

Impact of Visual merchandising on customer appeal

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Abstract: The goal of this study is to determine how and to what degree retail shops use visual merchandising to appeal to customers and encourage them to make a purchase. The study was conducted using the survey method, and data were obtained using sampling procedures from identified respondents who were chosen using convenient and judgment approaches. The most crucial conclusions, in light of the project's goals, were that most stores require gorgeous window displays, proper store layout, and appealing visual merchandising themes to draw in current and new customers. It is widely acknowledged that the most important parts of visual merchandising are appropriate lighting and enticing display themes. Visual merchandising is quite effective in turning potential customers into actual customers, according to the findings of the study. Most merchandisers' primary priority is to display the latest trend and best-selling items in display windows, and visual merchandising is quite effective in turning potential customers into actual customers.

Keywords: The store layout, visual merchandising, in-store displays, and visual sensor engagement.

Introduction:

It is impossible to market a product without expressing its image. In addition to product quality, a positive image is crucial for long-term brand loyalty. Many businesses spend a lot of money on promotions to achieve this. However, many firms overlook the storefront, which serves as the brand's face. In other words, how products are exhibited on store shelves, how salespeople connect with customers, and so on are some of the concerns that, if not handled properly, can pose a danger to a brand's image. Visual marketing is the skill of presenting products in a way that highlights the merchandiser. It educates purchasers, piques their interest, and speeds up the selling process. It's an aesthetic method to ensure that a retailer's goods move off the shelves faster, as well as a tool to appeal to the visual sensory parts of the buyer.

With the recent introduction of self-service in retail stores and numerous changes in supermarket merchandising methods, there has been a greater emphasis on the type of store layout, store construction, fixtures, and equipment, color displays, silent communication tools, window display, and final opinion building through in-store displays, which has elevated the art of retailing to new heights. The study's purpose is to find out how and to what extent retail stores employ visual merchandising to attract customers and persuade them to buy something. To investigate the elements that influence visual merchandising decisions, as well as the effectiveness of visual merchandising in attracting customers who will make a purchase.

VISUAL MERCHANDISING CRITICAL PROBLEM

The way businesses are conducted, as well as the so-called merchandisers of shop inventory disposition, has been revolutionized by retailing. There are numerous methods and techniques for boosting sales, increasing profits, and increasing the company's net worth. This is when visual merchandising comes in handy. This needs a concerted industry effort to prioritize quality retail coverage including self-integrity in-store advertising, pricing monitoring, stock rotations, new item cutting, and other related operations. The following visual merchandising difficulties must be addressed to run a successful retail business.

- a. Signs and graphics: The stall's complete instruction manual is comprised of eye-catching yet clear visuals that visually represent the brand. When combined with the appropriate signage, these graphics form the stall's full instruction manual.
- b. Trends: This is sometimes misunderstood as merely stall decorations. The source, in reality, the sheer requirement of the goods for the consumer, is communicated to the buyer through brand sources and moot boards. An excellent trend storyboard display can show the thought process behind the ideas (from research to swatch development to final product utilization).
- c. Space management: The majority of exhibits focus on space management on the floor. To produce the correct ambiance, the ceiling space should also be given proper attention. Because walls aren't flexible, space should be assigned to available products by customer expectations to offer the greatest outcomes. The most significant features of space management are as follows:
 - How do we want our product lines to appear? (stocking/hanging/customers, etc.)
 - How dense do you want your stock to be? The higher the potential returns, the more options/units you can retain for a given quantity of space. There are two types of space landing systems.
- d. Visuals & Numeric: Users can utilize a numerical planning system to account for available space and calculate ratios like returns on space. After range decisions have been made, users of visual systems can construct three-dimensional walk-through models of stores and judge the aesthetic of a store.
- e. Mannequins & Dresiforms, for example, The dress forms convey the product's three-dimensional form. A good mannequin can be tailored to transmit personalities in addition to the fit. Special children, for example, wear mannequins with caricatured faces to express the designs' humorous character.
- f. Synergy among the stalls: The appearance of a stall should correspond to the fair's overall ambiance; whether it's a color scheme or the material utilized, it should be incorporated into the booth.
- g. Outside-the-box thinking: Because there are so many stalls, it's sometimes important to concentrate some stock value to draw buyers' attention. Innovative ideas for exhibiting mannequins, swatches, and other items can attract a large number of people.

