the principle of cognitive balance given by Heider in 1946. As early as 1955, Osgood and Tannebaum developed a model similar to the cognitive balance model but one which recognized that attitudes could be positive or negative and suggested use of 'prior knowledge of attitudinal values' for uniting the two (Jordan, 1965, pg 318). They called this the congruity hypothesis and subsequently it came to be referred to as the congruity hypothesis model or the congruity model. Jordan also says that Rokeach and Rothman in 1965 subsequently compared this model to what they called the 'belief congruence' model.

Rokeach, according to Jordan, challenged not only the assumption that attitudes are unidirectional (as in the cognitive balance model) but maintained that 'when cognitive entities are related to each other either positively or negatively, the new configuration undergoes a change' (pg 318) According to Jordan, 1965, Rokeach's belief congruence model took this reconfiguration into account and 'hence has better predictive value'. (pg 318). Jordan himself uses the term 'symmetry' toward the end of his paper in the same sense as congruity when he says that "…an arithmetic average of attitude and opinion ratings that includes both positive and negative ratings now seems unjustifiable…..all cognitive and motivational theories that entail symmetry, either explicitly or implicitly, are now open to question…" (pg 322) Jordan also says '…under comparable condition "disliking" has an effect (on attitude) while liking does not- another case of asymmetry.'(pg 322, quotes in original)

The congruity studies at this time were essentially attitude oriented, specifically attitude change centric; attempting to understand how '…two attitudes will cognitively interact with one another' (Rokeach, 1967 pg 533). Rokeach, (1967) in a later paper refers to this attitude interactive orientation of the congruity based models. The focus was how attitudes interact with each other to produce the outcome, which Jordan, 1965 called an impression and which Rokeach, 1967 believed finally to lead to a 'behavioural measure' (pg 534). In keeping with this focus, Rokeach, 1967 explored further into the attitude-entity phenomena. He states "The question may now be raised whether it is ever possible to obtain a behavioural measure of a given attitude-toward-object that is uncontaminated by interaction with attitude-toward-situation." (pg 534) This two operating attitudes

(toward object and situation) perspective was believed to enable an explanation into the inconsistency of findings so far. (Atwood, 1969)

The second stream of research moved away from the measurement related issues and sought to apply the congruity concept is different contexts. Birdwell, 1968 used the 'fact that the self is an accepted concept of personality…'(pg 76) and that the self image includes "…a thousand other ideas, and it is reflected in every human action, including the purchase of goods and services" (pg 77). Birdwell in his study explored into the 'relationship between an automobile owner's perception of himself and his perception of his car" - what he refers to as the hypothesis of congruity; and '…to show that, among ownership classes,…perception of several brands and car types was significantly different…" (pg 78). The intention was not to 'predict product or brand choice.' (pg 78) He used bipolar adjectives selected from a master list describing automobiles and chose those that could be descriptive of both cars and people. Birdwell's congruity was a tool to distinguish between consumers and a tool to consumer segmentation and his study was extensively referred to subsequently.

Several studies reported similar findings. Grubb and Hupp, 1968 used a student sampled based on which cars they had registered for to test similar hypotheses. Dolich, 1969 extended the hypotheses to products other than cars. She tested hypotheses for two publicly consumed products (beer and cigarettes) and two privately consumed products (bar soap and toothpaste). Her study also separated the real-self from the ideal self image. Her study reinforced that self congruity and most preferred brands are linked, but on all other relationships, results were equivocal (she found no differences between real and ideal self and any of the products except bar soap and that too only in case of men). All these studies sought to solve the problem of incomparable measurement of self and product by using the semantic differential with adjectives that could describe people and products.

The lack of ability to predict behaviour was one of the several criticisms against Birdwell's January 1968 study. Evans, 1968 questioned the use of consumers in a study who already owned specific brands. Though Birdwell, October, 1968, maintained that ownership did not impact such congruity, Hughes and Guerrero, 1971 showed it otherwise and specifically in case of automobiles.

