

RETAIL STORE IMAGE: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

by

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## ABSTRACT

The concern of this paper is to conceptualize a better understanding of the term "image" as it appears in marketing literature especially in relation to products, brands, corporations and retail stores. The primary emphasis is upon retail store image; how it forms, why it forms, what shape it takes and how it may be changed. The need for clarification of the term "image" is vital if marketers are to evolve strategies which will enhance the sale of their goods.

The concept of retail store "image" is developed by introducing the formal theory of attitudes as formulated in social psychology, in an effort to show that attitudes give rise to images and that by understanding the nature of attitudes, retail store management might better understand the forces which determine and change the store image.

Two propositions are forwarded which serve to provide the theoretical framework for the discussion. The first proposition states that retail store "image" can best be explained in terms of attitude theory and that images are but simplified attitude summations and provide the consumer with a ready preference map of stores arranged in a hierarchical scale. The second proposition theorizes that specified groups tend to form similar "image" maps of preference in a relatively uniform way and with relatively uniform salience.

The determinants of store attitudes and therefore images are analyzed carefully. Firstly, the functional qualities of store location and parking, store hours, layout and display, price and quality relationships, depth and width of assortment and store services are presented as being fully controllable by the retailer. Psychological attributes such

as the character of sales personnel, packaging, advertising tone and style of merchandise are also analyzed as controllable determinants. Finally, the uncontrollable determinants of group influences and status connotations are dealt with as they intervene between the store's actions and the perception of these actions by consumers.

The study concludes with an attempt to relate the propositions presented with theories of consumer behaviour as presented by other writers in the field of marketing. The model of buyer behaviour evolved by John Howard appears to reinforce the image model presented in this paper. Irving Crisp, dealing with attitude theory in marketing, also adds weight to the formulation of "image" theory upon the base of attitude formation and change. Finally, the theoretical model of Victor Vroom is presented to emphasize the concepts of instrumentality and expectancy as prime factors influencing attitude and image formation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Retail Store Image . . . . .	2
The Concept of Image . . . . .	2
Image in Marketing . . . . .	4
Limitations of the Study . . . . .	5
Why Study Store Image . . . . .	5
Problems of Image Analysis . . . . .	6
Attitude Theory and Image . . . . .	7
Proposition I . . . . .	7
Proposition II . . . . .	8
Conclusions . . . . .	11
II. THEORY OF ATTITUDES . . . . .	12
General Attitude Theory . . . . .	12
Theories of Attitude Organization . . . . .	14
Rosenberg: Attitude Organization and Change . . . . .	15
Festinger: Theory of Cognitive Dissonance . . . . .	18
The Measurement of Attitudes . . . . .	20
Summary . . . . .	22
III. THE DETERMINANTS OF STORE IMAGE . . . . .	25
Functional Qualities . . . . .	25
Store Location and Parking . . . . .	25
Store Hours . . . . .	27
Layout and Display . . . . .	28
Price and Quality Relationships . . . . .	29

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
Depth and Width of Assortment . . . . .	30
Store Services . . . . .	31
Psychological Attributes . . . . .	32
Character of Sales Personnel . . . . .	33
Packaging . . . . .	33
Advertising . . . . .	34
Style of Merchandise . . . . .	36
Sociological Determinants . . . . .	36
Group Influences . . . . .	37
a. Primary Group . . . . .	38
b. Social Class . . . . .	38
c. Reference Group . . . . .	39
Status Connotations . . . . .	40
Summary . . . . .	42
IV. FURTHER THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS . . . . .	44
The Howard Model . . . . .	44
Crisp: Attitude Research in Marketing . . . . .	47
Vroom: Instrumentality and Expectancy . . . . .	49
Summary . . . . .	53
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION . . . . .	55
Proposition I . . . . .	55
Investigating Store Images: Individuals . . . . .	56
Proposition II . . . . .	60
Investigating Store Images: Groups . . . . .	60
Conclusion . . . . .	62
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	64

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
APPENDIX I . . . . .	.67
APPENDIX II . . . . .	.68

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
I	Schematic Conception of Attitudes . . . . .	17
II	Automobile Purchase Variables . . . . .	19
III	Determinants of Store Image . . . . .	43



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with a term that has crept more and more into marketing literature and terminology; namely "image". Countless articles have appeared in recent years which indicate the growing concern of marketers with image; corporate image; product image; brand image; and more recently, retail store image. Empirical studies have set forth findings on the measurement of these four forms of "image" and the results of these findings have played a large role in altering marketing techniques employed by manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers.

It is of interest that in research studies and writing there has been little agreement as to just what image is. In most studies, the empirically derived definitions are restricted to the frame of reference induced by the data collection instrument developed by the particular investigator. It is often left to the reader to infer the rationale, if any, underlying the instrument. Another approach to definition has been in terms of factors that shape the image. For example, Dichter, in discussing product image, suggests the following:<sup>1</sup> (i) Function (ii) Magic (iii) Mental set (iv) Mood (v) Symbolism (vi) Sensory appeals (vii) History (viii) Morality. As one can readily see, even the factors that Dichter enumerates are difficult in definition themselves.

It is apparent then that the term "image" is in desperate need of clarification so that marketers, when discussing the term, might readily

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Dichter, Handbook of Consumer Motivations, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964, p. 424.

understand and communicate with one another whether they are speaking of corporate, product, brand or retail store image.

### Retail Store Image

To narrow the scope of this study, corporate, product and brand image will not be dealt with, but rather a concerted effort will be made to understand the ramifications of retail store image as it bears upon the marketing strategy of a retail store. It may be seen that much of the discussion will also apply to corporate, product and brand image and that generalizations from this study may be carried over to other image studies. In a real sense, one cannot separate corporate and retail store image for a retail store image implies a corporate image that confronts the consumer directly. A corporate image has been defined as:

"the aggregate stimulus value a company has for a particular individual or group."<sup>2</sup>

This stimulus value spreads over all the products a corporation produces and as will be seen, readily affects the sale of its products. A retail store also has a corporate image which adheres most decidedly to the products it handles for sale to consumers.

### The Concept of Image

To move backward in time, the word "image" occurred most often in the field of art. Especially in poetry and painting was "image" or "imagery" dealt with extensively in the interpretation of these artistic forms. We are all aware of the attempts by poets to convey emotion and evoke imagination through the use of imagery. Shakespeare provides us

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2 W. J. Crissy, "Research on Images," unpublished paper, Michigan State University, 1966, p. 1.

with an excellent example:

"The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,  
 Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten gold;  
 Purple the sails, and so perfumed that  
 The winds were love-sick with them . . . "3

It might surprise the reader to find English poetry in a marketing discussion but on reading the lines the imagery conveys a picture in the mind which is relatively clear and sharp. There is little confusion on the part of the reader as to the sight of this barge on the water. It conveys an aura of luxury and quality that adheres to the imaginative picture of the Egyptian queen. How many marketers would delight in producing such a sharp image for their product or store? Shakespeare used a pen and ink. The marketer has many more tools at his disposal and as we shall see can convey a consistent image.

The term, image, next became the domain of psychologists who felt that by analyzing images created by the manipulation of variables, a better understanding of human behaviour might evolve. The Gestalt school of psychologists are most prominent in the research of image and its connotations.<sup>4</sup>

It is only in recent years that marketing has adopted the term image into its working vocabulary. This has come about through the realization that consumer behaviour plays a great part in the marketing process and is the key to marketing strategy formulation. In order to understand consumers, marketing has incorporated many of the methods and theories of the social sciences into its field of study. Naturally, the

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3 Anthony and Cleopatra, II, ii.

4 See Kurt Lewin, "The Conceptual Representation and the Measurement of Psychological Forces," Contribution to Psychological Theory, vol. 1, no. 4, Durham, Duke University Press, 1938.

theories relating to image and image formation became a topic of wider study and research.

### Image in Marketing

The introduction of the basic concepts of product and brand image into marketing took place in the late 1940's by Dr. B. B. Gardner and Louis Cheskin.<sup>5</sup> Since then, there has been a wide interest by marketers in exploring the concept of image as it applies to advertising and promotion of corporations, brands, products and retail stores.

While the majority of the interest has centred on brand image and its measurement there has been little in the literature concerning store image.

This sudden interest in image by marketers has brought about the awareness that image plays a large part in consumer decision-making. The extreme interest in brand image is of course fundamental to manufacturers operating within a national or international marketplace and attempting to differentiate their product and brand as clearly and as sharply as is possible. They are attempting to influence consumer choice so as to make it an almost automatic process. The examples of Heinz Ketchup, Coca-Cola, Kellogg's Rice Krispies come to mind of strong, consistent, brand images. Some might regard these as corporate images and they may suggest that corporate and brand image are similar. It would be difficult to disagree with such a comparison as it is a valid point. Images, whether of product, brand, corporation or store all have essential similarities which cannot be studied independently.

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<sup>5</sup> Remus H. Harris, "How Creativity in Marketing Can Develop the Image That Counts," Advertising Age, July 21, 1958, p. 61.

### Limitation of the Study

The restriction of this study to retail store image is a limitation which cannot be overlooked. There are brand images which enhance the image of the store carrying the brand. There are stores whose image adheres to the products and brands it sells to the consumer. There are corporate images which permeate to the brands, products and to the store selling these products. Yet, it is store image we will now look at and though the limitations are real, they will be overlooked for the purpose of this study.

### Why Study Store Image

The importance of clarifying the concept of store image is illustrated by the following quotation:

"Store image has many essential overtones which are worthy of study . . . . the essential point is the propensity of customers in the relevant population to trade regularly in a store without specific regard for their needs to buy particular items."<sup>6</sup>

and

"Clearly 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 . . . . this force is the store personality or image - the way in which the store is defined in the shopper's mind, partly by the functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes."<sup>7</sup>

It follows then that the conscious building of store image is an important marketing tool for the retailer. He may ignore the image he is building through his actions, yet if there is a force which he can influence he is surely in a position to draw more customers into his store and

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6 Wroe Alderson, Dynamic Marketing Behaviour, Homewood Illinois, Richard D. Irwin, 1965, p. 213.

7 Pierre Martineau, "The Personality of the Retail Store," Harvard Business Review, vol. 36, no. 1, Jan.-Feb. 1958, p. 47.

increase his market share. In order to influence this image, he must understand how it forms and what efforts he may make to achieve the desired image. It is the purpose of this paper to attempt to explain how images form, why they form, what shape they may take and how they may be measured so that the retailer may test whether his overt actions in building his image are along the desired course he has intended.

### Problem of Image Analysis

The real problem of analysis of image lies not only in the actions the retailer takes in building an image, but may also involve the perceptions of his actions by consumers. Consumers may be classed into groups depending upon age, income, social standing, reference group, life values, experience or background, education, stage in life cycle, etc. and though they belong to or may be classed into groups, they differ individually in terms of values, emotional reaction, ability and motivation. Thus, there are individual images which arise in connection with a particular store. No two people have identical images because of the multitude of factors listed above. All experience the store differently in terms of emotion or affect, perception and behaviour. It is really more appropriate to refer to images rather than image.

As a practical matter, a business interacts with too many people to explore in depth its image with each one. Rather, categorization and grouping must occur. A retail store is therefore faced with markets, not a market. The images resulting from a store's strategy are different for various groups and measurement is difficult.

