

Visual Merchandising – An Attractive Way of Enticing Consumers in Today’s Era of Fashion

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ABSTRACT

It is the creative hands of Visual Merchandising team that set its windows, interior, merchandise presentation and creative displays and in other words the total retail environment is the responsibility of a Visual Merchandiser that helps the store to sell its merchandise. It is ideal to have in house staff for visual presentations that includes the placement of merchandise on the selling floor and the development of signage and graphics. It is not always that store visual presentations are developed and installed by in house team but are also executed by freelancers in this field. (Diamond, 2007:347) With the advent of new season, the visual merchandising team transform themes in the stores overnight. There are mainly four seasons around which the fashion calendar revolves. The four seasons of the year Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter determine the promotional calendar for developing themes for visual presentation. After the celebrations of fall/winter in the retail stores, retailers get ready for the biggest selling season of the year i.e. Christmas/New Year. Each year usually starting with November, the Visual Merchandisers across the world get ready for the most unique presentations of the year; headed by the V.M. director along with the entire team of painters, carpenters, trimmers, sign makers, prop maker and photographers. (Diamond, 2007:355).

Keywords: Visual Merchandising, Retail Environment, In-house Team, Seasonal Themes, Store Presentation.

Introduction

In this era of Digitalisation and modernisation, Retailers now a days employs various techniques to enhance customer buying behaviour in stores. When a retailer takes a proactive approach to create a certain look with the help of props, fixtures, mannequins and backdrop, display products, stimulate shopping behaviour and enhances physical environment, thus it engages in Visual merchandising.

Visual Merchandising refers to “Store Displays” or “Window Dressings”, It is the arranging of props, fixtures, signage, graphics, mannequins and backdrop to influence a customer to enter the store and make a purchase.

History of Visual merchandising

The Concept of Visual Merchandising was started in the early 18th century. In that era, merchandise was basically kept in a piled up form and store owners and managers were not worried about the appearance of their stores. There were many people whose initiatives and brilliant ideas helped to set eye catching windows. Credit and appreciation goes to American retailer Gordon Selfridges, who brought the concept of Visual Merchandising in Department stores..



Plate 1.1: Display of Addison’s Tie & Timber Store in the 19th Century
http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/18574/8/08_chapter%203.pdf

The establishment of the “Grand Expositions” marked a great advancement in the evolution of store design. Grand Expositions were the buildings which were built according to the new technology and bought evolution in Store Design.

Crystal Palace Exposition started in 1851 in London by Grand Expositions to present new design and technology in store designs. Soon the expositions became very

popular. The more places where people exhibited their products in elaborate and exotic manner and retailers got the idea that they would be more successful if the merchandise displayed was more accessible and open to the public. They also observed that it is better to place merchandise close to the eye level rather than placing it on the floor. This concept of display brought an innovation in the field of Visual Merchandising (Bawa, Sinha and Kant, 2022).

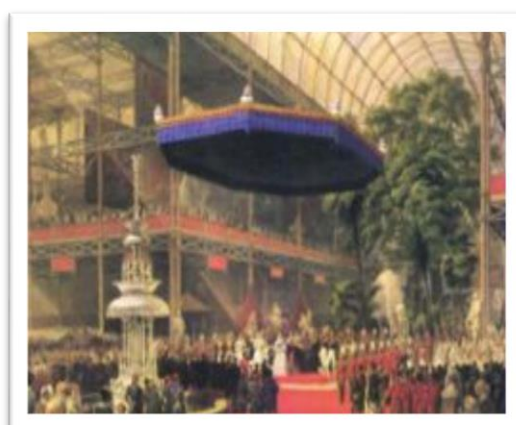
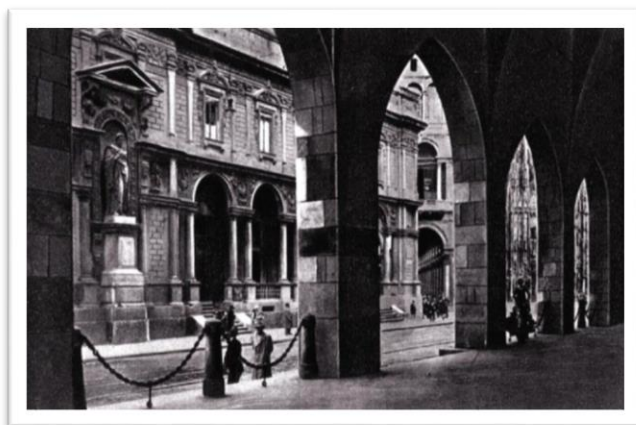