Hughes and Guerrero, 1971, also stated that the 'The application of the congruity model to buying behaviour requires identification of the goals of congruity.' (pg 127). They also suggest two additional aspects to keep in mind: one, that a buyer may select a product that he finds socially more acceptable rather than with reference to his self-image, two, that some consumers' behaviour may be better explained by incongruity. Hughes and Guerrero, 1971 state 'The congruity model suggests that the motivation of behaviour is reduction of tension between an individual and his environment, but this does not explain innovative, creative, or curious behaviour, which seems to be a search for incongruity' (pg 125)

Several studies subsequently related congruity to the social self (Johar and Sirgy, 1991) in addition to the actual and the ideal self. The congruity concept has been applied across several contexts and fields (marketing and non-marketing). In marketing, a large amount of work pertained to advertising appeals and how differences in use of emotions and celebrities' images impacted self-brand image congruity. (Wohl and Izawa, 1980?; Kamp and MacInnis, 1995; Desarbo and Harshman, 1985). Several studies examine congruity between two entities and not necessarily that one of them is self-image. One of the earliest studies in marketing making the use of congruity concept without the self-image entity was the study by Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989. Based on Mandler's propositions made in 1982, they examined the extent to which a new product having congruity with the overall product category schema influences an individuals' information processing and subsequently evaluation of the product. Another example is Sharma, 2000 who explored into program-commercial congruity which explored the extent that '…a cognitive or an affective commercial for a product, …was embedded in either a cognitive or an affective television program'(pg 383).

The issue of incongruity does not seem to have been explored much into, probably because it was perceived to relate to specific instances of consumer behaviour. Even otherwise, as the definition of the self improved, the focus of congruity was to use the redefined self concepts rather than to question the congruity principle. Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, 1993 say that "…the little statistical success in demonstrating a strong association between people and the products they choose is probably because self has been modeled as an indivisible entity rather than a composite of facets". (pg 210)

The lack of focus on incongruity is also possibly due to the fact that congruity principle is intuitively appealing and many researchers have taken the viewpoint like Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, 1993 that probably it is only the measurement techniques that need improvement rather than questioning the principle/model itself. Incongruity has been acknowledged time and again (Hughes and Guerrero, 1971) but has not been accepted as requiring a reconstruction of the model.

Similarly, ownership impact on congruity has been reiterated in literature. Barone, Shimp and Sprott, 1999 found that product ownership acted as a moderator on self-congruity effects. But this has not dissuaded researchers from exploring into the predictive ability of the congruity model probably for the same reasons as incongruity has not been focused upon. Also results have been equivocal and the tendency of researchers has been to define the operating self-concept in a sharper manner rather than attempt to examine the source and reason for incongruities.

Heath and Scott, 1998 say that there is empirical support that individuals buy goods congruent with their self-concept from several studies: Birdwell, 1964; Grubb, 1965; Grubb and Stern, 1971; Ross, 1971. They state that "These researchers found that self-concepts tended to be similar among owners of the same product brand, but differed across owners of the same product with different brands." (pg 1112)

One of the most recent studies reiterating the congruity findings (with the predictive element) is by Hem and Iversen, 2002, who quoting several studies say that the findings indicate that 'most consumers select the brand that fit their personalities…consumers prefer brands that are associated with a set of personality traits congruent with their self-image.'(pg 201)

Present understanding of self-image congruity

Congruity definitions seem to have emerged from usage rather than theory. One of the early definitions of what the congruity theory implied is given by Grewal and Krishnan, 1998 who say that "Congruity theory states that consumers try to bring disparate information together and make sense of it." (pg 333)

Kamp and MacInnis, 1995 give a definition which is suitable for linking ads and self-image. They say 'Self-brand image congruity is defined here as the extent to which the commercial creates the impression that the brand is right for the consumer.' (pg 22) Several aspects of congruity have been explored in advertising, like source congruity 'defined as the degree of match between accessible endorser associations and attributes associated with the brand.' (Kirmani and Shiv, 1998, pg 25)