## Attitude Theory and Image

The central purpose of this paper is to show that there is an equation between attitudes and images. Social psychology has developed a formal theory of attitudes which appears to aid marketers in the conceptualization of image.<sup>8</sup> Irving Crisp, in an article for the "Marketing Research Technique Series" explores the role of attitude research in marketing and presents a strong argument for analyzing attitudes to arrive at image definition.<sup>9</sup> Bruce Straits, in "The Pursuit of the Dissonant Customer",<sup>10</sup> presents a study of consumers after they have purchased items, using the cognitive dissonance theory developed by Leon Festinger<sup>11</sup> to explain dissonance after purchase and how the purchaser attempts to reduce dissonance.

More will be said in later chapters about attitude theory, but it is important early in this work to point to the direction the paper will take. The attempt will be made to demonstrate two propositions:

- I. The concept of retail store 'image' can be best explained in terms of attitude theory and that retailers may build or modify their 'image' by better understanding attitude formation and

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8 Paul F. Secord and C. W. Backman, Social Psychology, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964, chapter 3.

and

David Krech, R. S. Crutchfield and E. L. Ballachey, Individual in Society, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1962, chapter 5.

9 Irving Crisp, Attitude Research, Marketing Research Technique Series, no. 7, American Marketing Association, 1965.

10 Bruce C. Straits, "The Pursuit of the Dissonant Customer," Journal of Marketing, vol. 28, no. 3, July 1964, pp. 62-66.

11 Leon Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1957.

change. Retail store 'images' may be looked upon as preference maps that consumers construct from experience, perceptions, social interactions values and aspirations which serves to aid them in their decision-making as to where to go to purchase the assortment of products they require. A strong store image would then be associated with the propensity of customers to trade regularly in a particular store without specific regard for their needs to buy particular items.

- II. "Image" is those tangible and intangible properties of an object which have the effect of being cognized in a relatively uniform way with relatively uniform salience by a significantly large proportion of a specified group or aggregate of people.

Proposition (II) follows logically from proposition (I) and as will be demonstrated, has great significance for the measurement of store "image".

The purpose of developing the propositions is to clarify some of the research that has previously been done in store image measurement. A recent study by Image Research Inc. for the Hudson's Bay Company,<sup>12</sup> without even attempting a definition of store "image" measures imagery characteristics of this large retailer in terms of: high quality merchandise, modern, good values, prices, ease of shopping, etc., with no attempt made to relate why these are image characteristics or what effect these variables have on the acceptance of the Hudson's Bay stores. It is noteworthy that the study does dwell on attitudes held by consumer groups to the store without explaining why attitudes are studied. It is

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<sup>12</sup> Image Research Inc., A Study of Department Store Imagery Conducted in Canadian Markets, prepared for the Hudson's Bay Co. Ltd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1964.



also apparent that the study does not attempt to group the sample of respondents in order to arrive at a relevant image for significant groups. The Vancouver study is highly weighted by professional occupation, college education, middle to old age consumers and consumers with an income of \$10,000 or more. (See Appendix I). The results of the study should be qualified by these limitations, but are not. It is significant that this study was used to change the image of the store significantly.<sup>13</sup> It might appear to a casual observer that the study really was intended to reinforce the point of view of management or the researchers, that the change was needed.

A further study for the T. Eaton Co. Ltd. of their store image in Winnipeg offers the following conclusion:

"Value differentiation between department stores is largely made on the basis of quality. Choice is largely based on the degree of quality one wants, or can afford."<sup>14</sup>

The conclusion is arrived at, not through empirical evidence, but from the bias of the interviewers. Value is looked upon as having only two elements, quality and price. This is a step backward to the "rationality of choice" doctrine inherent in modern utility theory. Surely a study of this type measuring store image should attempt to measure image, not prove economic theory. Consumer behaviour viewed this narrowly would mean that psychology, social psychology and sociology have not influenced marketing.

A further example of the weakness in the research of store image is

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<sup>13</sup> Business Week, "Hudson's Bay Mushes Along the Urban Trail," September 3, 1966, pp. 64-68.

<sup>14</sup> Ben Crowe & Associates Ltd., A Store Attitude and Shopping Pattern Study, conducted for the T. Eaton Co. Ltd., Winnipeg, 1965, vol. 3, p. 24.

a study by Robert Meyers of a department store "image" which asked one question of 2,400 walkouts (those who were leaving the store without parcels), "What do you associate with the name Brant's?"<sup>15</sup> Though some twenty-five percent had bought in the store and did not have their purchase with them, the results indicated that Brant's had a high percentage of older women customers who suggested "high quality" most often with the store's name and "style" least often. The researcher was struck with the absence of younger women in the group of respondents and the absence of the word "style". "High quality" was mentioned 22 percent of the times the question was asked and "style" mentioned only 0.2 percent. The researcher then formulated the thesis that if Brant's were to maintain a quality image but build up the style influence in the store, then an image could be formed which would appeal to and attract the younger women to shop at the store. He even suggested that a lower quality of merchandise be sold in departments which catered to young, middle income families.

Brant's did do as suggested and the increase in sales reported by the researcher was highly pleasing. The question must be asked however, whether or not the research was the basis for the changes or whether the researcher and management were looking to verify their own beliefs as to what to do to a store which was falling behind in adapting to its market and the changes within that market. In order for the researchers to notice the lack of the word "style" in the answers to the question, they must have been convinced that style was already lacking in the store. The research merely verified what was already felt to be needed.

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Meyers, "Sharpening Your Store Image," Journal of Retailing, vol. 36, no. 1, Jan.-Feb. 1958, p. 47.

Unfortunately, Mr. Meyer does not indicate whether or not a very heavily subsidized advertising campaign contributed greatly to the sales increase of the following year. Also, the article does not establish whether or not "style" was the contributing reason for the increase in sales. A follow-up study would have clarified the research.

Typically, as in all other studies of store image, this study avoids a definition of store image. The research did point to an attitude held by shoppers about the store which was indicated clearly in their one word answer. A study based on one question alone, however, seems to be a rather shallow attempt at image measurement.

### Conclusions

It would seem that a more precise understanding of store image would lead to a definitive construct which might be better measured in experimental research in order to arrive at a basis for a changing and strengthening of a store's image through marketing strategy implementation. Retailers might better understand the implications of their policies of advertising, store layout, store fixturing and display, stock selections, sales personnel policies and packaging as these bear upon the formation and change of their particular store image in the minds of their customers and potential customers.

The next chapter will attempt to lay the foundation for the rationale underlying the propositions presented earlier, through an analysis of attitude theory as developed in social psychology.

CHAPTER II  
THEORY OF ATTITUDES

"By knowing the attitudes of people, it is possible to do something about the prediction and control of their behaviour."<sup>16</sup>

This introductory statement sets the key for a short treatise on attitude theory which will lead into a more operative definition of store image. A careful analysis of the above statement would lead a retailer to the conclusion that by knowing the attitudes of consumers, he may possibly predict and control their consumptive behaviour. This is "demand analysis" in a descriptive, qualitative sense rather than a quantitative analysis. It can readily be seen that the qualitative analysis should precede the quantitative study of potential demand. It is a ready tool for "segmenting" the market before quantitative research and predictions of the segments may be made.

General Attitude Theory<sup>17</sup>

Attitudes may be thought of as enduring systems of positive or negative evaluations, emotional feelings and action tendencies that the individual acquires with respect to social objects. An attitude is the particular regularity of an individual's feelings, thoughts and predispositions to act toward some aspect of his environment. Feelings are known as the "affective" component of an attitude; thoughts are the "cognitive" component; predisposition to act is the "behavioural" component. Attitudes may be directed toward concrete objects or abstract entities. They can

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16 Krech, Crutchfield and Ballachey, Individual In Society, p. 139.

17 Ibid., chapter 5 and Secord and Backman, Social Psychology, chapter 3.

be remote or personal.

The affective component of an attitude is the sum of the emotional responses the individual feels towards an object. The quality of emotional response may be positive or negative. The individual feels a liking or a dislike towards an object. He may also feel no emotional reaction whatsoever. Social psychologists prefer to measure the affective component of an attitude with the use of valence signs. Plus for a positive affect, minus for a negative affect and zero for no affect. A great difficulty resides in the strength of valence measurement and we will deal with measurement later in the chapter.

The cognitive component of an attitude includes the beliefs of individuals about the object and his evaluative perceptions of its relationship to other beliefs about other objects; in other words, everything the individual believes and knows about an object. A simple illustration would be an apple. The individual perceives it to be a certain colour, a certain shape. He knows it to be a food and may believe it is an excellent way of "keeping the doctor away for a day"; it has health implications. These are the cognitive components of the individual's attitude towards an apple. Whether he likes it or not may be thought of as an affective component of his attitude to the apple.

The behavioural component of an attitude includes everything the individual might say or might do in relation to the object. It is implied or latent behaviour as it represents the predisposition to act towards the object. Since, as will be pointed out later, attitudinal components tend to be internally consistent, the behavioural predisposition to act is highly correlated to the affective and cognitive stands of an attitude.

In relation to the above-mentioned apple, the individual may say he likes apples. He thus indicates a positive attitude to the apple. He may eat an apple. This, too, is behaviour and implies that he has a positive pre-disposition towards eating apples. He may buy the apple from a store.

This too is behaviour in relation to his attitude towards apples. However, this purchase reflects another attitude or cluster of attitudes. It involves a syndrome of attitudes including apples, stores, prices, services and many others, all revolving about a central core concerning the value placed by the individual upon aspects of his consumptive behaviour.

"Attitude" is a very useful concept in studying broad factors in society that mould behaviour in particular directions. Our concern is to attempt to isolate those factors which affect consumptive behaviour especially with regard to retail stores. An attitude can be seen to be a preparation for behaviour. Nelson links attitudes and images when he states:

"A composite of the attitudes which a group of people hold toward a product constitutes an image."<sup>18</sup>

Nelson has summed up the central core of this paper and reinforces Proposition I. Though the quotation speaks of product, it can be seen, that the words "retail store" could easily be substituted.

#### Theories of Attitude Organization

Moving further into the concept of attitude, the theory stresses consistency as the principle organizing agent of the three elements of an attitude. Since attitudes serve functional, adjustive, expressive and knowledge ends, there appears to be a consistency both within the elements of a particular attitude and between separate yet related attitude systems.

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<sup>18</sup> Bardin H. Nelson, "Seven Principles in Image Formation," Journal of Marketing, vol. 26, no. 1, Jan. 1962, p. 68.

The value system of the individual appears to be the principal catalyst in the structuring of attitudes. Various theories have been advanced to explain this consistency in attitudes. For our purposes the two most widely accepted theories should help in understanding this complex theoretical construct.

Attitude Organization and Change: Rosenberg<sup>19</sup>

Rosenberg's interest is in the affective and cognitive components of an attitude. His studies demonstrated the presence of consistency between affect and cognition. He formulated the proposition that strong and stable positive affect towards a given object is associated with beliefs that it leads to the attainment of a number of important values. Conversely, a strong negative affect should be associated with beliefs that the object blocks the attainment of important values. The cognitive element of an attitude really contains the over-riding value elements of the individual's personality. The individual perceives the instrumentality of the object in obtaining the value he finds consistent with his general value system. Thus his attitude towards one object is consistent in value judgement with his attitudes towards other objects.

