

“A study on Needs of Visual Merchandising for Online & Physical Stores”

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Abstract: Visual Merchandising has revolutionized the field of retailing in mode of physical retailers or online retailing industry. Physical Retailer & on-line retailer both have the conflicting customers & purpose and both wants to get more customers. As we can see now a day that online retailing is getting more popular as comparison with physical shoppers market. Sustainability for both the retailer can be differentiating at the point, how they attract the customers. Visuals merchandising can work as a core competency for both format of the retailers for better performance.

This Paper will discuss the concept of visual merchandising which is used to increase sales and improve the overall image of a store. Paper will cover theoretical concept of visual merchandising providing practical information about how effective visual merchandising will increase sales and improve the overall image of a store. Comparison was done for Physical store & online store for visual merchandising & challenges in achieving the impact.

Key words: Visual Merchandising, in-store, Online store & Customers

I. Introduction

The Attractive planning, which are used to display & organized the retail outlet to engage customers and to execute sales activity. In visual merchandising, the products being sold are typically displayed in such a way as to attract consumers from the intended market by drawing attention to the product's best features and benefits.

The role of a visual merchandising

Visual merchandising is a retail strategy that maximizes the aesthetics of a product with the intent to increase sales. Visual merchandising can also play a role in the look, feel and culture of a brand. If it had done well, it can create awareness while simultaneously increasing brand loyalty. Most importantly, it can draw customers in and close the sale – all based on the aesthetic quality of your retail display.

Success factors of visual merchandising include the store's appearance, signage, lighting, uniforms, menus, point of sale material, color, shapes, textures, packaging, ticketing, presentation and the “wow” factor each of these elements bring together in a retail setting. When these elements come together to showcase a brand, it enriches the customer experience, leading to a positive shopping experience and increased sales.

II. Understanding the importance of brand identity and the theory of interior visual merchandising

Customers must be able to experience your brand through the visual components that surround your product. For instance, an up-coming cosmetic brand can better showcase its product through colorful displays with bold signage and edgy models to convey a sense of youth. On the other hand, a conservative cosmetic brand can use pastels, script writing and soft imagery to appeal to a mature audience. These subtle strategies not only draw the demographic into the brand, but it also opens up the customer to the brand experience. This, in turn, fortifies brand loyalty and increases the chances of a customer repurchasing in the future.

III. Visual Merchandising Technique:

The interior display of the store includes the following:

- **Store Layout:** The plan that allocates a specific location or space to each of the merchandise departments as well as each of the non-selling areas; e.g., Men's wear, women's wear, etc.
 - **Store Design:** The decorative style or décor used by the store to convey the image it wants to project to the customer. This includes a selection of wall-coverings, carpets, furnishings, shelves, dividers, pictures and planters.
 - **Display Space:** Free spaces which are used for display, e.g., columns, ledges (built in shelves), platforms, islands, fascia (shelves used to hide recessed lighting), walls, shadow boxes and hangings.
 - **Vignettes:** A product or group of products shown in use in a special small space is a vignette.
 - **Item Display:** A single garment or accessory may be featured in an item display; different colors and sizes of one product.
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Assortment Display: A display that shows, identities and prices of each of the style currently in a section of stock.

• **Other Types:** The other types of interior display include:

– Counter card: A hanging card which describes the good qualities

– **Signage:** This refers to all the printed wordings that carry the store’s message to the customers and embodied in all manner of shapes and forms, simple and

Exterior Display

An exterior display attracts the prospective customers who pass by or who are at a distance. The exterior display includes: window display and store front.

• **Window Display:** A store window is useful for selling merchandise, promoting an idea or publicizing the store. The primary function of a window display is ‘to make the passer-by purchase’. They are designed in such a way that they convey one of the several different kinds of messages to the customer, to show seasonal trends in fashion colors or looks, to show how to wear a specific merchandise to achieve a particular look, or to show what the store has available at various price lines.

There are different types of window displays used: (a) Closed-back window; (b) Corner window; (c) Elevated window; (d) Island window; (e) Lobby window; (f) Masked window; (g) Mock window; (h) Open-backed window; (i) Ramped or racked window; and (j) Shadow-box window.

• **Store Front:** The store front is the area that is surrounding the entranceway. There are four different types of store fronts: (1) Straight front; (2) Angled front; (3) Arcade front; and (4) Corner front.

Online, visuals are everything. Shopping from a computer, tablet, or phone, customers can’t reach out and touch your garments or try them on. They’re not influenced by your store layout, your witty window display, or your carefully chosen colour scheme. All you have is the screen and your images.

1. Get beautiful, high-res photos

Your product photos are your no. 1 asset. Make them clear, uncluttered, and high-res. Zoomability is essential, whether it’s automatic on a mouse hover (on your website) or the classic finger swipe zoom on a mobile.

2. Consider model shots

Model shots are a great added extra to your flat product shots.

3. Add some video

Video is the next level – an expensive option, with potentially great results.

4. Play with your layouts

Why not look to fashion bloggers for inspiration? They’re often masters of merchandising, shooting products in fun flat layouts

5. Write a killer product description

The final piece of the puzzle, this is where you need to fill in all the information customers can’t get from your photos.

The important components of a visual merchandising strategy are challenging.