A relatively recent study by Sirgy et al., 1991, reviewing studies on brand attitude, classified related models into two categories: multi-attribute models which 'usually include only utilitarian or performance related attributes', and self-congruity models which have focused on symbolic or value-expressive attributes. They say "Self-image congruence models are based on the notion of the cognitive matching between value-expressive attributes of a given product (brand or store) and consumer self-concept." (pg 363)

Sirgy et al, 1991 gave a distinction between self-congruity (abstract schema used) and functional congruity (concrete schema used). Self congruity impacts functional congruity and has a biasing effect. Also, self congruity can be seen as providing the goals for functional congruity. Essentially, store image in self-congruity sense refers to constructing the store personality as it exists in mind of consumer and matching it against the self personality dimensions.

Johar and Sirgy, 1991 based on a review of several studies, said that "the two most common approaches used in advertising to influence consumer behavior might be described as value-expressive (image) or symbolic appeal and utilitarian (functional) appeal." (pg 23) They call these as the value-expressive versus utilitarian appeals. They further state "Value-expressive and utilitarian advertising appeals may impact advertising persuasion through two different psychological processes: self-congruity and functional congruity." (pg 24) According to them self-congruity is defined "as the match between the product's value-expressive attributes (product-user image) and the audience's self-concept". (pg 26)

Johar and Sirgy, 1991 also say that the value-expressive function is usually realized through self-image congruence models which are based on the cognitive matching of the

value-expressive attributes of a product with a consumer self-concept. These models, according to them, are of several kinds, including: the actual self-congruity model, the ideal self-congruity model, the social self-congruity model, and the ideal social self-congruity model. The social self-congruity model suggests that consumer behaviour is influenced by the match between the product-user image and the social self-image. And so on for other images as well.

Thus we can define congruity as 'the degree to which an individual (whether part of ad audience, a shopper or a consumer at the information search stage etc.) finds a cognitive similarity between the cues obtained from two separate entities and uses such similarity to form an image of either one or both the entities'.

Self-Image congruity, then, is a specific instance of congruity where one of the two entities is the individual's own self-image.

Cues and Congruity

Hem and Iversen, 2002, referring to Aaker (1991), they say that he referred to those individuals with a high match (between self-image and the brand) as schematic and those with a low match as aschematic. Aaker also hypothesized that 'individuals who are schematic versus aschematic on a particular personality dimension should have a greater preference for brands that are highly descriptive on that personality dimension.' (pg 201)

Johar and Sirgy, 1991 say that advertisers can use the self-congruity route to persuasion by understanding it as "a psychological process in which the audience focuses on source cues and matches these cues to their self-concept (actual, ideal, social, and/or ideal social self-image)." (pg 24) Thus greater the congruity, greater are the chances of the consumer 'persuasion'.

According to Hogg et al. 2000, the image congruence hypothesis 'provides a model for symbolic consumption which explicitly links the evaluation of product attributes with the interpretation of product meanings.' (pg 642) According to Heath and Scott, 1998, "…the process of consumers purchasing products/brands that they believe possess symbolic images similar and/or complementary to the image they hold of themselves is referred to

as image congruity." (pg 1110) They refer to the work by Sirgy (1982, 1986) who outlined the congruity concept "by explaining that consumers who perceive the product image to be consistent with their actual self-concept are likely to feel motivated to purchase and consume that product. This occurs because the greater the congruity of self-concept with a particular product, the greater the likelihood that the product will satisfy a consumer." (pg 1110)

The image congruity is thus the same as Sirgy et al., 1991 usage of self-congruity. Thus, self-congruity/image-congruity/self-image congruity examines attributes from a symbolic perspective using abstract schema where the referent is the self-image; and functional congruity examines attributes from the performance perspective using concrete schema where the 'referent may be an ideal product/store, a competitor product/store etc.' (Sirgy et al. 1991 pg 373)

Self-Store image congruity

Primarily congruity has been applied to the self-image and one other entity: most commonly to ad, brand and store. Substitution of brand with store was recognized as applicable in congruity studies as early as 1974-75 when Doyle and Fenwick stated that "…considerable evidence has been amassed to suggest that shoppers seek stores whose image is congruent with their own self-image." (pg 41)