Attitude change, according to Rosenberg, comes about when there is a perceived inconsistency between affect and cognition. The inconsistency will result in a change in the valence sign of either the affective or cognitive component of an attitude. An example might explain this concept better. An individual might believe a particular store offers the best price on television sets and buys his at this store. Later on he learns

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<sup>19</sup> Milton J. Rosenberg, "An Analysis of Affective-Cognitive Consistency," Attitude Organization and Change, Yale Studies in Attitude and Communication, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1963, pp. 15-64.

that another store sells the set at a lower price. Either he will be emotionally upset and stop buying at the first store, therefore changing his affect sign from plus to minus, or he may perceive or believe that the second store has an extremely poor service department and literally rationalize his cognitions or beliefs about that store. Whether this is true or not will not be the issue. He must achieve consistency in his attitude in some manner.

A further example may be a person buying in a store which he considers to cater to people in his particular social class. He feels at home within the store and has both a positive affect and cognition about it. Let us suppose that he learns that his friends or his social group now shop at another store. He may begin now to notice that the people shopping in this store really are not like his social group. He begins to perceive that they dress perhaps in a little less stylish manner and that their behaviour in the store is not to his liking. Until he learned his social group were shopping elsewhere, these thoughts perhaps would not have occurred to him. The change in cognition (his social group shops elsewhere) yields an inconsistency, and he therefore looks to change his affect and behaviour. He stops shopping at this particular store and shops at the other. His attitude change results in new shopping behaviour and a change in his store images.

Rosenberg's theory is of prime importance to the marketer. It suggests that the attitude change process might be conceived of in terms of the arousal and reduction of affective - cognitive inconsistency. A marketer may be able to induce inconsistency in either cognitions or affect towards a product or store. The Hudson's Bay study, quoted



earlier,<sup>20</sup> resulted in a more modern packaging and advertising campaign in order to change consumers' perceptions of the company and its stores. The "Hudson's Bay Company" name was changed to the "Bay" in all displays, packaging and advertising. A young, modern image was attempted. By changing the cognitive valence sign of consumers who were attracted to youthful, less traditional stores, from minus to plus the "Bay" hoped to gain a broader segment of its potential market.

Rosenberg also presents a schematic conception of attitudes and it is included here to help the reader picture the hypothetical model more clearly.

FIGURE I

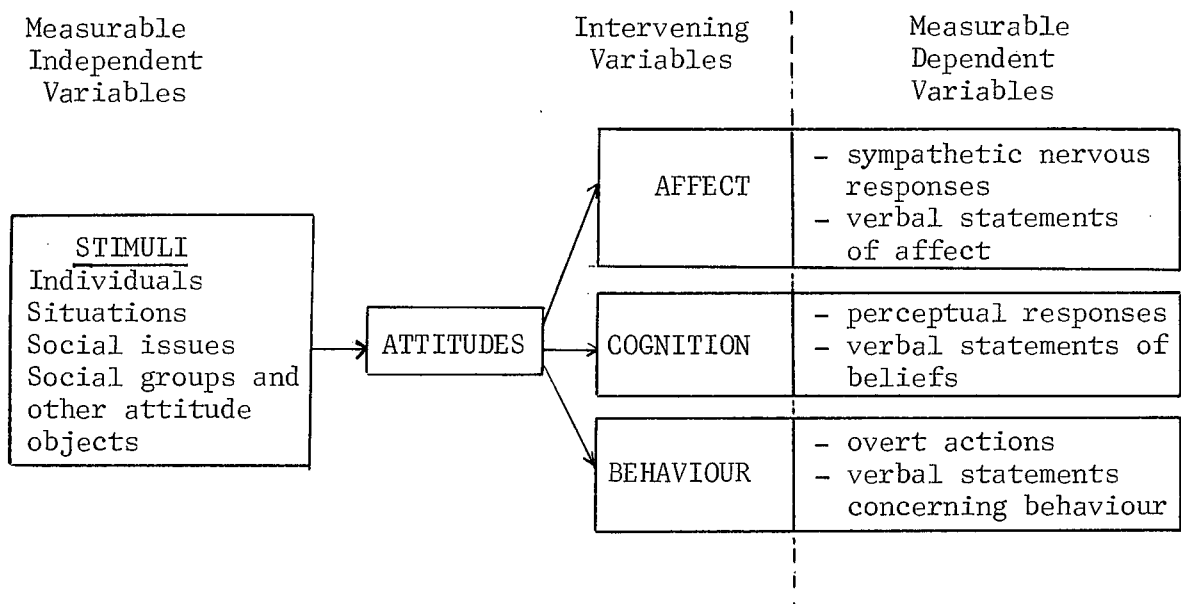


Figure I

Schematic Conception of Attitudes<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Image Research Inc., op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> Rosenberg, op. cit., p. 3.

Theory of Cognitive Dissonance: Festinger<sup>22</sup>

Leon Festinger has formulated a theory of attitude which stresses the consistency between what a person knows or believes (cognitions) and what he does (behaviour). Consistency, in his theory, is called consonance, while inconsistency is called dissonance. He believes the human organism has to establish internal harmony, consistency between his attitudes and within his attitudes, and especially consistency between cognitions and overt behaviour. Festinger presents two hypotheses:<sup>23</sup>

- "I. The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance.
- II. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information likely to increase the dissonance."

Since dissonance will inevitably arise after a decision has been made between two or more alternatives, then the cognition that the rejected alternatives had some positive characteristics and the cognition that the chosen alternative had some negative characteristics will doubtless lead to some cognitive dissonance. The individual is then motivated to reduce the dissonance in whatever ways he can. He may search out opinions from others, read articles in magazines and newspapers in order to reinforce his decision. He may seek out information which will help him to substantiate his rejection of other alternatives. In all cases he strives to reduce dissonance and perhaps may even change behaviour to do so. A good example is the heavy cigarette smoker, who, on reading articles which showed how detrimental cigarettes were to health, decided to give up reading. Exaggerated, perhaps, but a fine example of the reduction of

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<sup>22</sup> Festinger, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

dissonance.

Bruce Straits, in an article in the Journal of Marketing,<sup>24</sup> analyzes consumers after they have made a purchase in order to apply Festinger's theory to marketing. To the marketing manager, the importance of the theory is not whether dissonance is present or has been reduced, but rather the possible effects on subsequent purchases. Straits presents an analysis of four cars in the following manner:

FIGURE II

	<u>Car A</u>	<u>Car B</u>	<u>Car C</u>	<u>Car D</u>
Price	+	+	-	-
Style	+	+	-	-
Economy	+	+	-	-
Roominess	-	-	+	+
Popularity	+	-	+	+
Performance	+	-	+	+

It is apparent that this valence rating of the four alternatives by an individual buyer will lead him to buy Car A. However, the magnitude of the valence signs is not given. If "roominess" is of more importance to the buyer than the other factors, then he will choose Car C or Car D. Festinger indicated that the magnitude of post decision dissonance is an increasing function both of the decision and of the relative attractiveness of the unchosen alternatives.<sup>25</sup> He also considered social support as a means of reducing dissonance.<sup>26</sup> The buyer of Car A, after the purchase,

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24 Straits, op. cit., p. 63.

25 Festinger, op. cit., p. 262.

26 Ibid., p. 177.

will tend to seek social support as well as reading articles or other sources to reduce the dissonance arising from his rejections of the other cars. He may avoid information which will stress the roominess of other cars or may rationalize that roominess is really unimportant in cars. If, however, he fails to reduce dissonance, the probability of buying Car A again will be lessened. And so it applies to other products.

Straits feels that it is, however, difficult to measure dissonance and that the best measure may be to allow the purchaser to evaluate new information presented him, and to interpret the results based on the knowledge of what the individual already has purchased. Such a measure of dissonance, at best, is highly subjective and could lead to biased conclusions. It appears to be inadequate as an analytical tool of measurement.

#### The Measurement of Attitudes

Many of the measurement techniques evolved by social psychologists for attitude measurement stress the "affect" component of an attitude and as such are not adequate for the purposes of measuring retail store attitudes or images which, though they contain "affect" components, are more in the area of the cognitive elements of attitudes.

#### Thurstone-type Scale<sup>27</sup>

This technique measures attitudes towards social objects by the use of a series of statements to which the respondent is asked to agree or disagree. Each statement has a previously assigned scale value depending upon its strength of positive or negative valence. A resulting score

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27 L. L. Thurstone and E. J. Chave, The Measurement of Attitudes, Chicago University Press, 1929, pp. 37-41.

determines the strength of the respondent's attitude.

#### Likert-Type Scale<sup>28</sup>

Here, a set of judges choose one of five possible responses to each item - strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree. This is done in order to achieve an internal consistency within the items. A scale is then prepared and respondents tested. It is similar to the "semantic differential" used by many researchers in retail store image studies. A real problem of the placement of responses is encountered. Many people are loath to take strong stands by choosing outside answers (e.g. strongly agree or strongly disagree) and do not reveal their attitude directly.

#### Free-Response Method

This method appears best for getting a description of the cognitive content of an attitude. It is therefore highly useful in store image studies. The respondent is free to answer questions in his own words and the researcher comes away from the interview with meaningful data about attitudes. Though the data is not quantitative, it does yield a rich source of attitude information and may lead to positive conclusions, especially if a wide range of consumers is canvassed.

A series of open-end questions is also a prime tool of the free-response researcher. The variety of ways in which an individual may reply to these questions brings out an extensive attitude content. Also, these replies may suggest relations between different attitudes and between attitudes and personality.

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28 Rensis Likert, "A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes," Archives of Psychology, 1932, no. 140.

The problem in the free-response method lies in the skill of the interviewer in interpreting the responses to the questions asked and determining what the structure of the attitude is, based on these responses. Also, the questions themselves must be carefully constructed in order to elicit the free response answer.

In examining retail store image, the questions must be worded in such a way as to elicit responses which help to measure the general image in the relevant population. As stated in Proposition II, there should be a relatively uniform image or attitude held by a significantly large proportion of those within a given group. The real problem lies in the structuring of the groups. The researcher must segment the population into homogeneous groups. Some assessment must be made as to how groups divide. Warner's Chicago Tribune Studies<sup>29</sup> showed a break-down of five classifications: upper class, upper-middle class, lower-middle class, upper-lower class and lower-lower class. An image researcher could measure store image based on Warner's classifications and test whether or not a uniform image was prevalent for each store among the various socio-economic groups. The problem of reference groups is a real limitation of the Warner-type classification. It will be examined in Chapter III.

### Summary

Attitude theory helps explain the predispositions people feel towards social objects. Especially important is the knowledge that attitudes are rather stable and enduring but that they can be changed by new perceptions and communications. Positive attitudes towards a corporation, a product, a brand or a retail store are important guides for purchasing.

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<sup>29</sup> Cited in Jerome McCarthy, Basic Marketing, Homewood Illinois, Richard D. Irwin, 1964, p. 251.

Rosenberg's schematic diagram shows how individual attitudes arise from the influence of social groups, situations, social issues and other stimuli. But once formed, attitudes tend to resist change.