h. Merchandising planning: The major goal of merchandising planning is to develop a five-year or longer strategic plan that identifies the critical success factors for merchandising in terms of sales, margins, and stock levels. To put it another way, merchandising planning is a systematic strategy for optimizing return on investment by strategically organizing sales and inventory to boost profits.

i. Range planning: Start with an assortment strategy. In an assortment plan, the objective of the product plan is divided into distinct lines so that the division increases the overall marginal mix. After that, a distribution strategy is devised. The link between available physical space and the range done here is a critical aspect of marketing performance.

Literature Review

By showcasing how visual marketing should be integrated into a company's operations. Maier (2009) emphasizes the relevance of a visual design that aids in making decisions about the style of a boutique in his corporate plan. Pricing recommendations, layout, customer reaction, and merchandising are all things to consider in offering customers a sense of the boutique's many components, impacting their appeal and likelihood to purchase from that boutique, according to the study. It is believed that implementing a sound visual marketing plan can help any company create a brand image with its target market quickly and efficiently. The study put forward that the aforementioned visual guidelines will be of great assistance in effectively establishing a boutique, saving time, and money, and attracting loyal and continuing clients.

Gelsomino (nd) coined out several aspects of a shop that can be enhanced to call to customers & finally convert fetched into purchases. The identity of the storefront and initial impressions, as well as the store layout and promotional activities, are all important considerations. The research goes on to suggest that the way the merchandise is displayed has a lot to do with attracting customers and that it may reflect the store's personality while also giving a sample of what's inside. In addition, he suggested Lifestyle merchandising as a store layout option. According to the survey, store presentation and product marketing result in an alluring cover, an engaging first chapter assuring the reader that they made the right choice, and a satisfying finale that leaves the audience wanting more. Supporters suggest hiring a professional display assistant at least once and incorporating a hands-on training session in the charge so you may learn the principles of a successful display from an expert.

Garvey (2010) elaborates on the significance of visual merchandising, arguing that it is all about making the customer feel the way the marketer wants them to feel. He discusses the various steps that must be performed while opening a store, such as using eye-catching displays, showing a diverse range of things appealingly, and so on. He emphasizes the first phase, which requires us to analyze our business plan to choose a theme and other key elements because the store's appearance and feel might influence a customer's decision to buy, enter the store, or return for repeat business. He also mentions how good signage, as well as small but crucial things like the location of garment racks or the pricing alignment of displays, can help in effectively delivering one's message to a customer. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of shop displays in developing a brand image rapidly.

Storms (2006) looks into how interior design might help with visual merchandising. Because the eye is the link that connects the head and heart to the outside world, the research shows that even a first glance can help with purchasing habits selections. Visual merchandising seeks to introduce a product stylishly and colorfully; it educates people to help them make rapid purchasing decisions. The location must be decorated to highlight the main product of the show. The backdrop colors, lighting, art pieces, and vegetation in exquisitely designed pots, among other things, all contribute to the overall appearance of the focused product. Furthermore, visual themes are remembered better than audio or written themes. To generate such an effect, today's designers use Video Display Systems in combination with acoustics. According to him, the primary goal of interior design is to keep customers in the store longer, buy more than they anticipated, and return as satisfied customers. It allows retailers to showcase their most recent and high-quality merchandise in a stylish manner.

According to Clark (2007), the mannequin industry is vital to any retail/visual merchandising. It has gone through considerable changes, with mannequins becoming realistic at one point, then abstract, then headless, and finally reverting to a realistic concept associated with a human touch. The changes, according to the study, correspond to societal trends, with customers preferring a "complete look." According to the author, the Mannequin business is likewise reliant on company budgets; as a result, they must act as workhorses throughout the year, with innovation as their trump card. The study concluded that, no matter how much the industry changes, it will eventually develop to meet changing times and client preferences.