These may include:

- **The attention-grabbing store signs and displays.** Providing product descriptions and promoting schemes like ‘Buy One Get One Free’ using eye-catching fonts.
- **Recognizing the importance of integrated retail systems.** Effective integration of advanced retail POS system technologies can help control costs and deliver concentrated operability to the business. Given the rapid pace of change within the retail ecosystem, it is essential all IT assets are tracked, monitored and managed in a seamless manner.
- **Shopper engagement at POS.** Good deals versus fostering relationships and knowing also where social media fits in and the tapping the power of crowd-sourcing to enhance product assortment.
- **Effective loyalty systems.** Delivering unmatched customer service to valued customers by being proactive and look for people in need of assistance and be a resource, can distinguish your business from the competition and fosters true and effective “relationship marketing”.
- **Multichannel retailing.** The advent of online stores and mobile technology with e-commerce and m-commerce are latest additions to the multichannel mix of mail order catalogues and bricks and mortar

stores and are fresh and interesting avenues and benefit for retailers with more opportunities to get their product in front of customers whom they would not have been able to reach with a single channel.

- **New innovations in retail sector.** Retail innovation is about driving down costs and driving up spending. Whether it is inventory control or product mix; ecommerce or cost control, the retail sector should have the capacity to accommodate a sustained flow of pioneering products, innovative channels of delivery and ingenious ways of holding down costs to remain profitable in the most competitive consumer markets.

More to these, visual merchandising is an extension of your store’s customer service. Even if you intend to stretch your retail process to web-based shopping, literally changing shoppers’ point-of sale environment, and regardless of any challenges in retail, that importance of your brand’s visual identity should not diminish. The goal is to project a pleasing and more charismatic image because visual merchandising is about customer loyalty, regardless of the point-of-sale environment.

IV. Benefits:

Create Win-Win situation between customers& retailer buy benefiting both. Customers can buy easily & choose best which satisfy needs & Retailer can demonstrate best what they have to offer.

Affect consumers positively to buy more:

Successful virtual merchandizing and brand delivery is all about understanding and satisfying customer needs. So the more that a company understands its consumers, brand and competitors, the better it can define and refine its own virtual merchandising practice to deliver better solutions in store to improve the customer experience.

As they say, whilst the idea may not be ‘rocket science’, it does require real expertise in store design, space planning and presentation expertise and a real commitment to adopting a consumer led approach.

Essentially, virtual merchandising is a set of practical selling tools to influence what, when and how consumers buy – and no serious 21st century retailer can afford to ignore the powerful effects and huge commercial potential of implementing better virtual merchandising.

Whether this is achieved by increasing the size of spend, type and number of items that people buy, the frequency of purchases, the brands and lines that shoppers select and even down to the stores they choose to shop in.

Practical examples of virtual merchandising techniques could include prioritising the location of certain items that are on promotion to increase the volume and rate of sale.

Grouping different, yet related product items together to create higher value is also a commonly used technique, as are all-inclusive solutions such as outfit combinations in fashion stores, meal suggestions in supermarkets and project areas in DIY stores to inform, influence and inspire customer purchases.

Good virtual merchandising even goes down to the micro-detail of understanding which shelf positions perform better to influence what brands people buy and the rate of sale.

And, as the world gets a little smaller everyday and consumers travel to more global destinations, having a consistent and recognisable global brand image can help retailers win out by providing shoppers with the reassurance, familiarity and trust they expect from the brand – making the whole selling process much easier.

Affect retail teams to perform better:

Virtual merchandising offers retail teams more time to concentrate on the right tasks, i.e. implementing corporate policy - rather than having to create their own.

It allows the whole company to move forward with the same selling strategies, components and practice to maximise opportunities – delivering a consistent application of company policy in-store, which improves the customer experience and maximises sales opportunities.

Retail Teams benefit from greater clarity of direction, and from better information and training to help them perform role related tasks with an effective integrated approach.

This multiplies success throughout the business and is good for motivation and personal development aspects too.

The Digital display is based on the internet which are devised by web expert. E-retailers or m-retailers generate most of their revenues by Books, Computer hardware, health & beauty, jewelry etc. which require less tactile involvement of the customers.

We can say physical merchandiser expert plays with shapes, whereas stores with their physical landmarks play with the forms. However, now we can also see the 360 degree or virtual outlook of the products online, but customers can’t touch and feel it unless she goes to the physical store.

Both the retailers have need of visual merchandising, but skills & expertise are different & categories of products/serves are different. Visual merchandising can be applicable in a different ways for both the format of retail for better customer presence.

V. Conclusion

Visual Merchandising is way to differentiate the retailers from competitors. Each retailer's weather they are in in-store or online retailing needs to have visual merchandising effectively to be profitable. Even though both format of retailers are competing in one way or the other but, they are focusing on different categories of products/services. So, work independently also by focus on core business. Retailers from physical &online marketing their product have started using the varied methods of display to gain the maximum exposure of the merchandise, to increase the revenues. Now virtual merchandising is not limited to apparel display rather evolved at various levels. Hence we would see the display tactics used today would get obsolete soon and swapped with efficient and unconventional methods. The display techniques would then further be involved with online portals.

VI. Future scope

This research was purely based on secondary data so further study can be done empirical on competitive approach between on-line & in-store retailer which will be future of retailing industry.

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