To the retail store, the attitudes of the relevant market to the store are highly important to its sales volume. The predisposition consumers feel to buy or not to buy in the store are vital to its retail sales. And this predisposition is a measure of the attitude consumers hold towards the store. To state, at this point, that when we speak of store "image" we speak of attitudes held, is perhaps premature. Careful analysis of attitude theory does lead to the conclusion that there is a relationship between the hypothetical "attitude" and the hypothetical "image". It will be shown that "image" is but a symbol of attitude. It is a convenient means of summarizing an attitude. It is not far removed from the concept of "stereotype". Stereotypes are formed by human beings as simplifications from a complex reality. Perceptions of objects and relationships from the environment are modified by the individual's value system. Walter Lippman calls them "pictures in our heads".<sup>30</sup> They are bases for behaviour and though, since they are modified by the prejudices of the individual, they become reality to the individual and evoke behavioural responses, they are not always related to reality but more often to the "stereotypes". People form stereotypes about races, social groups and also about corporations, products, brands and stores. It is quite easy to see the relationship between "stereotype" and "image".

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<sup>30</sup> Walter Lippman, Public Opinion, New York, Pelican Books, 1946, chapter 1, cited in Edward L. Brink and William T. Kelley, The Management of Promotion, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1963, p. 155.

Both are perceived, yet perhaps distorted, mental pictures of simple structure in order to sum up the complex reality.

Stereotype and image really are the summation of an individual's attitude. He sorts out his attitudes about stores by forming images, positive, negative and indifferent (no image). He uses these images in order to guide his consumption habits. He moves to stores which possess a positive image for him. He avoids negative image stores. He may explore an unknown store in order to establish an attitude towards it and construct an image. Yet he does not do this alone. He does this by physical encounter with the store, its stock, its sales-people, its advertising, its other customers; all tempered by his value system which modifies his perceptions to fit his attitudinal set.

He constructs a clearly marked map of preference in order to choose the particular store where he will purchase his requirements. The images he constructs help him make this choice rather quickly and he will tend to follow his image map as he proceeds to buy in retail stores, preferring the strong, positive image to the strong, negative image. A hierarchy of image value is constructed and a choice is made on the basis of the highest positive image.



## CHAPTER III

### THE DETERMINANTS OF STORE IMAGE

Since, in this paper, an attempt is being made to link the concept of "image" with the concept of "attitude" it is important at this point to analyze what are the determinants of an individual's store image. What factors are at work in shaping his attitude towards a particular store and how does he differentiate one store from another?

The analysis will be attempted under three major headings: functional qualities, psychological attributes and sociological attributes. It will be seen that the first two headings deal primarily with shopping experience which can be thought of as direct perceptions and encounter as well as indirect experience or indirect perceptions, i.e., advertising messages, package recognition, and other indirect encounters. Sociological attributes may be thought of as intervening variables. They condition the perceptions of the store and may distort the valence ratings of the actual experience with the store.

#### Functional Qualities

Included under this heading would be store location, ease of parking, store hours, layout and display, price and quality relationships, depth and width of stock assortments and services such as credit, delivery, rest rooms and restaurants.

#### Store Location and Parking

Where the store is located is certainly one very important determinant of store image. If it is within easy access to the consumer, it will

possess a higher valence in the area of convenience. A neighbourhood speciality store, supermarket or department store will attract the housewife whose near proximity will save her time in shopping since she will be able to shop in the stores without losing valuable time getting there.

Also, if the store is located together with other stores at which she shops, this too will attract her positively to the store. (A note of caution must be inserted here. Since all the determinants being discussed in this chapter affect the store image, it is important to note that the image is a composite of all these factors and though location may be positive, it may be offset by other determinants being discussed.)

The trend to suburban living and the growth of shopping centres has been a strong force in changing consumers' store "images". Jonassen has pointed out clearly the advantages and disadvantages of the stores in the downtown and in shopping centres.<sup>31</sup> One of the most important shopping-centre advantages is the nearness to home.

Parking, too, is a real advantage of the shopping-centre and again must affect store "image". The problem of parking near the store she prefers is a real determinant of store image. The store, situated in a shopping-centre, has the advantage, generally, of ease of parking for the consumer. Shopping-centres are typically set up with large parking areas. Another determinant associated with parking is that of traffic levels. Generally it is far easier and less frustrating to the consumer to get to the shopping centre or neighbourhood store in his or her car. In many cases, it is a short walk from home. The store that is located near large parking areas is clearly at an advantage over those whose customers

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31 C. T. Jonassen, The Shopping Center Versus Downtown, Bureau of Business Research, Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio, 1955.

are unable to park near the store or must circle through heavy traffic before finding a parking place for their cars.

Of course, rapid transit has helped overcome parking problems. In Toronto, the subway moves directly under the T. Eaton Co.'s store and the Robert Simpson Co.'s store. Shoppers may get off the subway and proceed into either store directly. Montreal's new subway system which empties directly into the downtown area, also will be a strong force in changing consumers' attitudes towards many of the stores in the downtown area. In Vancouver, major department stores have built their own parking lots in order to offset the parking problem.

Store location and parking do affect the attitudes of consumers, especially in the perception of ease of shopping and affect other attitudes which involve the value of time spent in shopping as against other activities the consumer engages in.

Another associated determinant, as pointed out by Jonassen, is the influence of children.<sup>32</sup> Going to downtown areas with small children can be a rather harrowing experience. The crowds, the large stores, the boredom experienced by children while their mothers and fathers shop, can certainly affect the valence sign of the determinant of store location.

#### Store Hours

The convenience of store hours is another determinant of store image. Again, we must deal with downtown as against shopping centres. Shopping centres usually open more nights and often stay open later on normal days.<sup>33</sup>

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32 Ibid., pp. 18-30.

33 Woodward's Oakridge Centre, Brentwood Shopping Centre, Vancouver, B.C., open 9:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m. Downtown stores open 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

In shopping for durable goods, generally the husband and wife are involved and shop together. Often, they may be able to shop on the husband's day off, but frequently, night shopping allows them to go together. Grocery shopping, too, may be a joint responsibility of the parents. Sunday shopping at supermarkets has a positive valence for many families.

### Layout and Display

The physical layout and display of a store can be a strong determinant of store image. Attractive store fronts and display windows may affect the attitude of the consumer positively. Though the consumer may not enter the store, the image is positively or negatively affected. Especially the style of both physical decor and merchandise offerings in display are perceived by the consumer. He or she notes the design of the physical front, the style of the inside furnishings, and the quality of the merchandise displays. This is readily seen in the use of attractive furniture for display in windows of high quality women's specialty stores. The furniture may serve no functional end but does convey by its style, a feeling of quality which adds to the style of the store's merchandise and image.

Physical layout of departments within the store is another determinant of store image. Ease of accessibility to various types of merchandise is vital in projecting a positive image for the store. Information centres do help in promoting a positive image and are a vital need in a store with many departments. It is indeed a frustrating experience and perhaps a loss of valuable time to have to seek out merchandise which is not clearly visible.

Cash register locations and their number also affect store image.

The problems involved in seeking out a place to pay for merchandise may vitally affect store image. Also, if the line-ups of registers are long, many consumers may be discouraged from shopping at the store.

### Price and Quality Relationships

Depending upon the income of the consumer, his economic valuation as well as sociological group influences on his consumptive habits, price and quality relationships must affect his image of the store.

The economically "rational" consumer may still exist, but in most instances other factors than price alone are involved in consumptive behaviour. Price, to a great degree, still influences the consumer but the "price" involves much more than the dollar value of the product. It involves the type of package, the type of store, the delivery or service as well as other factors being mentioned in this discussion of image determinants. Rich and Portis found that high fashion appeal was becoming more important than price appeal especially in non-standardized product lines in department stores. They found that discount stores presented the strongest "price" image.<sup>34</sup>

Store image is certainly conditioned by price and quality relationships. A store whose quality image is accepted will find price alone is not as important a factor as it might be for lower quality stores. Consumers perceive price-quality relationships amongst the different stores they visit. Income and price must of course be related although, as will be pointed out later, reference group influence may well offset lower income individual's store image and may lead them to buy literally "over their heads".

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34 Stuart Rich and B. D. Portis, "Clues for Action From Shopper Preference," Harvard Business Review, March-April, 1963, pp. 132-149.

Quality of merchandise and dependability of the store appear to go hand in hand. An image of quality merchandise is often associated with store dependability.

Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance can be used to explain why many individuals shop quality, high priced stores after they have purchased in lower priced stores. They are literally seeking to reinforce their purchase by finding similar merchandise, much higher priced in other stores. That the similarity may be more fictional than real, often eludes them for they are seeking similarity so that they can offset the negative aspects of their previous purchase.

#### Depth and Width of Assortment

Although a shopper may only need to buy one item, most shoppers prefer a width of assortment so as to satisfy their need to be able to make a "good" choice. Shown twenty ladies' dresses in a specialty store, a customer, who only needs one, will probably seek a store which has a wider range of style and price lines.

With our affluent society has come an increasing interest in style and fashion. The store which stresses fashion and interprets it through a wide range of choice of current fashionable styles at varying price lines, will tend to build a strong fashion image. Of course, there is a limit. Sometimes the question of choice may result in confusion especially if the width of assortment is too great. Trained salespeople can possibly overcome this disadvantage of choice from too many, by directing the customer to the items which may satisfy his or her needs. Depth of assortment also helps determine image. A customer who wants a blue shirt, size sixteen with a thirty-three inch sleeve length would be somewhat disgruntled to find all sizes but his. Out of stock positions can be

very costly to a retail store and can promote a negative valence in the image for that store.

Fashion, as a means of positive image building for department stores has become more important in recent years since a majority of the department stores' customers are women. Rich and Portis found that:

"Downtown department stores which present a fashion image are undoubtedly in the strongest position . . . "35

They found that a fashion-image store, though located downtown, had a strong following among suburbanites who were still willing to come downtown to shop when buying fashion merchandise. It can be seen that the negative valence of poor parking and heavy traffic can be overcome by the strong positive valence of fashion for groups of consumers. Also, the authors found that many young, career women work downtown and these women are high fashion conscious.

Here, then is the juxta-position of quality and assortment. Given good quality merchandise a store whose fashion presentation is limited, may suffer competitive losses to a store whose breadth of assortment includes a wide range of current fashions.

The main appeal of the specialty fashion stores is to those who are fashion conscious and who can find exclusive fashions in these stores. The specialty store can concentrate on narrower ranges, especially in price lines, and can stock a deeper assortment of merchandise in particular areas than can most broad-appeal department stores.

#### Store Services

With the complexity of modern life has come an increase in consumers'

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35 Stuart Rich and B. D. Portis, "The Imageries of Department Stores," Journal of Marketing, vol. 28, no. 2, April 1964, p. 15.

shifting of problems to the retail store. Especially in the areas of credit and delivery is this apparent.

The store that can provide easy access to credit for its customers, enhances this aspect of its image. The charge plate has eliminated much of the delay in credit-granting and has saved valuable time for the consumer. The charge plate serves too as a triggering cue for store selection. It is far simpler to buy at a store on credit with a charge plate than to go through a credit interview with new stores.

Delivery service is also a strong image-building determinant. Stuart Rich found that women preferred to shop in stores which could deliver their purchases.<sup>36</sup> He found that to many consumers, mail orders and telephone orders were prime image determinants. Again, this reflects the tendency for consumers to pass on to the store many of the functions they formerly undertook themselves. Especially in the higher social classes is such behaviour apparent. It would be considered in poor taste by some, to carry parcels home. Rather, the store should deliver these.

Other determinants in the realm of store services would be wash-room facilities, restaurants or nearness to restaurants, cheque-cashing especially for the working man and finally post-office facilities and gift wrapping. All add to the image when found in a store and lately there has even been a trend to serving coffee to customers in better ladies specialty stores.