Social Identity and Congruity

Hogg et al, 2000 suggest a model incorporating social identity and internal and external congruence. "The conceptual framework recognizes that consumers have different propensities towards the visible aspects of consumption (e.g. product categories; brand labels) to pursue the maintenance of self-esteem via the enactment of social identity, and proposes intrinsic and extrinsic congruence. Intrinsic congruence represents the relationship between internally driven attitudes of value expressiveness and the functions of products and services. Extrinsic congruence represents the relationship between externally driven attitudes of social adjustment and the functions of products and services." (pg 646) This implies that by their definition, social adjustment of both the public and the collective self operates under extrinsic congruity while the intrinsic congruity applies to the private self.

Hogg et al., 2002 have probably called the relationship between attitudes and products as extrinsic congruence because they are referring to an 'adjustment' by the individual in keeping with the norms. This would be true for a passive conformist or a passive rebel, but definitionally excludes the active conformist, who would not be attitudinally oriented to merely adjusting socially but whose value expressive functions as well as the externally driven attitudes would both need to be congruent with the aspects of consumption, whether publicly visible or otherwise. To cover this gap, it is proposed that one associates intrinsic congruence with the personal identity and the extrinsic congruence with social identity.

3. The third component of store image formation: The Object

A retail store is the literally just a physical structure in spatial dimensions involved in the marketing activity of retailing. But all the store mix elements convey a meaning to the actor; whether in functional or symbolic terms. The store itself is thus a composite whole of all these mix elements.

Extending existing knowledge from brand literature wherein a brand is defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors." (Keller, 1993 pg 2), we can understand store as not just the physical structure but all its components, physical or symbolic, that is intended to signify it (the store) as differentiated form competing stores.

A retailer positions different cues to address specific identities of the consumer. Table 4 shows the positioning alternatives that a retailer chooses from, depending on the identity that is focused upon.

Table 4: Positioning alternatives using different cues to address different identities

Positioning alternatives		**Identity of the consumer as addressed by the retailer**	
		Personal Identity	Social Identity
Cues provided by the retailer	Functional	Cell One -Value-for-money; convenience (range and location)	Cell Two Products to maintain SI; generic products which are lifestyle specific
	Symbolic	Cell Three Aspirational, exclusive, brand centric	Cell Four SI reinforcers Augumented product focus, services and brand lifestyle Emic cues

Identity addressed by the retailer: Personal or Social

Cues provided by retailer:

Functional: appeal to problem solving application, involving properties of mix elements

Symbolic: appeal to instrumentality in application, involving abstracted properties of mix elements

It is possible that an identity is addressed using both functional and symbolic cues. However, intuitively one can say that social identity, which has a larger emic component, is more likely to use symbolic rather than functional cues. This is in keeping with the theory of symbolic interactionism, which in fact, perceives all cues as being symbolic in nature.

Understanding store image formation from perspective of actor's SI

Store image results from perception of the store mix elements arising from the totality of the experiences (may be formed without direct experience e.g. through ads or word of mouth) with the store by the actor.

In our discussion, we consider only adults; those who are past the formal development stage in cognitive terms. We are also focused upon the Domain of SI as shown in Table 1.

Table 5 combines the interaction between identities and indicates how store image is likely to be formed in a typical situation. For example; when the working self concept comprises the actual self and the actual social self, the individual is likely to be an active conformist.

The figure assumes that actual social self related behaviour is at any point in time within the threshold limits of socially acceptable behaviour for a given social identity. If it is not, then the operating social identity would be different.

The figure does not include situations where only the personal identity may be operating. It only considers situations where the SI impacts attitudes and behaviour. This paper also takes the view that though SI can be studied as a divisible part of the self, but when examining the behaviour of the individual as a consumer, one would need to control for the personal identity. This is because the PI and SI interact with each other (the PBI can be ignored while studying symbolic interactionism as it relates to others' perceptions and not self perceptions).