The importance of visual merchandising and the essential guidelines that must be followed to have an impact on the customer's thoughts and perception was highlighted in a study by Dawes (2008). With more and more businesses adopting ways to catch customers' attention, the window display industry is becoming an important business. This article explains how the best approach to get someone's attention is to get their interest in the first place, which is exactly what a well-dressed window does. According to the research, window displays represent your brand and business, drawing customers and promoting things, regardless of which display idea is suited or which route is taken. Products that should not be neglected are promoted in window displays.

According to Sebastian (2008), traditional visual marketing was traditionally associated with store windows and sales floor displays, with businesses paying specialists to design the best floor space layout for retail space optimization. In contrast, as the internet and, in particular, e-commerce has grown in popularity, merchants are considering whether to launch their online businesses with their marketing, merchandising, and fulfillment capabilities to make financial returns. According to the survey, organizations will find it tough to ride out the early stages, but early adopters will have an advantage in executing this fundamental transformation. This makes us cautious to believe that visual merchandising, on its own, would be completely devoid of innovation. On the other side, visual merchandising may evolve in the digital world as a website designer, supporting cross-channel retailing or selling retail products via online sales-commerce or m-commerce.

Bustos (2004a) goes into considerable depth about the importance of store presentation, claiming that customers respond better to simple, innovative, and inventive displays and that strong merchandising presentation skills are required to achieve this. The study

identifies several guidelines that must be followed to complete the task at hand. The study's walls, flooring, and fixtures are all designed to be as simple as possible. Basic and inventive presentations have been found to aid businesses with minimal budgets for visual presentations. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of retail display simplicity in establishing a strong brand image.

Designers frequently ignore the display window while establishing a new firm, according to Bustos (2004b). The display windows are considered an exterior feature, but they quickly become one of the most important marketing tools once the store is open. The study emphasized the need of creating a display window layout, recruit a labor team (visual merchandising team), and creating a yearly budget. Display windows should be updated based on the products that will be displayed in them, according to the research. While arranging for the windows, the study details the use of imaginative floors, lighting, backdrops, and mannequins. The conclusion of this study focuses on a few simple but critical aspects of designing a display window that may be used as a marketing tool for a company.

When it comes to the display of grocery products in different retail outlets, Gates (2007) emphasizes the importance of communication between retailers and suppliers in his research. According to the survey, the key to creating a win-win situation for all sides is for suppliers and retailers to collaborate when pushing produce, meet halfway on promotions, and convey each other's requirements along the route. According to the poll, offering information about the farm's offers to demo fruits in local stores, as well as asking suppliers a list of comprehensive questions regularly, would ensure that the retailers' needs are met.

Suppliers' constant communication of facts to retailers, such as what fruits they have ready so that they can make room for them, facts that they can pass on to final consumers, and information on new products, especially products with new packaging, portion control, or unique varieties, encourage produce managers to follow other departments' lead and stack recipe cards next to their fruits and vegetables. She also points out that some merchants set up whole displays of exclusively local products, comparable to a small farmer's market, and they frequently include images of the local farmers who raise the food in their marketing, which adds to the additional component that drives customers to the stores. According to the report, "promotions" are important, but if suppliers want to establish true consumer reliance, they should focus on all-encompassing marketing strategies. This means that "promotion" is just one instrument in the marketing arsenal; other elements like merchandising and packaging are as important and should be considered. Gates concludes by emphasizing the need for supplier-retailer partnership, without which consumer needs will not be properly satisfied.

Research Methodology

The descriptive research technique was castoff in this study. The research's primary goal is to describe the current state of affairs. In a descriptive study, the type of research utilized to collect information about the demographic and behavioral factors of the respondents is usually a survey. Nationality, age, and gender were investigated as demographic factors. Visual merchandising is important in defining the tone of the store, making a large impression on the customer, and possibly converting him into a purchase, according to other descriptive material provided in the study. Two types of questionnaires were employed in the survey: one for visual merchandisers and the other for purchasers. The visual merchandiser was asked six questions, and the clients were asked five questions. Questions about respondents' personal information were included in both questionnaires. Open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple-choice items were included in the well-structured questionnaires. Multiple-choice & scaled-response questions Before being finalized and distributed, the questionnaire was pretested.