### Psychological Attributes

Another group of determinants which affect store image are those

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<sup>36</sup> Stuart Rich, Shopping Behaviour of Department Store Customers, Boston, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 96.



which involve the personality of the individual, his value system and the direct and indirect encounter with elements of the store.

#### Character of Sales Personnel

The individual consumer's reaction to the sales personnel in a particular store is a strong determinant to his total reaction to the store. The consumer's value system and personality help to shape the nature of his or her encounters with sales people. One important area is that of friendliness. The consumer may feel that a clerk is not giving enough attention to his or her needs, even though that clerk is busy with another customer. The consumer may believe that all clerks in the store are impersonal without having further experience with other sales personnel in the store. A consumer who is greeted warmly and is helped in making a purchasing decision by a particular clerk, may walk out of the store convinced that this is a "friendly" store and retain a positive image of the store in this area.

The manner in which complaints, returns, and adjustments are handled also affect the store image. Ease of return can be a strong factor in building a strong store image. Consumers are typically uncomfortable when making a return or getting an adjustment on merchandise. If the transaction is handled in a manner which is not embarrassing, the image can only be enhanced.

#### Packaging

The store box or bag is another determinant of store image. The style of the package, its colouring, the symbol used for identification, all contribute towards store image. The Image Research Study, mentioned

earlier,<sup>37</sup> led to the Hudson's Bay Co. redesigning its boxes and bags using a mystical symbol of gold on a white background. The box or bag became readily identifiable as against the grey box and bag used earlier. Here is an example of an appeal to style-conscious, younger consumers, for the box and bag were aimed at giving an image of style and newness as it was carried out of the store by customers. It was hoped that consumers would change their image of the Bay from one of a long established, traditional store to one of a modern, forward-looking store.

Since the box and bag are a key to identifying the merchandise handled by the store, they become an important cue to shoppers as to the styling to be found in the store. Also, the boxes and bags are carried by them and if they see many, they begin to think of the store as being busy and attracting many customers. When the box and bag are unexciting, they are not identified as readily and do not convey the idea of a busy, attractive store.

A "flashy" box and bag may, however, have the opposite effect. They may convey a sense of poor taste and irritation to certain consumer groups. The store must decide on what groups it is appealing to before decisions on packaging should be made.

#### Advertising Tone

The image of a particular store may be built in consumers' minds merely by the tone of the advertising messages. Given a wealth of advertising cues in newspapers, radio and television, consumers identify a store partly by the type of messages that are presented.

A store which uses a price appeal constantly in its advertising, will

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37 Image Research Inc., op. cit.

be thought of as a "price" store and will attract consumers who value price highly in their purchasing decisions. A store which stresses style and fashion in its advertising will hopefully gain a fashion image. Since consumers in an affluent society tend to place high stress on fashion, and are extremely style conscious, a retail store should tailor its advertising to reinforce a fashion image. In homogeneous goods, price will become a more important variable and here the store may aim at a price-oriented message to gain the consumer's patronage. Especially in convenience goods and durable shopping goods is price an important consideration.

The consistency of the advertising message will become important in building a consistent attitude to the store and therefore a consistent store image. Woodward's Stores Ltd. of Vancouver, B.C., use the words "nice department store" and "family store" consistently in their advertising. The appeal is to a broad segment of the population and these words help to convey the aura of the store to consumers. Of course, such consistency should continue in the store itself for if consumers find an unfriendly attitude by sales personnel, the advertising message will become an irritant rather than a shopping cue.

Since consistency is an organizing principle in attitude formation, the building of a positive attitude to the store must be done by consistency in all the determinants of store attitude. The perception of advertising tone must be reinforced within the store in order to form a positive attitude. There is no question that all the determinants mentioned in this analysis must be of a consistent pattern in order to evoke a strong, store image.

### Styling of Merchandise

Styling has already been dealt with in previous sections, but it must be recognized that the style of merchandise is an essential determinant of store image. The consumer identifies her personality with a certain style of dress, home furnishings and other outward means of personality expression through purchasing. She therefore identifies strongly with a store whose merchandise expresses most clearly her own taste and will form a favourable image towards those stores whose taste is similar to hers.

A store whose styling is consistent throughout all departments will therefore tend to attract consumers who identify with the type of styling presented by the store. A strong customer following will result, one which will regularly choose to shop at this store for particular needs. Where style and quality are consistently maintained, a strong attitude can only result. Brooks Brothers of New York is an ideal example of a store who has maintained a strong style and quality image. One reason given for their success is:

"There's feeling of security when a shopper knows he can depend upon a store to carry the same quality merchandise year in and year out."<sup>38</sup>

The store whose styling varies from department to department conveys a fuzzy image to its market. Perhaps some departments will appeal to a group of consumers but the overall store image will be cognized as being rather unstructured and inconsistent.

### Sociological Determinants

Sociological determinants such as group influences and status

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<sup>38</sup> Tom Mahoney, The Great Merchants, New York, Harper and Row, 1955, p. 45.

connotations, may be thought of as intervening variables for they act to distort the perceptions of a store and its image. These are the variables which stores cannot control. They can control the functional qualities and can influence greatly the psychological attributes, but they have little or no control over sociological factors. All they can do is to understand them better and tailor their efforts in image-building to conform with the social and cultural characteristics of the market.

### Group Influences

Nelson, in examining image formation, speaks of "reference points" which help human beings in a complex society to make choices or judgments. He speaks of external reference points as being:

" . . . social influences, instruction, suggestion, group pressure and group participation."<sup>39</sup>

Consumers need reference points in order to help them distinguish between the many products and stores available for purchasing their consumptive needs. Group influences are certainly a force in helping the consumer build his attitudes towards products and stores.

#### a. Primary Groups

Included in this sub-title would be the family group, the work group and close friends and associates.

The family certainly helps mould an individual's likes and dislikes in all areas, as well as in the choice of stores at which to shop. The affect component of the store attitude will be strongly influenced by the family. Children will form attitudes toward stores that reflect their parents' attitudes. These attitudes, in the early years, will be emotional in nature. As the child grows up, he may perceive that there is

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<sup>39</sup> Nelson, op. cit., p. 69.

an inconsistency between his affect and cognitive elements of the attitude towards a given store. He may change his affect component, or he may tailor his cognitions to be consistent with his affect. A store's image may be perceived entirely differently than that which the store intends, because of the family influence.

The work group, too, may help condition an individual's attitudes to particular stores. His adoption of the group norms of those he works with will tend to change his store attitudes and images especially where the group is internally strong.

Friends and associates are another influence upon the individual in the formation and change of attitudes. Veblen presented the thesis that economic consumption is not only motivated by intrinsic needs but also by prestige seeking.<sup>40</sup> "Conspicuous consumption" is the consumption by the leisure class at stores and for articles which friends and associates are made aware of and can readily identify. This differentiates the individual between classes and in a real sense expresses his choice of social class identification.

b. Social Class

In dealing with consumptive behaviour, the marketer is concerned with aggregates of consumers either at a given time or over a period of time. Thus, he must examine the social fabric of the market about him in order to stratify, by some means, the social classes to which individuals belong. Social class exerts a strong influence on family behaviour and helps to form a frame of reference from which the individual units sort out their own value systems and to which they relate their

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<sup>40</sup> Thorstein Veblen, Theory of the Leisure Class, New York, Viking, 1955.

attitudes. Social class is defined as:

" . . . a group of individuals whose members are much alike in terms of certain characteristics that distinguish them from others in society . . . . in terms of wealth, occupation and education."<sup>41</sup>

We have already spoken earlier of Warner's social classes and its application to consumptive behaviour. Proposition II extends the effects of social class norms applying to retail store image and predicts that social class groupings will tend to cognize a particular store's image in a relatively uniform way. The problem of sorting social classes is however a real one for it is further complicated by another sociological concept; that of "reference group".

#### c. Reference Group

A sociological concept which has resulted from the rapid social mobility of the Canadian and American social structure is that of reference group. No longer can social class be thought of as the only frame of reference for family units or individuals for the ability to move rapidly between social classes in our society results in a seeking to better one's position or class and results in an adoption of group norms largely unrelated to social class both by families and by individuals.

Reference group may be defined as:

" . . . that group whose outlook is used by the actor as the frame of reference of his perceptual field."<sup>42</sup>

Clearly, reference group may be a prime determinant in the

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41 Kenneth R. David, Marketing Management, New York, Ronald Press, 1966, p. 230.

42 Tamotsu Shibutani, "Reference Groups as Perspectives," Marketing and the Behavioural Sciences, ed. Perry Bliss, Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1963, p. 226.

individual's adoption of his social role. Like an actor, he assumes the role which serves to gain him status within a social group. This role highly affects his behaviour and also tends to influence his perceptions. Social class, to some, may determine the character of social roles, but to others, reference groups may provide the company in which these roles are to be played.

Reference groups therefore help to order the view of one's world; one's perspective. They may not be related to the social class that an individual may be measured in when surveys are undertaken. Reference groups may influence the purchase of a product (conspicuous consumption) the choice of a particular brand, the choice of stores at which to shop and therefore store image.

Reference groups affect attitudes and images and must be measured by the marketer in surveying the attitudes of consumers when image studies are embarked on. The individual adopts the reference group perspective. He feels he is a real member of this group and though his wealth, occupation and education may not be up to the standards of the group, he is aiming to move to the group in his behaviour and is highly motivated towards being accepted as a member of the group. The world of the reference group is made known to the individual partly by communication channels. He reads of them, hears of them and wishes to belong. He attempts to move to a cultural area which may be dissimilar to his own and through effective communication he begins to adopt the perspective of the reference group.

#### The Connotations of Status

Another intervening variable which may distort the store's attempts at image building is that of status. Status may be thought of as the



position of prestige an individual holds within a group. It is a relative position relating to all other members. It defines how high in the group's hierarchy the individual feels he has risen to or presently holds.

The concept of status has great significance for store image studies. Pierre Martineau distinguishes between the "lower status" and the "upper status" shopper.<sup>43</sup> The former, he found, looks to the functional qualities of the store more directly. The store image for the lower status shopper reflects her values of concreteness, practicality and economy, the quality of the merchandise and the dependability of the store. Conversely, the upper status shopper has a more symbolic meaning in the store image. It reflects her own perceived status and her style of life. The shopper, whether upper, middle or lower status, knows what to expect from a particular store by means of a preference map of images. Where the image is heightened and sharp, the valence signs are very positive and very negative for the shopper. When, however, the personality of the store is dull and not clearly accentuated, the store merely becomes an alternative when the sharply defined stores do not have the products sought.

Status implies that an individual has an image of himself or herself and this image is matched to the stores which the shopper encounters. The shopper seeks to match the image of herself to the image of the store, and will seek, preferably, the store whose image is most congruent with the image she has of herself. This implies that the consistency in the affect and cognitive components of attitude extends to overt behaviour such as shopping.

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43 Martineau, op. cit., p. 49.

One can imagine a shopper, when faced with the need for purchasing items, fitting stores into her planning, manipulating store images in her mind and choosing those to which her attitudes are more favourable for solving her consumption problems. Store images are easy tools for solving complex decisions. They act as reference tabs for files of complex determinants as experienced by the shopper. When the preference map is being constructed, the connotations of status will change the map to adapt it to the status needs of the shopper.