Plate 1.2: The Arcades and Grand Expositions in 18th century

The rise of Visual Merchandising in Department Stores

The rise of Department Stores brought more advancement in Visual Display and Store Designs. The Department Stores of 19th century introduced the concept of Visual Merchandising in retail stores in four ways. Display with the merchandise was the first and most important aspect of display in retail settings. The concept of Departmental Store then spread to U.S. In 1858. The next Departmental Store by the name Macy’s in New York was opened. The next in the list was the Marshall Field’s in Chicago in 1865, Bloomsdale’s in New York in 1872 and Wanamaker’s in Philadelphia in 1876.

There were many people whose initiatives and brilliant ideas helped to set eye catching windows. Credit and

appreciation goes to American retailer Gordon Selfridges, who brought the concept of Visual Merchandising in Department Stores.

Selfridge worked as a managing director of Marshall Field’s in Chicago. After leaving his post as managing director, he came with greater designs and ideas to London. His aspirations converted the traditional Department Stores into a modern purpose- built Department Store with beautiful window displays carrying all sorts of merchandise. He became the benchmark of British retailing. His ideas were filled with creativity and innovation. He advocated his concept and designs in a different way. Selfridge left the window lights on at night, even when the store was closed, just to have the passers by enjoy the merchandise display even at night.



Plate 1.3: Window display by Gordon Selfridge in 1920s

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headed by the V.M. director along with the entire team of painters, carpenters, trimmers, sign makers, prop maker and photographers. (Diamond, 2007:355).

Store Atmospherics

Kotler first introduced the concept of “atmospherics” in 1973 and defined Atmosphere of a Store as the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects by evoking pleasant feelings in the buyer thus leading to probability of purchase.

Kotler(1973) asserted that atmospherics such as odour/scents, sound, color, sizes and shapes tend to increase purchase probability by creating attention, conveying messages and feelings that lead to purchases. Such atmospherics entice emotions within customers and behavioural intentions of fashion marketing book

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) specified that the presence of environmental stimuli in the store affect the emotional states of pleasure and arousal in consumers. Thus this affects the approach or avoidance behaviour during purchase.

Store Atmospherics- Three category framework (Baker,1986) and (Baker and Parasuraman, 1994)

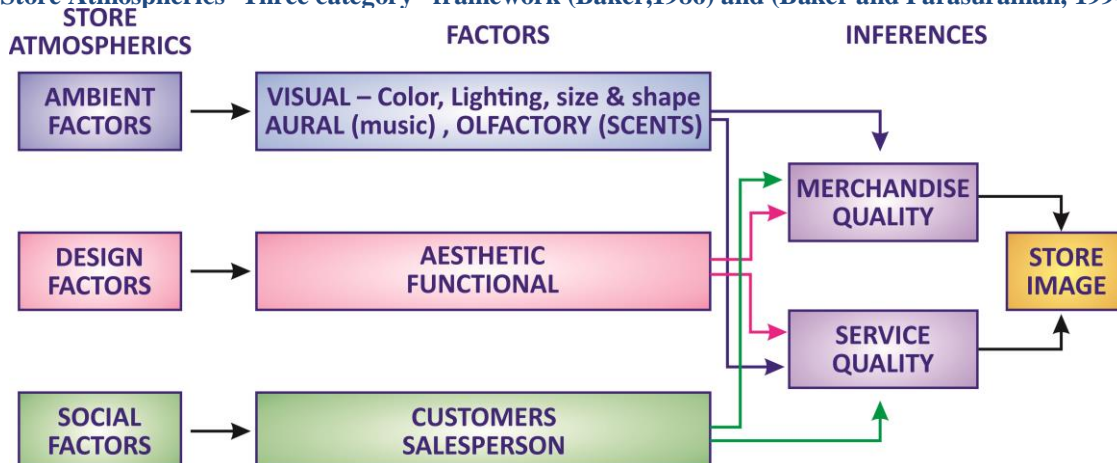


Figure 1.1: Store Atmospherics- Three category framework

Adapted from Source: Baker and Parasuraman (1994)

Store Ambient Factor The ambience factors refers to the overall background features that tend to influence consumers subconsciously in the store environment as said by (Campbell, 1983) Ward and Russell (1981); Milliman (1982); Wineman (1982); Yalch and Spangenberg (1990) expressed that elements such as temperature, scents, lighting and music can profoundly affect how people feel, think about a particular store environment. These factors exist below the immediate awareness of customers.