Norms in society that appeal to an individual would, over a period of time, tend to be stored as values within the PI. Personality traits may impact the extent to which norms are observed and in some cases even the social identity that an individual adopts. Even more meaningful when studying consumer behaviour, would be to consider the salient aspects of the personal identity operating in any situation along with the SI.

Table 5 : Store image as Actor personal identity and
social identity interaction oriented

		Relevant Social identity	
		Actual self	Ideal self
Personal identity	Actual self	1Passive rebel -tendency to move to ideal self -conflict between actual and ideal may make the person search for ideal social identity while maintaining present identity to extent possible -store image would reflect congruency with actual self, but loyalty would be low as indicated in lack of congruency with ideal self	2Passive conformist -tendency to move to ideal self -since social reinforcement and related pressure form expectations are high, tendency would be to observe all essential norms and display no rebellious behaviour -store image would show greater congruency with actual self and social ideal self but patronage may have an element of spurious loyalty
	Ideal self	3Active conformist - since ideal self corresponds to behaviour, a person would tend maintain status quo, believing that the behaviour displayed by him/her should in ideal terms be displayed by all -opinion leaders -store image would show congruency with ideal self and working social self-concept, loyalty would be high	4Utopian condition -similar to cell 3 except that need of individual to influence others would be low.

Proposed further research:

1. retail patronage and impact of symbolic cues
2. measuring the extent of symbolism inherent in cues, their effect on store image and classifying cues on such basis
3. measuring social identity and arriving at a holistic measure of store image based on measure of social identity
4. congruity measure for Indian context
5. comparing the two methods (cue based store image and identity based store image for predictive power on store patronage intentions)
6. Behaviour of an individual based on identity interactions (active, passive, conformist, rebel)
7. How cues are actually processed
8. What forms basis of accord, separating it from congruity

Appendix

Variations in current literature on how store image is defined and measured

Author	Definition	Operationalization	Comments
Martineau, 1958	store personality or image---the way in which the store is defined in the shopper's mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes	Two components: 1.functional (location, price ranges and merchandise offerings etc.) 2.psychological (architecture, color schemes, advertising, sales people etc.)	Psychological aspects more important Consumer interpretation focus
Berry, Leonard L., 1969	The total conceptualized or expected reinforcement that an individual associates with a particular store-accounting for rewarding and adverse consequences (pg 4)	Three open ended questions (most liked about store, least liked about store, why shop at store) Related these to 12 component based perceptions of the store	
Doyle and Fenwick, 1974-75	Evaluation of all salient aspects of store resulting in an overall impression and attitude to store (pg 40)	Ranking based on similarity, MDS	
Hansen and Deustcher, 1977-78	No definition, an application perspective to help retailer identify which store elements to focus on (pg 61)	3 classification scheme: at dimension level (e.g. merchandise), component (merchandise selection) and attribute (pg 62)	
Reynolds and Gutman, 1984	stored meanings that an individual has in memory (pg 29)	Linkages between physical characteristics (of store), feelings and emotions	Consumer interpretation focus
Williams and Burns, 2001 Affective (hedonic) and Functional		Two components: 1.Functional (Merch. selection/ quality, Physical facilities, Pricing, Salesmanship/Store service) 2.Emotional (store's design and its physical surroundings)	impact of both components on children store loyalty

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Measurement and Scaling

I Measuring Social Identity

<u>For measuring identity</u> in a sociological sense, Callero, 1992 refers to Burke and Tully's measure of role-identity, which he says takes into account that the self is largely a reflection of the various social roles one claims. This process detailed here is largely the description as given by Callero of the Burke process for measuring role-identities which can be used to measure social identities as well:

1. identify the relevant counter-identities by looking at the social situation to understand the meaning of the identity in question. This can be also be done by taking a temporal dimension.