### Summary

The concept of store image building has been dealt with in this chapter in an attempt to isolate those factors which affect the store image preference map that individuals construct. Functional determinants of location, parking, store hours, layout and display, price and quality relationships, depth and width of assortment and store services have been examined. These are also controllable by the retailer. Psychological determinants are partly controllable and include: character of sales personnel, packaging, advertising tone, and style of merchandise. Though these latter variables are controllable, they may be conditioned by the psychological differences between individuals. The above determinants are then influenced greatly by intervening variables of group influences: primary group, social class and reference group. Status is a further intervening variable that may serve to change the perceptions of store image. The intervening variables are uncontrollable by the retailer. He must understand their effects and attempt to measure them in order to tailor his controllable efforts to match the sociological segment of the market he is attempting to capture.

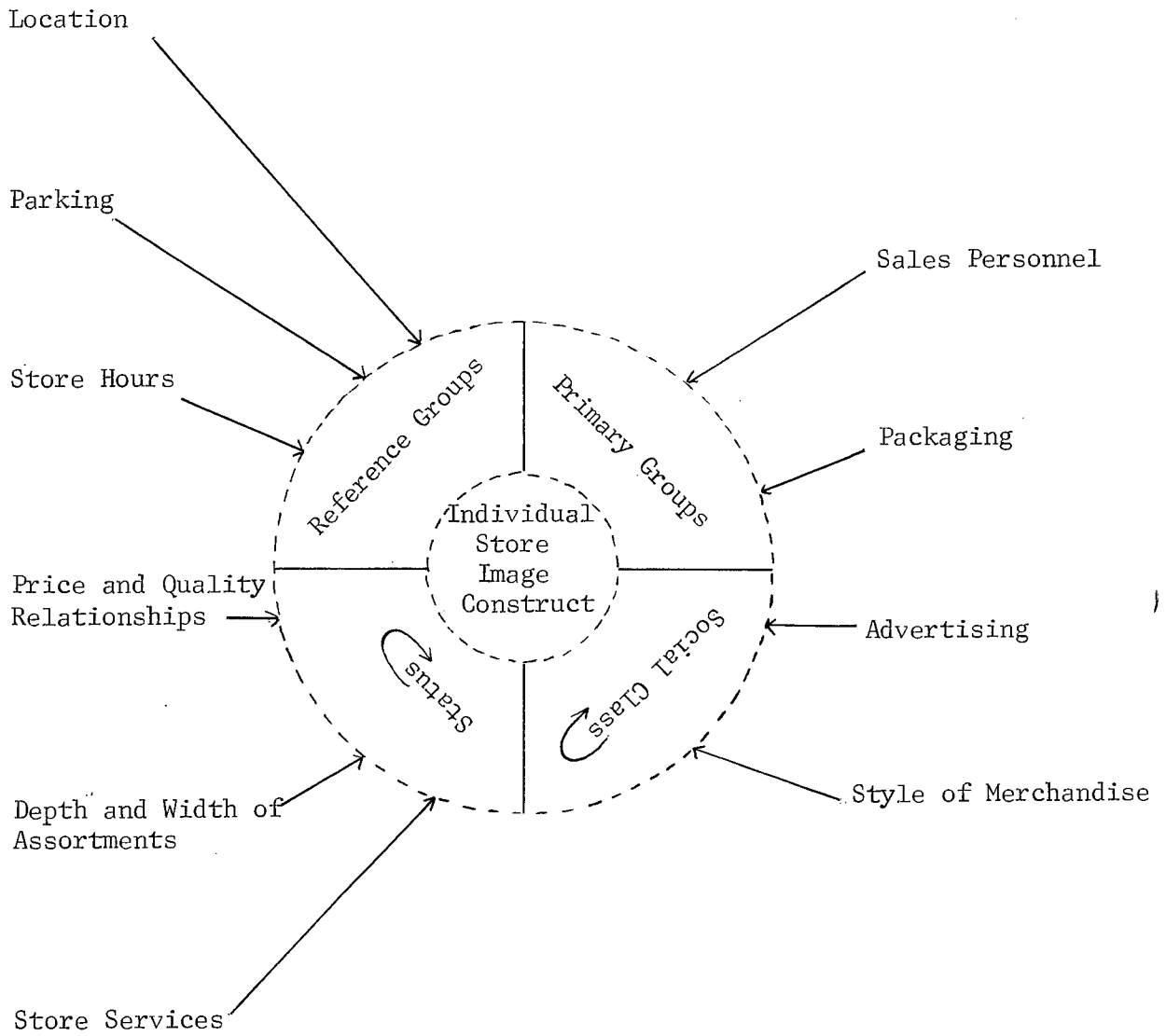
To visualize better the determinants of store image, a hypothetical diagram is presented.

FIGURE III

Determinants of Store Image

Functional Determinants

Psychological Determinants



CHAPTER IV  
FURTHER THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to reinforce the arguments presented in earlier chapters, it is necessary at this point to review some of the theoretical explorations of the concept of image as presented in recent publications. It will be seen that the work of John Howard and Irving Crisp tends to follow, along similar lines, the propositions presented in Chapter I and although the work to date is highly theoretical, it is hoped that methodology will evolve to further substantiate the theory presented in this paper. It is not the purpose of this thesis to present a clinical method of store "image" field study, but rather to point to the basic principles underlying the formation and perception of store image by the consumer.

The final section of this chapter will deal with the theories of Victor N. Vroom as presented in "Work and Motivation".<sup>44</sup> The inclusion of Vroom is to expand image theory by showing its relationship to motivational research whether in consumption, production or any other social or economic activity. The concept of image is related clearly to all the social sciences and must emerge as an acceptable construct to all who work in the field of human behaviour.

The Howard Model

In "Marketing Management",<sup>45</sup> John Howard presents a three phase

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44 Victor H. Vroom, Work and Motivation, New York, John Wiley, 1964, pp. 2-28.

45 John Howard, Marketing Management, Homewood Illinois, Richard D. Irwin, 1963, pp. 31-113.

model of buyer behaviour which he hopes will be useful in helping to explain consumer behaviour in choosing from alternative products or brands. Built upon learning theory, he evolves a stimulus-response model with three time dimensions: extensive problem solving (EPS) in which the buyer is being conditioned to choose from a maze of products and searches for sources of information extensively in order to clarify his choice of product; limited problem solving (LPS) in which the buyer has now learned to narrow his choice of alternatives and where there is a greater probability that the buyer will repeat the purchase of an alternative; automatic response behaviour (ARB) in which the buyer ceases to learn and often automatically chooses only one alternative whenever a buying stimulus is present.

The application of this theory to store image is apparent. Once the word "store" is inserted in place of "product" in alternatives for choice, the theory is still meaningful. Howard does not deal with image as such but implies in the (ARB) stage that images do exist which are strong and clear and allow the buyer to move automatically to a particular store when purchase needs arise.

Howard's behavioural equation is stated as:

$$B = P \times D \times K \times V \text{ }^{46} \text{ where}$$

B is response behaviour  
 P is the predisposition - the "inward"  
 response tendency  
 D is the present drive level  
 K is the "incentive potential"  
 V is the intensity of the cue

For our purposes the "P" is the essential key to image for "P" represents the attitudes of the consumer towards stores that he has

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46 Ibid., p. 43.

formed over time. Howard defines attitude as:

" . . . the buyer's feeling for or against the brand."<sup>47</sup>

Howard's definition of attitude is rather narrow for as we have seen, the concept of attitude has more components than merely "feeling". Howard does deal with the topic of attitudes as predictors of behaviour. He implies that attitude studies are most useful for predicting future purchases. He feels that buyers plan future purchases and to do this they store up information about products in advance of purchasing. This statement reinforces Proposition I in this paper for the planning of specific product purchases may be compared to the "preference map" of store images that is hypothesized in Proposition I.

In an earlier work, Howard deals more extensively with attitudes. He says:

"Attitudes are adaptive, cognitive acts which reduce tensions and help achieve goals. They are enduring predispositions for or against . . . objects, people or events".<sup>48</sup>

It appears that this statement is the basis for the "P" factor in his ultimate behavioural equation. Howard further elaborates on predisposition (attitudes) by hypothesizing that the amount of information seeking by a buyer is:

" . . . inversely related to predisposition . . . "<sup>49</sup>

The buyer seeks less information when his predisposition towards a product, brand or store is high than when it is low. Howard also deals with sources of information, firstly from personal sources; social

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47 Ibid., p. 50.

48 John Howard, Marketing: Executive and Buyer Behaviour, New York, Columbia University Press, 1963, p. 138.

49 Howard, op. cit., p. 58.

structure, primary groups and reference groups and secondly from impersonal sources; consumer guides, mass media, direct mail and shopping. Howard envisages a perceptual bias which is explained by what he calls the congruity principle, that is the congruity of individual attitudes and behaviour. He feels that incongruity causes dissonance (Festinger) and motivates the buyer to attempt to achieve consistency. Congruence of behaviour and class values results in equilibrium and consistent behaviour.

Howard's theoretical treatment of buyer behaviour is consistent with the theory presented in this paper. Though Howard deals with product and/or brand alternatives and we are dealing with retail store alternatives, the consistency of the two treatments is apparent. The "perceptive bias" that Howard speaks of is equivalent to the "intervening variables" discussed in Chapter III, those of sociological influences of groups and status connotations.<sup>50</sup> The store "image" concept is highly consistent with Howard's "P" in his behavioural equation; the predisposition latent in the individual whenever a stimulus occurs.

#### Attitude Research in Marketing: Crisp

Perhaps the most extensive treatment of the role of attitudes in marketing is presented by Irving Crisp in an article dealing with attitude research.<sup>51</sup>

Although in this article Crisp deals with choices of products and brands, the implication for choices of stores appears to be logically inherent in his discussion. Crisp develops similarly the theory presented in Chapter II of this paper as regards attitude theory and makes the

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<sup>51</sup> Crisp, op. cit.

point that the frame of reference to which all attitudes relate is meaningful only when we use the consumer's frame of reference, not the manufacturer's (or stores') frame of reference. He stresses the need in attitudinal analysis, "to identify and analyze the relatively consistent ways of behaving that are characteristic of people . . . to arrive at an underlying structure to account for consistence".<sup>52</sup>

This quotation serves to solidify the theory inherent in Proposition II of this paper that it is groups of people with similar "images" or "attitudes" towards stores that must be measured in attitude or image research. Individuals are important only when significant groupings occur and must be examined as members of specific groups.

Crisp does speak of "image research" which he feels is a specific type of attitude research in that it involves investigating cognition and frame of reference jointly. This is in line with the research conducted by Rosenberg and the prediction that the value system (frame of reference) of the individual is a component of the cognitive element of attitudes, and is a bias affecting perception.

Crisp also deals with methods for conducting attitude research as regards consumer behaviour. Of particular interest to him are experimental studies in which variables are deliberately manipulated in order to discover the extent of attitude change accompanying the manipulation. In store image research this could involve changing determinants of store image and measuring the resultant attitude change. For instance, advertising tone could be one determinant that could be readily manipulated. Packaging could be also changed in an effort to determine the extent of attitude change. Of course the sample groups used, as indicated in

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52 Ibid., p. 9.



Proposition II of this paper, would have to be stratified into some pre-determined socio-economic levels in order that the attitude change be measured within specific groups who tend to cognize the store in a relatively uniform way. Crisp, however, does not deal with this problem of reference groups as attitude reference anchorages.