Visual Dimension

The Visual dimension comprises of color, lighting levels and the appearance of objects (size and shape). Color can be divided into light, warm, cool, neutral, shades, bright, intense, and warm colors. Warm colors are present at the red end of the spectrum, while cool colors are at the blue end. Color has been found to attract attention, improve mood, emotions and increase arousal or excitement.

The findings show that red color gives a feeling of excitement and physical stimulation to the human brain. It brings an increase in blood pressure and respiratory rate may increase, and eye blink may also increase in frequency. At the other end of the spectrum, the effect of blue is found to be much more relaxing (Gerard, 1957; Wilson 1966; Clynes 1977). Lighting is recognized and considered as an important component of store atmospherics and store environment as it affects the consumers' visual appraisal i.e. the way the consumer is viewing everything in the store, including the merchandise (Gobe, 1990; Rea, 1993; Lopez, 1995).

Aural Dimension

The aural dimension is concerned with the effect and impact of music type, tempo, pitch and volume in the store environment.

Milliman (1982) found that tempo was related to traffic flow i.e. Slower tempo reduced the speed of customer traffic flow. When the customer enters the store, the background music running influences the buying behaviour of customers consciously or subconsciously. He also found that certain type of music can distract the attention of shoppers and that enjoyment of music produces a more positive mood of the listener.

Olfactory Dimension

The olfactory dimension refers to the presence of scents in the store environment.

Pleasant scents are estimated to increase performance and alertness. They facilitates pre-social behavior, recall of pleasant memories and increase the time spent in the store. (Baron and Bronfen, 1994) ; (Mitchell et al., 1995).

Store Design Factor

The design factor refers to a store's environment elements i.e. layout, fixtures, displays, interiors and

exteriors of the store. Merchandise display is an important factor in helping consumers to lead to purchases. Window display is an important promotional tool. If the merchandise is beautifully displayed on fixtures, it would rather help customers in locating of merchandise. (Dunne et al., 1990; Bitner, 1992) of fashion marketing book. Spears and Gregoire (2004) argued that by applying a particular store layout along with certain visual merchandising techniques, consumers will automatically be attracted and directed through the entire store.

Clark (2007) discusses that mannequin industry is very critical to any retail industry and is an important part of visual merchandising. It has undergone drastic changes with the mannequins being realistic before, abstract then, headless later and now switching back to the realistic concept, associated with the human touch.

Research undertaken by Ti (2009) with a group of college students, illustrated the fact that "the context setting of a window display had a significant effect on consumer's mental imagery and arousal response." Textual style (signage and graphic) message is not only conveyed through signs and graphics but they also enhances the window display's sophistication. Furthermore, as "all windows are stages, mannequins are mere players to unveil products".

Store Social Factor

The social factor involves people who are present in the store environment.

Numerous studies were undertaken by various scholars on staff behaviour and salesmanship. Wicker (1973) examined understaffing; Crosby and Cowles (1996) asserted inadequate salesperson make consumers annoyed; Baker (1986) discussed that Good salesperson provides positive environment; Bitner et al. (1990); Harris et al. (1995); Harris et al. (1997); Mc Grath and Otnes (1995) investigated positive influence of conversations between consumers and salesperson can achieve consumer satisfaction.

In the nutshell, Store environment is the overall aesthetic, emotional and sensory experience created by store physical atmosphere. Now a days, shoppers regardless of their shopping motives are attracted by safe, comfortable and attractive shopping experience. Hence store environment should be tailored to the psychological needs of customers by creating enhanced shopping experiences (Sullivan, 1992). The biggest challenges faced by today's retailers is to integrate fashion elements in consumers and to finding ways to make shopping experience more entertaining.