A combination of convenience and judgment sampling was used in this study. Convenient sampling is a type of sampling that is not based on probability. The method was chosen since it is simple and keeps back time. We chose respondents who were readily accessible for the study. The researcher utilizes his or her judgment in selecting units from the study population based on population parameters in judgment sampling. Respondents of diverse ethnicities and ages were included in the sample size. The sample size for clients was set at 100 questionnaires, while the sample size for visual merchandisers was set at 20. This was deemed sufficient for easily analyzing and interpreting the data. The dispensation was completed in Microsoft Excel once the field data was scrutinized. Before being entered into the computer, the whole multi-choice options were pre-coded.

Data Analysis

The bulk of the respondents in the poll (77%) was between the ages of 18 and 30. Many of the people who responded were college students, graduates, and employees of various companies. Middle-aged respondents (30-40 years) made up about 12% of the total, with the majority coming from the working class. The age categories 40-50 (4%) and 50 and above (4%) had the lowest number of respondents (7 percent). Because the perspectives of male and female respondents on numerous problems concerning merchandising and buying decisions differ, the population of respondents for the determination of the study was segmented constructed on gender. As a result, gender cannot be ignored as a factor in the analysis. According to the following graph, the number of male and female respondents was equal (50%); however, because this is a broad study, replies from both groups are significant. The age group of 18-30 dominated the sample, with 52 percent of girls and the remaining males falling into this category. The rest of the age categories were underrepresented in the sample.

Indians made up the majority of the responders (64 percent). Arab citizens from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) made up the second-largest group of responders (16%). Pakistan (11%) was represented, as well as the Philippines (3%) and Sri Lanka (3%). (1 percent). People from countries other than the ones listed above made up the rest of the respondents. In terms of nations, the research was kept as broad as feasible to assess the preferences and perceptions of respondents from as many diverse parts of the world as conceivable.

Professionals (23 percent) were those who were employed in their field of specialization at the time of the survey. A small percentage of the survey respondents (1%) were business proprietors. Front liner employees, service sector personnel, & others

made up the remaining (29%) groups of responders. A vast percentage of the respondents (62%) have a monthly income of between 300 and 1000 BD. This group reflects the most price-sensitive members of the entire study sample. Those with a family income of more than 1000 BD made up the second-largest segment (31 percent). These people weren't necessarily price-conscious. As a result, people were more likely to choose specific brands. The remaining respondents (7%) were from families with an annual income of less than 300 BD. These respondents were particularly priced sensitive, thus they didn't have much of a say in what they bought.

This section explains how the many in-store factors employed in the shop design entice customers to purchase that particular outlet. We gave the respondents a rating system to utilize to analyse the various criteria based on their preferences to identify their favorite and least favorite options in this section. The majority of individuals believe display settings to be the most significant aspect to consider when they first enter a store. Furthermore, the respondents stated that the orderly organization of the various items on display for purchase was highly significant since it allowed them to go about their shopping with the fewest possible obstacles on the shop floor. Staff behavior was the respondents' favored second appeal-creating component, as good employee behavior adds to the ambiance, making customers feel at ease when shopping in that particular store. Graphics and signage were the next most popular aspect among respondents. They reasoned that if there was adequate signage throughout the store, customers would be able to navigate their way around and not waste time looking for specific items. The preferred in-store qualities were illumination and space, after-display settings, employee demeanor, and graphics and signage.

Display settings are favored by a big portion of the survey sample once again. Following the display settings, staff behavior is equally important. Space organization is the third most important component in the business, especially for non-durables, because clutter and stacking up of things with no space for clients to paddle would deter them from purchasing. Enough illumination and appropriate signage are the final two factors on the survey's scale. We also asked respondents to rate four criteria for a variety of products and venues, including personal care products, durables, fashion, edibles, furnishings, and restaurants, including brand name, visual attractiveness, discounts and offers, and accessibility. After reviewing and analyzing the numerous responses, the following results were obtained.