2. Rate the identities (the relevant one and related counter-identities) against a series of adjectives in semantic differential format using the Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, 1957 scale. The selection of adjectives should reflect the 'opportunities and constraints' of the particular role-identity and be relevant for the respondent (Burke and Tully, 1977)

3. Use Discriminant Analysis to identify dimension of meaning that best distinguish the specific identity form the counter-identities. The adjectives are the discriminating variables, roles (social identities) become target groups to be distinguished in the Discriminant function equation.

The result of such analysis is a coefficient for each adjective that represents the degree to which it discriminates among the role-identity and its counter-identities. Larger the coefficient of an adjective, the more discriminating and more representative it is in defining that identity.

4. Finally, respondents are asked to rate self-in-role (self-in-society) for the target identity against the same adjectives employed in step two. These ratings are then multiplied by the coefficients weights obtained in step two to produce a single scalar value representing the meaning of self in a particular identity.

This measure incorporates sociological features because the discriminant weights represent the direction and intensity of meaning as defined by the network of identities.

The modified version given by Callero requires the individual to assess self in relation to the 'community assessments' of the role in general (rather than with respect to other roles as suggested by Burke). As Callero himself states, this difference is more in terms of the practicality of approach (easier since one does not need to identify counter-identities, less tedious for respondent who does not need to use same adjectives repeatedly) rather than an improvement in measurement of the identity meaning.

Callero scale also uses action statements (is a teacher less or more likely to commit a crime) rather than bipolar adjectives. The aspect of choosing these action pairs such that they are relevant is still as important as in Burke's scale. The action pairs are measured on a 7-point scale (to which one attaches rates from 4 to -4 to account for direction and intensity) enabling a summary measure calculation.

To measure salience, Callero uses five statements:

1. 'Blood donation <role>' is something I rarely even think about (reversed scored)
2. I would feel at a loss if I were forced to give up <role execution>
3. I really don't have any clear feelings about <role performance> reversed scored
4. For me, being a <role performer> means more than just <a mere role>
5. <role performance> is an important part of who I am

One needs to note that the role taken here is activity oriented (donating blood) as compared to the roles of being a parent, a union member which are primarily position – centric. It is little surprise that the activity pairs of Callero as compared to the adjectives of Burke are better able to measure this role chosen by him. Applying the same scales and measurement methods, Kleine, Kliene and Kernan, 1993 have sought to empirically examine a social identity of an athlete and related it to a product cluster.

Burke's (as quoted by Callero) urge to define identities in terms of counter-identities should not be interpreted in too simplistic a manner that it restricts social identity to either an occupational identity or a role-identity with few counter-identities (which of course makes measurement far easier but that less meaningful). Little work has been done to explore the dimensions of social identities more comprehensively.

Social identity is defined and reinforced through the groups and networks that a person associates with and interacts with on a regular basis.

To assess the network, Callero, 1992 suggests asking the following questions based on the scale developed by Stryker and Serpe (1982):

1. Of all the people you know through <role activity>, how many are important to you, that is, you would really miss if you did not see them?
2. Think of those people that are important to you. About how many would you lose contact with if you stopped <role performance>
3. How many people do you know on a first name basis through <role activity>
4. Of the people you know through <role activity> how many are close friends?
5. Of the people you know through <role activity>, how many participate in other activities with you (e.g. work together, engage in recreation together, visit each others homes etc.)?

To assess community expectations, Callero, 1992 suggests the following eight-item scale: (strongly agree to strongly disagree)

1. Many people think of me in terms of being <role performer>
2. Other people think that <role performance> is important to me
3. It is important to my friends and relatives that I continue as a <role performer>
4. It really wouldn't matter to most people I know if I decided to give up <role performing>
5. Many of the people I know are not aware that I am a <role performer>
6. Many of the people I know expect me to continue as <role performer>
7. No one would really be surprised if I just stopped <role performing>
8. Many people would probably be disappointed in me if I just decided to stop <performing role>

The correlation between the Burke's definition of role-identity and of Callero's measure indicated a correlation coefficient of 0.4 for the role-identity of blood donors. Callero

says that while the two scales indicate convergent validity, Burke's scale measures identity on a continuum of different identities.