Objectives

The objective focused on studying the role and awareness of Visual merchandising and Influence of all visual merchandising factors (Displays, Mannequins, Temperature, Music, Color, lightning,

Scents, Aesthetic and other factors) store atmospheric factors followed in retail stores.

Materials and Methods

For the present research work purposive sampling, Interview schedule and convenient sampling methods were used to carry out the research work. The sample size consisted of 140 research scholars from faculty of arts and Sciences of Panjab University, Chandigarh. The period of stay of Research Scholars on the campus is more than 3 years, for this reason the sample size was limited to Research Scholars. Research scholars belonging to different states and different religions are registered in Panjab University. In-depth interviews of Research scholars from departments of Science and Arts Faculty on university campus were conducted to gain insight into their behaviour. Furthermore to make students understand the effect of store atmospherics, photographs were shown at various point of time. These pictures depicted different motivating factors that attract customers to go inside a store and check on products. The

total concept was explained to the respondents with the help of photographs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Visual Merchandising: Visual Merchandising helps retailers in creating an environment in the store that makes merchandise look appealing and attractive (Colborne,1996). Respondents were interviewed regarding the role visual merchandising plays in their buying behaviour.

Awareness of Visual Merchandising:

Bhalla and Anurag (2010) opined that Visual Merchandising is the art of showcasing products by creatively educating customers, enabling selling process, presenting products with correct back ground and in a life like environment thus enhancing the attractiveness of merchandise, thereby drawing the attention of customers towards sales. Figure:2 shows the awareness of Visual Merchandising among respondents

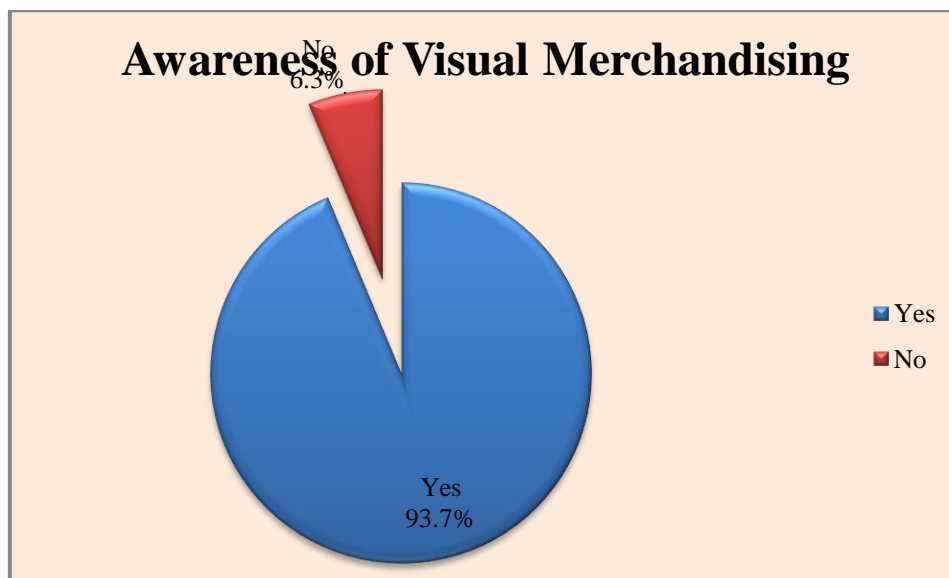


Figure 1.2: Awareness of Visual Merchandising

From the figure 1.2, it was concluded that 93.7% of the respondents were aware of Visual Merchandising whereas, rest 6.3% of the respondents were not aware of Visual Merchandising.

Some of the narratives explaining the awareness of Visual Merchandising are given below:

One of the respondents, (R42/29/Hindu/UNM/9lakhs/N.F) mentioned that -

“Visual Merchandising gives one an idea of trends of latest fashion products. Sometimes one gets an idea about a colour that one has never thought of buying”.

Another respondent (R43/27/Buddhist/UNM/8lakhs/A/H/N.F/Leh Ladakh) mentioned-

“She visited a store of Numero Uno, saw a red jacket displayed, dropped the idea of buying because it was

costly, then after coming back, it visited her thoughts frequently, she thought it was only because the garment was displayed beautifully. Even when she was trying to sleep, the picture was clear in her mind. If it had been folded, it would not have that impact. It was purely the display effect”.