In the case of personal care products, we can see that the brand name was given top significance. This is because the brand name is usually associated with the product's quality; for example, if a product is very popular, people assume it is of good quality and vice versa. When it comes to buying personal care products, stores that sell branded items are prioritized. The second most significant factor is visual appeal. People do not like to shop at stores that do not visually appeal to them. Discounts and special offers are also seen to be important elements in luring shoppers into establishments. When it comes to making a purchase, customers consider accessibility to be the least important factor.

When it came to durable goods, the brand name was once again the critical factor that influenced purchasing in any store. This is because, even in the case of long-lasting products, the brand name is viewed as an indicator of product quality. Discounts and special offers were the second most essential influence on any customer's decision to buy. People seek value for money when purchasing durables, which is why discounts and offers are regarded as vital in persuading a buyer to purchase the durable. The third most essential component in persuading customers to make a purchase was the visual appeal. Accessibility is, once again, the least crucial aspect in attracting consumers to a shopping location.

In the instance of clothing, visual appeal was deemed to be the most essential component in encouraging purchase. This is because aesthetic appeal (particularly mannequin displays) offers the customer a notion of how the clothing might look on them. In the case of apparel, the next most important factor was the brand name. This is because people feel proud when they wear branded clothing. The third most significant factor in drawing customers to a clothes store is discounts and special deals. Accessibility was considered the least important factor by the majority of respondents.

In the case of edibles, the brand name was the most important factor that respondents considered before making a purchase. This is because respondents associate the brand name with the quality of the items they intend to purchase. The product's visual attractiveness was identified as the second most important factor. According to the respondents, to encourage consumers to buy edibles, the product must be visually appealing and fresh-looking. When respondents needed to make a purchase, discounts and offers were the next most essential factor to consider. Accessibility was once again the least significant factor to consider when purchasing edibles.

When it comes to furnishings, the most important factor that respondents considered before acquiring them was their visual appeal. This is because customers who were drawn to a store by its appearance had an idea of how the furniture would look in their house or office. Before purchasing furniture, respondents ranked discounts and special offers as the second most important factor. This is because they didn't worry if the product wasn't branded as long as they got the things they wanted at a lower price. Following reductions and special offers, the brand name was mentioned as an important factor in drawing customers to a furniture company. Even while purchasing furniture, respondents regarded accessibility as the least important factor.

When it came to restaurants, respondents preferred Brand names over all others when they had to choose from several options. This is because the excellence and sense of taste of the food provided in such eateries were linked to the brand name. The visual appeal of the restaurant they chose was the next most important element. The atmosphere had to be suitable for the respondents for them to return to the restaurant. The restaurant's accessibility was the next most important aspect for the responders. Discounts and special deals were the least essential consideration for respondents when choosing a restaurant.

When asked whether they prefer outlets that sell single brands or outlets that offer many brands, 76 percent said they prefer outlets that sell several brands, while 24 percent said they prefer shops that sell single brands. This implies that a large number of respondents enjoy shopping malls, food courts, and beauty stores, but since the 24 percent represents a significant portion of the population, their preferences should not be overlooked. When respondents were faced with the situation of their desired product not being available in the store where they typically shop, 63 percent preferred to buy a substitute from the same store, while 37 percent preferred to buy the identical product from a different store. This suggests that product availability in a store is incredibly important and has a substantial impact on sales. Individuals are likely to modify their purchase preferences if they realize that a business is

unable to match their needs for acquiring a specific brand of product. When asked if window displays are an important part of the store, 38 percent strongly agreed, and 58 percent agreed. Only 1% of the remaining respondents were undecided, and only 3% said they disagreed with the statement.

When enquired if visual attractiveness contributed to the brand's image, about 41% strongly agreed with the statement, while 51% agreed. Only approximately 5% of people were undecided. Around 2% highly disagreed with the statement, whereas 1% severely disagreed with it.

When enquired if the websites they purchase from should be visually appealing as well, roughly 17% strongly agreed, while 50% agreed. Around 23% of respondents had no view on the matter, while 10% of individuals disagreed with the remark.