Crisp is one of the few marketers to incorporate formal attitude theory directly into marketing research analysis. Some marketers have introduced some facets of attitude theory without extensively recognizing the validity of the theory as a whole. Others have used attitude theory without expressly defining the relationship of attitude theory to marketing.<sup>53</sup> Crisp points to the importance of attitude analysis as an aid to the better understanding of consumer behaviour. He reinforces the discussion in this thesis that attitudinal analysis is a key to the definition and understanding of image whether it be product, brand, corporate or store.

#### Instrumentality and Expectancy: Vroom

In "Work and Motivation", Victor Vroom presents an historical, cognitive model to explain why a person chooses an alternative from a group of alternatives when confronted with a decision.<sup>54</sup> The concept of valence (preference) is linked to outcomes as cognized by the individual. For each alternative an outcome is perceived. The valence attached to alternatives indicates the desirability of the outcomes. If an outcome is desirable, it is positively valent. If it is not desired, it is negatively valent. A valence of zero, indicates the person is indifferent

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<sup>53</sup> Image Research Inc., Meyers, Ben Crowe and Associates, studies mentioned in Chapter I.

<sup>54</sup> Vroom, op. cit. p. 14.

to attaining or not attaining the outcome. Motive is a term used to indicate a class of outcomes; those that are positively valent and which the individual wishes to attain, or those which are negatively valent and which the individual wishes to avoid. Motive is therefore used to indicate ambivalent behaviour; attainment or avoidance.

Further, Vroom argues that outcomes themselves are only means to ends. A person may be positively or negatively attracted to outcomes but may perceive that these outcomes may not be satisfying in themselves but may contribute to ends which are desired or appear to be satisfying.

Thus, instrumentality of outcomes is a motivating force for behaviour, since outcomes are instrumental in achieving further desired ends. Vroom presents his first proposition that:

"the valence of an outcome to a person is a monotonically increasing function of the algebraic sum of the products of the valences of all other outcomes and his conception of its instrumentality for the attainment of these other outcomes."<sup>55</sup>

To state this in terms of consumer behaviour, an individual may be able to shop at two different stores for his needs. He cognizes that store A is higher priced for most items and that store B is lower priced. Economically speaking, he has a positive valence for store B and a negative valence for store A. But other factors enter into the decision. He wishes to be known as a member of a higher socio-economic group which shops at store A. He perceives that the clientele of store B is not of the class he belongs to or wishes to belong to. He therefore may choose store A even though he cannot really afford to shop there because his shopping there will be instrumental in achieving the desired end of conforming to the norms of the group he feels he belongs to or wishes to belong to. Of course the example does not really interpret Vroom's

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55 Ibid., p. 17.

proposition fully, for there may be a choice of twenty stores. He then will shop where the highest or least low valence is perceived to be, which is modified by his conception of the instrumentality of the store in achieving his desired ends.

Vroom next examines the concept of expectancy. Since outcomes are dependent not only on the choices the individual makes but are also dependent upon events which are beyond his control, then behaviour is further modified by the degree to which the individual believes the outcomes to be probable. The belief that outcomes are probabilistic is referred to as expectancies. Since probabilities are calculated from zero to one, then expectancies may be described in terms of their strength. Maximum strength would be the perceived certainty that an act will be followed by the desired outcome.

Vroom then specifies how valencies and expectancies combine in determining choice.. His second proposition is:

"the force on a person to perform an act is a monotonically increasing function of the algebraic sum of the products of the valences of all outcomes and the strength of his expectancies that the act will be followed by the attainment of these outcomes."<sup>56</sup>

An outcome with a high positive valence will therefore have little effect on the force to perform the act unless there is some subjective probability that the desired outcome will be attained.

The concept of the probability of success of an outcome also has great relevance for marketing behaviour. I may prefer to buy at a particular store, however I may perceive that I will not find the item at this store. I therefore will go to the highest valent store at which I

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56 Ibid., p. 18

may expect to find the item. This explains the reason for the preference map of images as a simplification of attitudes in the minds of consumers. The preference map exists. It is structured by the interwoven determinants of image and the intervening variables of groups and status. Stores' images reflect the valence assigned to determinants of image and result in positive, zero and negative valent images. This image map is held in reserve and is latent. It comes to life when buying decisions are to be made. It directs the individual's shopping behaviour and the operative force or motivation to go to the store is a function of the expectancy of the individual that the store will be able to satisfy his product needs. The preference map of store images helps the consumer sort out his expectations. He wants to be able to know what to expect when he walks into the store. The image determinants all operate to form this image of expectation.

Vroom's theory of instrumentality and expectancy is highly applicable to attitude studies of store image formation. It helps explain why attitudes form and why images are constructed to represent symbolically individual attitudes.

Vroom's model suffers from two major defects. Firstly, it is untestable as yet for its concepts have not been related to observable events. It is a difficult task to quantify valence and though we may know valence direction, measurement may only be ordinal rather than comparative. Secondly, being ahistorical, the model suffers from the weakness of not formulating why individual attitudes develop and how or why they change. It does however conceptualize two important choice variables, instrumentality and expectancy both of which operate markedly on consumptive behaviour. Alderson moves to a similar conclusion when he

says:

"Studies indicate that consumer decision-making proceeds in terms of expected values. The consumer begins a shopping trip with some degree of specification of what is wanted and some subjective judgement as to the probability of getting them."<sup>57</sup>

### Summary

In this chapter an attempt has been made to link the concepts of store image as presented in Chapter I with other theoretical concepts formulated in current marketing literature. The consumer behaviour model, as formulated by John Howard, was examined with particular reference to the "predisposition" of consumers towards products, brands, corporations and retail stores. Though Howard deals primarily with "product choice", the inclusion of retail "store choice" can be arbitrarily inferred. The predisposition to buy at particular stores is certainly a factor in consumer behaviour and is, as has been shown, related clearly to the attitudes consumers have evolved over time. Retail store image is merely the simplification of attitudes into a convenient package for ready recall when the consumer is faced with a buying stimulus.

Irving Crisp's article on the role of attitudes in marketing was also discussed in an attempt to show further that marketers are becoming familiar with socio-psychological concepts which are analytical tools for studying consumer behaviour. Crisp is the first marketer to incorporate attitude concepts into marketing in an attempt to more clearly define why consumers behave as they do. He deals with "image" research as a particular kind of attitudinal study. Store image is an essential concept which derives mainly from the cognitive element of attitude.

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<sup>57</sup> Wroe Alderson, Dynamic Marketing Behaviour, p. 222.

It has very little or no affective component but is rather in the field of opinion or belief. Its unifying strand is the value system of the individual which is a real component of the cognitive element and permeates through all attitudes held by the individual, unifying and organizing them by a movement towards consistency.

The motivational model of Victor Vroom was introduced into the discussion for it appears to explain more clearly the force that operates on an individual to choose one store over another. The concepts of instrumentality and expectancy help to explain valence and force. Images, for Vroom, would be an index system for the individual to unlock attitude clusters relating to choice decisions. Rather than examine each alternative again when faced with a decision, the consumer constructs a hierarchical structure of valent weighted alternatives encountered in the past, ranging from plus to minus. This is similar in concept to the preference maps that are presented in Proposition I of this paper in order to define retail store image.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

An attempt has been made in this paper to clarify the concept of retail store image by postulating two essential propositions. We will now deal with them one at a time.

Proposition I           The concept of retail store "image" can be best explained in terms of attitude theory and that retailers may build or modify their "image" by better understanding attitude formation and change. Retail store "images" may be looked upon as preference maps that consumers construct from experience, perceptions, social interactions, values and aspirations which serves to aid them in their decision-making as to where to go to purchase the assortment of products they require. A strong store image would then be associated with the propensity of customers to trade regularly in a particular store without specific regard for their needs to buy particular items.

The core of "image" theory is presented in this proposition for it defines store "image" formation by relating image to attitude. Since attitudes are relatively stable characteristic ways of reacting to aspects of the environment, then images would also be relatively fixed and stable. Attitudes arise from experience, perceptions, social interactions, values and aspirations, as has been shown in the chapter on

attitude theory. So, too, must images arise.

The consumer sorts out his many attitudes by means of stereotypes or images. These "pictures in the mind" are a means of simplifying the complex clusters of attitudes. Retail store "images" simplify those attitudes developed towards particular stores in order to solve the complex decisions involved in consumptive behaviour.

As can be seen from previous discussions, store image research must seek out attitudes, not merely images, by attempting to uncover two strands in the cognitive element of attitude, the beliefs and opinions the consumer has about the store as well as the frame of reference; the value system which modifies perception. These must be investigated jointly as they operate together.

#### Investigating Store Images: Individuals

There are really two problems involved in investigating store images in light of the definition in Proposition I. One is the reconstruction of the individual's preference map of store images by the investigator. This can only be attempted by product categories since stores do not all handle complete product lines. A type of question might be posed in the following manner, "To which store would you go to buy the following items?" The responses to this question would uncover the top valent stores but would not uncover the total image map for it deals in positive valence only. A better technique might be a ranking of stores by the consumer. Again product categories would have to be stipulated. Department stores might be classed as a single group, whereas specialty stores might be separated by product classification. A recent study at the University of British Columbia's marketing



department<sup>58</sup> was aimed at unearthing consumer buying habits in department stores in the Greater Vancouver area. Really, the study resulted more in unearthing underlying attitudes and images rather than buying habits. It is a difficult task to interpret what people say as against what they might do. An image map must be modified by the significance of Vroom's expectancy theory. Though a consumer may rank a store highly, she may not shop at that store. She may choose an alternative for reasons of lower price, convenience or other reasons for she may not be able to afford the prices at the higher ranked store even though in her image map, it ranks higher. Expectancy is a real force operating on consumer behaviour.

Once the investigator is able to reconstruct the image map of the consumer, the second problem is to analyze why it takes the shape it does. Why are some stores higher than others in rank? This problem centres upon the determinants of retail store image as they are perceived and judged by the consumer. Functional, psychological and sociological determinants (see Chapter III) must be assessed and their impact must be measured. For the individual store, it is not enough to know how the consumer ranks it in comparison to other stores. The store must know why it is ranked as it is in order to adopt strategies which may reinforce positive or change negative or zero valented determinants. Again, product categories may be used for determinant measurement. Comparative ranking within categories for each variable would help to uncover the individual store's strengths and weaknesses. The problem again is one of measurement. A semantic differential technique similar to the

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58 S. Oberg, "Study of Consumer Buying Habits," unpublished survey, Vancouver, B.C., University of British Columbia, Department of Marketing, 1966.

Likert-type scale might be evolved for each variable. The Lippencot and Margolies study<sup>59</sup> used only two semantic differentials e.g. moderate prices, expensive prices; high quality merchandise, low quality merchandise. This limited use of comparative ranking is not really a true differential for it offers the consumer little choice in ranking. It is an either, or technique and cannot really measure the variables as they should be. A five point scale would be a better choice: e.g. very low prices, low prices, average prices, higher than average prices, very high prices. Such a scale would be more meaningful for each determinant measured.