R44/30/Sikh/Jat/Mar/12.5lakhs/S/D.S/N.F/Punjab, said that

“Visual merchandising attracts a buyer to its products/brands. It also motivates a customer to make a purchase. V.M. make the store/brand appealing and promotes the sale of products”.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that Visual Merchandising consciously or unconsciously helps one to make a wiser choice because it plays an important role in customer buying behaviour. It also helps the buyer to get a clear idea about the new launches, color trends,

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new styles in fashion, knowledge of latest designs besides one gets to learn fashion sense and outlook of a brand. Moreover, V.M. is considered such an attractive factor that sometimes even if a shopper has not come with an intention of buying, a display prompts him to make a purchase.

Influence of Visual Merchandising in buying process

Respondents were interviewed to find out the influence of Visual Merchandising in the buying process in the form of open ended interview. The respondents discussed their views regarding the role of Visual Merchandising. Special narratives of various respondents related to specific aspects of Visual Merchandising are listed below:

Visual Merchandising – 28.1% respondents considered visual merchandising as an important factor that influenced their buying process. They further elaborated that visual merchandising is a motivating factor that helps in making a wiser choice. 13.1% respondents considered visual merchandising as an attractive factor. They further elaborated that “Stores in a simple and subtle way attracts you, we are not aware that V.M. attract us, ‘*Jo dikhta hai woh bikta hai*’. (We do not have time to see each and every garment. Most of the time we buy products on display). These displays appeal to our eyes and heart, It is a story that is played at the front” Diamond (1993) interpreted similar findings by saying that Merchandise displayed help us to show a story besides playing a secondary role of aesthetic appeal.

One of the respondents mentioned *V.M. is a like a director who is behind the camera to see the product. He is the main hero of the store that helps to sell the products. Customers buy garments that fit them well and attract them and they further said that V.M. attracts the youth even if the qualities are low.*

The similar results were interpreted by Davies and Ward (2005). They found that Visual merchandising plays an important role in forming an impression of a store. Visual display is what the shopper witnesses, it includes exteriors and interiors of the store which influence the purchase behaviour of the customers.

36.8% respondents felt that Visual Merchandising is a helping and educating factor among shoppers, some of the narratives of the shoppers are listed below:

The views of the different respondents are as under:

Visual merchandising help in getting first-hand experience of the goods displayed and one can make up their mind about buying or not buying a product and also give an insight on the products and designs (3.1%).

Visual Merchandising is a silent seller, it helps in picking products without the help of salesperson (1.8%).

V.M. is a promotional activity; one get to know about the brand promotional schemes (1.8%). 6.8% respondents agreed V.M. adds on something to the store unintentionally, we go inside a store due to visual merchandising and it enhances the value of products

displayed. V.M gives one idea about what is new in stores or new in season.

As many as 13.7% respondents said that V.M makes one aware about the new color trends, new styles in fashion, latest and best designs, accessories in trend. One get to know the fashion sense, the styling and outlook of a brand.

6.2% respondents agreed that Visual merchandising increases brand image, brand awareness and brand standard.

Further, 3.1% respondents felt that V.M help to locate products easily as different areas are aligned for different categories of clothing, The present study is consistent with the study undertaken by (Dunne et al. 1992; Bitner, 1992) where they expressed that if the merchandise is well displayed on fixtures, it helps customers in locating of merchandise.

Bhalla and Anurag (2010) also mentioned Visual Merchandising displays are ‘Silent salesperson,’ as they provide the information to the consumers through visual mediums.

(Levy and Weitz, 2009; Bell and Ternus, 2006) also mentioned that Visual Merchandising displays are used to introduce new products and they further perform different functions such as help in supporting sales, help in communicating with the customers and assist in communicating brand image.

Cant and Hefer (2014) undertook a study on effect of Visual Merchandising display effect on customers in South Africa and found that Visual Merchandising enhances the customer buying experiences by beautifying the stores and by creating a relaxed atmosphere. These displays contribute to store image. They also mentioned Visual Merchandising displays are viewed as a promotional tool as they convey branding, product information and quality of products.

Posters, mannequins and clothes displayed in light boxes attract customer image and entice them to buy products.