When questioned about the importance of mannequins for display in a clothes store, 31% said they were extremely important, while 47% said they were important. Around 12% of respondents had no opinion, while 9% disagreed and 1% strongly objected, arguing that it was unimportant to an apparels store.

When asked if long lines deter them from buying something from a store, 37 percent strongly agreed, 39 percent agreed, 18 percent had no opinion, and 6% disagreed.

When asked how important trial rooms are for an apparel store, about 61 percent answered they are extremely significant, while 33 percent said they are somewhat important. There were 6% of respondents who said they had no opinion.

The majority of respondents in the visual merchandiser's group worked in the semi-durables industry, according to the data. In terms of percentages, half worked in the semi-durables industry, a quarter in the durables industry, and the remainder in the non-durables industry.

For the study, respondents from all business categories were contacted to examine the discrepancies and come to a conclusion.

Results

1. Among the several elements offered, respondents chose display settings as their top priority, followed by staff demeanor.
2. It was also observed that, contrary to our predictions, the majority of those who claimed to be in the price-sensitive segment of the population preferred to purchase branded and visually appealing products over those on sale.
3. Appealing storefronts and outlets benefited responders in creating a mental image of the company in customers' thoughts.
4. In contrast to customer preferences, visual merchandisers rated lighting at their store locations/outlets as their most preferred in-store visual appeal-creating component, but customers did not.
5. While visual appeal received the highest ranking among the various features of a store that help convert window shoppers into real customers, the other factors were not far behind, leading to the conclusion that an optimal combination of all the listed factors is necessary to ensure customer delight.

Conclusion

We are required to see how the store design and appearance influence buyer behavior, as well as how retailers take these variables into account and mold them to the tastes of their customers. We also wanted to learn more about customer preferences and how they prioritize visual attractiveness in comparison to other variables such as brand name, offers and discounts, and accessibility. We also sought to find out what factors were most important in establishing the right atmosphere.

We also looked into which set of abilities visual merchandisers regard to be the most significant among the skills required to develop client desire. We evaluated the various parts of the store's overall visual merchandising strategy to determine which area should receive the most attention to increase client attraction. We also looked into what kind of merchandise was on exhibit among the most popular, fastest-moving, and trending items. We also looked into the visual merchandisers' perceptions of what they considered to be the most important factor in attracting customers.

The following are the findings of the research:

1. Visual merchandising begins with the structure of the store. The management then decides on the store's design to reflect the things it will sell, as well as how to create a welcoming, friendly, and approachable environment for potential customers.
2. Showroom outlets should have excellent communication abilities as well as the capacity to forecast future retail trends.
3. The major goal of most companies' displays is to show off the latest trends and new arrivals.
4. The majority of clients are pleased with the lighting. They specifically stated that illumination aids in the selection of appropriate products, the reduction of time squandered, and the feeling of calm during shopping excursions. As a result, visual merchandisers can choose an appropriate lighting system that satisfies buyers' psychological needs.
5. Enhanced Visual Merchandising necessitates the use of adequate lighting in conjunction with display themes.
6. It has been noticed that most individuals are enticed to purchase a product by the shop's atmosphere and visual display.
7. More marketing techniques are needed for personal care items because individuals choose to buy these products based on their popularity and brand image in the market. Discounts and special offers are also regarded to be major factors in attracting customers to stores.
8. When it comes to durables, consumers want to get the most bang for their buck, which is why discounts and special offers are so vital in persuading customers to buy them. Durables should be priced by ordinary man's norms and expectations.
9. In the case of apparel, the mannequin business plays an important function in giving customers ideas on how to wear a specific item or product, and the visual look appeals to or encourages the client to make the final purchase.
10. Financial aspects such as visual merchandising budgeting, timely supervision of staff behavior, and the usage of safety equipment are some of the crucial features that ensure the shopper's utmost ease.
11. Appropriate product spacing in the concerned point of display, as well as a proper alley or passage for customers, must be developed.

12. Store window displays may be a terrific method to entice customers into the store by showing them a sample of what they can expect to see inside. They're also a terrific technique to draw attention to specific items.
13. Graphics and signage are cost-effective and efficient ways to convey a message or tell customers about the department store's merchandise.

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