Problems of measuring the intervening variables of group influence and status connotations are more complex. The use of open-end questions or association techniques might be helpful in uncovering the nature and extent of these variables. Perhaps an interview designed to uncover the value system and aspirations of the individual might be most helpful in assessing the impact of the intervening variables. Although the examination of the functional and psychological variables may lead to an inference of the value system of the consumer, it would be better to disclose this by some projective techniques. Other attitudes may be uncovered which affect the perceptions of the store's efforts to build an image. To the store, such information would be of vital assistance in indicating needed changes in its strategy in order to enhance its image. By better understanding consumer attitudes, the store may better tailor its efforts to gain wider acceptance. The Hudson's Bay study, mentioned earlier, did uncover widely held attitudes which indicated the significant groups of consumers were less and less interested in

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59 Image Research Inc., op. cit.

tradition and the company's long history. What they found was that these consumers wanted to identify with modern, young stores. The Bay then changed its strategy to attract this large group by modern advertising techniques, more youthful colouring on boxes and bags, and a change in merchandise to incorporate more youthful styling.

The store that can project a strong image, one which is consistent in every determinant, makes use of the principle of consistency inherent in attitude theory. Since consistency organizes attitudes then a high consistency should lead to a strong positive attitude. For the specialty store, a high consistency leading to a strong image ensures it an acceptance within the market segment it has chosen to cater to. The problem of a high negative image for the store in other market segments may be a real one. But this is overcome by the loyalty of the group it has chosen to serve. The department store, however, has a far more complex problem in that it covers a wider market segment. Consistency must still pervade its every effort, but these efforts must be consistent with the attitudes held by widely differing social groups of consumers. It is much more difficult for a department store to build a strong positive image for it cannot afford a strong negative image in any of its varied market segments. The appeal of the department store must therefore be the wide range of assortments in a wide range of departments. Store services become an indispensable aid in building a department store image. Ease of parking, inside store transportation, ease of credit procurement, delivery, easy return of merchandise; all these aid the department store in building a favourable image, perhaps even more importantly than style of merchandise and depth of assortment. To the specialty store, style of merchandise and depth of assortment

may be the most important image determinants.

Proposition II "Image" is those tangible and intangible properties of an object which have the effect of being cognized in a relatively uniform way with relatively uniform salience by a significantly large proportion of a specified group or aggregate of people.

Investigating Store Image: Groups

Proposition I defined retail store image for the individual consumer. Proposition II extends the definition into categorical significance which can be meaningful to marketers. Individuals make up a market but marketers must be concerned, not with individuals, but aggregates of individuals or groups. Knowing that a preference map of store images is built up for each individual and knowing the determinants of store image is of vast importance in structuring retail store strategy, but the realization that the image map is similar for a large proportion of consumers is the real key to implementing strategy.

Sociologists view consumptive behaviour as:

" . . . the behaviour of consumers at a given time or over a period of time".<sup>60</sup>

It is these aggregates that retail stores must seek to identify. The lack of data presently on the social fabric of society, values, norms, habits and customs, is a real stumbling block to sorting out meaningful groups for marketing strategy formulation. Too often, marketers get around the problem by choosing to separate groups by one

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<sup>60</sup> Charles Glock and Francesco Nicosia, "Uses of Sociology in Studying Consumptive Behaviour," Journal of Marketing, vol. 28, no. 3, July 1964, p. 51.

independent variable such as income. As has been pointed out in this paper, income may not necessarily be the only variable operating. Social class and reference group aspirations may be even a stronger force in structuring groups. Unfortunately, there is not enough research results available as yet to identify the structure of contemporary society. Life-cycle concepts, too, augment the complexity of the problem.

The solution to the analysis of store image among specific groups is not yet available to marketers, but through some arbitrary classification, group affiliations may be inferred. In examining individual's store images, useful hypotheses may be uncovered to classify individuals to groups. Proposition II implies a significant segment of a group has a relatively uniform image map and this may be verified by grouping similar reconstructed preference maps and noting the similarities between individuals, stressing sociological variables such as education, race, religion, profession together with the economic variables of income. Perhaps an indication of the social aspirations of the individual may help in classification.

Proposition II makes use of a familiar marketing principle, that of market segmentation. It is necessary for any marketing institution to define, through research, the varied characteristics of the market segments it is attempting to attract. The idea of "target markets"<sup>61</sup> is inherent in the theoretical presentation of Proposition II. Retail stores aim at "target markets" in the same way that manufacturers and wholesalers do. By knowing the characteristics of the "target markets" retailers are better able to tailor their strategy to satisfy this

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61 McCarthy, Basic Marketing, p. 25.

market. The concept of store image helps to understand better the market segment for it yields an understanding of the attitudes and therefore the behaviour of the group of consumers in the segment.

### Conclusion

The concept of retail store "image" has been dealt with extensively in an attempt to clarify its connotations so that retail stores may better tailor their strategy to enhance their market position. Attitude theory has been introduced in an effort to show that store image merely reflects the overall attitude a consumer holds towards a store as well as towards all stores she has experienced. Two propositions are presented which serve to simplify the understanding of retail store image. One defines store image for the individual, the other moves to a meaningful generalization.

Throughout the paper, the concept of consistency has been stressed as the underlying principle of attitude organization as well as image formation. It has been shown that a consistent store image attracts a significant group of consumers who identify themselves with the store. Bruck sums this up when he says:

" . . . shopping is an expression of a woman's personality and the store she prefers is one that reflects a view of contemporary life consistent with her own . . . one that offers merchandise that fits in with her home and her vision of what she wants her store to be".<sup>62</sup>

Attitude theory also can be utilized by marketers in better understanding how store image may be changed. Knowing firstly the attitudes of the groups comprising his market, the retailer may tailor his efforts to influence them to regard his store favourably by creating a

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62 Gilbert Bruck, "What Makes Women Buy," Fortune, August, 1956, p. 101.

strong store image. As has been shown, he may examine separately all the determinants of store image in light of the sociological influences that are at work to form the value system or reference anchorages that are the pivot about which attitude clusters evolve. He must clearly communicate to groups of consumers the instrumentality of his store in fulfilling their consumptive needs as well as the probability or expectancy that these needs may be fulfilled in his store. By accomplishing this, he serves to build an image which groups of consumers readily cognize and incorporate into their image preference maps. The inclusion of his store's image into group maps ensures a market acceptance of his store. But he must continue to note attitude changes in his clientele and in other consuming groups so that he may change his strategy in the light of changing attitudes.

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## APPENDIX I

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

## VANCOUVER

	<u>Total</u>
All Respondents	109
<u>Demographic Characteristics</u>	%
<u>Age of Respondent</u>	
18-24 years	3
25-34 years	17
35-44 years	29
45-54 years	29
55 years or more	22
Total	<u>100%</u>
<u>Education of Respondent</u>	
1-8 years public school	6
1-3 years high school	12
4 years high school	31
Technical school	4
1-4 years college	45
No report	2
Total	<u>100%</u>
<u>Occupation of Head of Household</u>	
Professional	26
Executive, owner, manager	19
Sales	10
Clerical, white collar	15
Skilled labor	9
Unskilled labor	1
Widow, spinster, retired	11
All other occupations	7
No report	2
Total	<u>100%</u>
<u>Yearly Household Income</u>	
\$ 3,999 or less	13
\$ 4,000 - \$4,999	6
\$ 5,000 - \$7,499	16
\$ 7,500 - \$9,999	13
\$10,000 or more	32
No report	20
Total	<u>100%</u>

Source: Image Research Inc., A Study of Department Store Imagery Conducted in Canadian Markets, Table 36U.

## APPENDIX II

October 12, 1965.

The Hudson's Bay Company Ltd.,  
Portage Ave. Retail Store,  
Winnipeg, Man.

Attention: Public Relations Office

Gentlemen:

I am writing to you in an effort to find out why your executive has found it necessary, after nearly three hundred years, to change the whole concept of "The Hudson's Bay Company, established 1670", to a pseudo-Chinese motif "the Bay".

Even if people do prefer to call you "the Bay", does this need a complete, if unpalatable, "face-lifting", including the removal of the trade-mark granted at the same time as the Charter?

In this day of fast-changing pace, those who cling to the old traditions are distinctly in the minority, but when encountered, present a refreshing change. Three hundred years of history-making is no mean contribution to this country's history, and it is a shame to see it sacrificed to a merchandiser's dream, or as a sop to consumer opinion. Perhaps the old traditions do not bring more dollars into the store, but surely bring gratification to those who have helped to shape Canada's history - for example - "The Hudson's Bay Company".

Personally, I have always felt that The Hudson's Bay Company stood for a dignified service, something more than just another retail outlet, which may or may not be around next year. The "Bay" has been around for three hundred years, with every indication of being around for a good long time yet. Incidentally, being known as "the Bay" is not new - in my lifetime you were always referred to as "the Bay" in our family - but without benefit of the radical changes you seem to feel necessary now, and people were proud to shop at a store which had been so instrumental in the shaping of this country, particularly the West.

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Source: Correspondence file of the Hudson's Bay Company Ltd., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

- 2 -

Although I know this letter will not change anything, and you will go ahead with your 'modernization' plans, I would really be interested to know what prompted this change - particularly now, when so many plans are afoot for the Centennial celebrations, one would think you would capitalize on your long history in this country, instead of playing it down.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs.) Eileen Pruden

October 15, 1965.

Mrs. Eileen Pruden,

Dear Mrs. Pruden:

Thank you for your forthright comments on our "new look".

We believe that the reason we have survived as a Company for almost 300 years is that we have been able to change with the times. For 200 years we were exclusively a fur trading organization, then in 1870 we became primarily a land company. Management in the early 1900's was able to see that land, a depleting asset, would not last forever and large scale investments were made in the retail business. Today our department stores, large and small, account for over 75% of our profits.

We believe that to succeed in the retail business our stores must constantly explore new methods, feature new merchandise, adopt new ways.

About two years ago we undertook an extensive customer survey on the image of our stores and our competitors. We found that The Bay and Morgan's, our Eastern Canadian subsidiary, were highly regarded in relation to competitors in such characteristics as high quality merchandise and attractive displays. They scored fairly well in progressiveness.

But customers generally rated our stores somewhat behind competition in best values, helpful sales people and friendly atmosphere and The Bay and Morgan's were thought to have more expensive merchandise than competitors in each community. Some of these findings were quite disturbing. We know our prices are competitive, we know our sales people are helpful and we would like to think that our stores have a friendly atmosphere.

We attributed some of the misconception on the part of our customers to failure of our own communications. We felt the use of the formal

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Source: Correspondence file of the Hudson's Bay Company Ltd., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Mrs. Eileen Pruden

- 2 -

October 15, 1965.

Hudson's Bay Company name in the archaic old English configuration, together with a Coat of Arms, contributed to this aloof, stuffy, somewhat old-fashioned and high price image.

We decided to use our less formal name - The Bay - which had been used by customers and staff for many years, as the principal identifier for our stores, retaining the Hudson's Bay Company name for secondary purposes in the stores - it will continue to be found on many items of merchandise - for our fur operations and for corporate purposes.

We then set about to design a new configuration for The Bay. We wanted a design which would suggest a store that was fashionable, modern, dependable, friendly, and offering quality for the dollar spent. We also wanted a design which would be strong and unique. Individual tests in the field of design vary widely and the result which you describe as "pseudo-Chinese" impressed us as the best of a number of alternatives in satisfying these criteria.

We then proceeded to apply the new design to a wide variety of items, including wrapping materials, forms and stationery, signs and trucks (a program which is still in progress).

The objective is to give our stores a look which is more modern, friendly, fashionable, competitive, progressive and appropriate to our business. We hope that our new look will grow on those of our customers who find it strange at first.

Many thanks for having taken the time and trouble to write.

Yours sincerely,

A. R. Huband,  
Secretary,  
Canadian Committee.