If we look at the way the scales are constructed, Burke's scale enables one to take into account the ingroup-outgroup phenomena; comparing own group with that of other groups. Having an in-group that one can belong to is partly the notion that drives humans to form in-groups and make the effort to establish and nurture the related social identity. Callero's scale does not take this into account. Rather, he focuses on comparing the social identity as 'actioned' with how the relevant in-group would want it to be actioned.

If social identity is linked with the norms of related roles and takes meaning through the mental construction of ingroups and outgroups, then a more valid measure of social identity would be one that employs both scales. This would enable one to assess the roles that a social identity group wants actioned and also assess the strength with which the social identity group boundaries are defined.

Callero says that most measures have attempted to examine the multiple dimensions of a single identity (with one or two counter-identities). For more complex simultaneous assessment of multiple identities, he suggests Hoelter's, 1985 measurement model.

Note: same semantic schema used in Burke's scale to measure social identity can be used to measure store image as well (to check for congruity between social identity and store image). Process of using same set of adjectives for measuring store and self image in retail is well documented.

II Operationalizing Store Image

Store image can be conceptualized as being based on two different dimensions and within each dimension, be examined from two different perspectives:

(i) Taking the dimension of its formation; one can take the element based perspective or the holistic perspective. (ii) Based on the dimension of distinctiveness, one can see store image as a comparative unique configuration or a non-comparative associative configuration. The former depends on the perspective that one takes on what influences store choice: the consumer value or congruity. The second dimension takes into account

that store image need not always be in comparative terms. A shopper may have several stores that she shops from simply because she finds all of them 'acceptable' in quality. The perceived distinctiveness of a store may apply in situations of higher competitiveness. In act, at very high levels of competition, stores may again be evaluated in terms of 'acceptability'. This aspect of consumer behaviour is captured in the dimension of distinctiveness.

As already stated, 'the perception of the store cues results in some perceptions' and attitude formations, which give rise to an overall store image. This implies that store image formation can occur in two ways; one, where individual elements are evaluated and the separate attitudes combined in some meaningful manner to form a store image. Second, the store is perceived in some symbolic sense as a whole, and the attitude to the whole that is the store image then impacts the perception of the individual elements which in turn reinforce or alter the store image perception.

Measuring Store Image

I Dimension of store image formation

1. Element-based perspective

Store images are stored as schemas in the mind of a person, so to this extent, the image is more than just a summation of the perception. From the element based perspective, store image is defined based on the way Lindquist conceptualized it. It is the overall attitude to the store derived from opinions that a consumer holds of the various store element dimensions that are tied together using a structure of some sort. The structure combining the individual perceptions to form the store overall image is cognitive using either systematic processing or some sort of heuristic. Store image formation then is a learned phenomena based on past experiences with the store elements evaluated cognitively.

2. Holistic perspective

From the holistic perspective, store image can be defined as the multi-sensory perception of the store based on the experience with the store elements. This definition conceptualizes store image as an experiential phenomena involving emotions, feelings, symbolic interactionism and esthetic appeals and not just thought based processing. The

store image, then is formed based on the experiential view as applied to consumption as opposed to the cognitive information processing view. Each store cue (called so to distinguish it from store mix elements used in the previous perspective) conveys a symbolic meaning to the consumer who puts them together using cognition and affect, processing them rationally for their functional value and emotionally for their hedonic value, and thereby has an overall attitude toward the store. This conceptualization does not rule out that the overall store image then may impact element based perceptions, or that individual elements are not assessed cognitively or even that element based perceptions do not impact store image. This definition only emphasizes that the process of store image formation is not derivable from an aggregation of its elements' perceptions and emerges from the experiential view of consumption. This holistic view, for the purposes of congruity study, is visualized as store personality.

II Dimension of distinctiveness

1. Comparative unique configuration

Store image can be defined as the distinctive perception of a store in the mind of the consumer. This is derived from a configuration of specific store related factors which are compared across other stores in the consumers' consideration set and evaluated accordingly. This evaluation can be cognitive and feature based or it can be holistic and experiential.

The comparison can be element-based; a feature by feature cognitive comparison across stores of the same type or can be holistic; against a stereotypical store in that category against which each store is compared in an overall sense. Since store image is stored in form of a schema in the mind of an individual, a stereotypical store image would also be stored as a schema.

2. Non comparative associative configuration

Store image can be defined as the associations that an individual makes with the store in his mind.

Neither perspective posits that two stores cannot share a similar image. The difference between the two perspectives is that in the former, the consumer forms a store image by comparing it with other stores.

Table 6: Operationalizing store image

I Dimension of store image formation			
		1.Element-based perspective	2.Holistic perspective
II Dimension of distinctiveness	1.Comparative unique configuration	Cell one: Store image is the attitude to store based on the perception of a store derived from the uniqueness of the store features which are aggregated in some meaningful manner to form a composite image. -Feature by feature comparative evaluation across stores - aggregation of these perceptions to form the overall store image	Cell two: Store image is the attitude to store based on perception of a store derived from the unique experiences an individual has at a store that is derived from, impacts and is impacted by how the store cues are symbolically interpreted. -Comparative experiential view across stores, using similar stores as reference -Identifying cues that are used for store comparisons
	2.Non comparative associative configuration	Cell three: Store Image is the attitude to store based on perception of the store derived from the evaluation of the store elements on the basis of their ability to satisfy the consumer. -Feature based evaluation of the specific store against desired benefits -aggregation of these perceptions to form the overall store image	Cell four: Store Image is the attitude to store based on the perception of the store derived form the evaluation of one's experiences with the store. -Experiential view of the specific store using self as reference -Identifying critical cues that are used to form image impressions

This inherently assumes cognitive information processing by the consumer, where the individual also evaluates the hedonic emotional arousals and experiences cognitively as

more or less positive vis-à-vis other store(s) to arrive at a comparative store image. In the second perspective, the consumer evaluates each store against some preprocessed criteria and finds a store positive or negative against those criteria. These criteria would tend to be based upon some expectations of such stores that an individual has which would be influenced by what value such stores offer in general but it would not be the same as what is offered by the stereotypical store.

Table 6 shows how each dimension results in a different conceptualization of store image. The cells indicate how each store image definition would be defined and operationalized.

Congruity and the holistic perspective

Congruity studies have always conceptualized the store image as its personality. Personality is holistic, a composite more than the sum of the parts that comprise an individual. Thus, extending the congruity perspective to the principle of accord, one defines store image based on the experiential, holistic view. Specifically, for examining congruity, one needs to measure store image and the self image on the same dimensions. This therefore, requires personification of the store in question.

Congruity studies have defined store image based on the objective. Thus, one can say that if objective of a study is to assess store loyalty, one would require comparison of the degree of accord across different stores (cell Two). If the objective is to assess store choice, then one would need to assess the threshold of accord that results in the store being evaluated positively (having a positive store image)- Cell Four.

How Processing of Cues based upon Social Identity impacts store perceptions and store patronage

Based on the discussion so far, we can represent the processing of different cues, consumer motivations and information processing modes and link these to store patronage as follows:

Stage One:
Cues interpretation
impacted by identity

Stage Two:
Information
processing

Stage Three:
Impact of Motivation
on store image

Stage four:
Nature of store image
formation

Functional Cues

Cognitive Cell 1, Table 3.1

Utilitarian Cell One, Table 3.2

Store image: Element based, non-comparative Patronage, low loyalty

Cell Two Table 4

Affective Cell 2, Table 3.1

Hedonic Cell Two, Table 3.2

Critical cues based but holistic; patronage eroded by competition

Social identity

Cell Five Table 4

Cognitive Cell 3, Table 3.1

Utilitarian Cell Three Table 3.2

Element-based for consideration, holistic in choice; patronage high, loyalty needs to be sustained

Symbolic Cues

Affective Cell 4, Table 3.1

Hedonic Cell Four, Table 3.2

Holistic; patronage and loyalty likely to be high