Displays: When the importance of visual merchandising was analysed, 14(8.75%) respondents agreed that they visited a store if the outside display at the entrance were attractive. Similar perception about the outside displays was interpreted by (Ken, 1999). He explained that the look of a store is like monograms on t-shirt, the person who wears it feels good. Same is the case with the outside of a store displays and its shoppers like the look, feel good and are attracted to them.

The respondents gave different views about displays. 38.7% respondents attributed the importance of window displays.

Good displays create a picture in the mind for long term. Meena Bazar Store in Elante Mall features good display of lehgas and sarees that help potential customers to buy stuff just because of displays. One just see the displays

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and can easily access the products as one does not need to open each and every garment.(R63/30/UNM)

Respondents had strong opinion about Collection displays with Interior displays which they opined were attractive.

Sometimes one cannot express what one wants. Displays gives a person an idea of the garment. Sometimes one does not feel comfortable with the idea of wearing revealing clothes. But by trying the garments, one gets a feel of the products. (R64/28/UNM)

Home Shop displays, Festive Seasonal displays especially Traditional displays appeal to people's eyes and heart. They tend to enter the store and think it is a good way to attract customers. (R65/27/UNM/H.P)

If something looks good in displays, one often ends up buying even if one is not wanting to buy anything. One usually enters a store to see the displays. Respondents felt that "Emerge" displays are awesome. They just go for fun to see a store even if they do not like the clothes inside, they find V.M. awesome. Some respondents said that they visit stores in Sector 17 plaza for good ambience and displays. They inform their friends about good. V.M.(R66/28/Hostler)

The present research interpreted that shoppers are attracted by the window displays, as they get a very good feeling of leisure by looking at windows dressed in varied colors and style. Windows help them to easily sort the products. Somewhat similar findings were found by (Bloch et al., 1994); He discussed that shoppers look at the window display for leisure and windows act as a major attraction factor to lead customer inside the store.

The research work analysed that Customers who visited branded store felt that Window displays or Visual Merchandising increase brand image, brand awareness and brand standard and a somewhat similar findings have been mentioned by (Dawes,2008) where window displays portray a brand and business.

Shoppers felt that Window displays can change their mood and mind. They can think of purchasing, even if they have not come with a buying intention. The similar results were found by (Darden et al., 1983), where they mentioned that shoppers are attracted to window displays, even when they are not in a mood to visit a store. Window displays influence them to enter the store and make a purchase.

Henry(2014) analysed that window displays are the most important factor influencing purchase decisions and thereby increasing customer traffic and sales. They also mentioned that window displays attracted new customers and was the first thing that respondents saw before entering a store. Window displays create brand awareness and products offered inside the store.

Mannequin: 23.7% of the respondents believed that mannequins help us to visualize the look of garments and

one get to know the real appearance and feel of the clothes and urge one to buy. The collectives on the mannequins give a person information regarding how he or she would actually look like and what is fashionable. They also give a view of the colour combination, and an idea about how it will look on certain height and weight. 5.6% respondents mentioned that they imagined themselves in place of mannequins and when they saw garment displayed on mannequins, they were inspired to make a purchase. If the garments are displayed well, they do not need to try them. Mannequin display gives them idea about the full detailing of the garments, they said.

Some of the narratives related to display on Mannequins are as under

"Mannequins help a lot in making purchase a decision. They show how styles should be worn. Many a times, a person does not prefer certain kind of lowers but after watching clothes displayed on mannequin. One tends to buy that very lower. For example The respondent did not really like red colour, but once she saw a red dress on a mannequins, Now she have started purchasing outfits in red color (R67/26)

One of the respondents mentioned that, *she found the best collections displayed and thus attracts customers and serves the purpose of a bate. She strongly oppose the colour themes on them. She added that V.M. is almost like the menu card of a restaurant displaying the chef's special. The brand "Superdry" has a perfect ambience for youth. It is facts that brand stores one chooses to buy from are a reflection of one's personality. They define a person. The display on mannequins gives one an idea of how the outfit look like.* (R68/26/UNM)

Temperature: 11.8% respondents agreed that temperature is an important part of a Store atmospherics. Most of the respondents were satisfied with ambient factors in stores. They expressed that temperature is particularly noticeable in extreme conditions. There are times when one visits a store where the air conditioning is not working properly. This fact causes impatience and frustration and a customer is likely to leave the store in a huff.

One of the respondents, (R69/32/Married) said that *once she went to Cafe coffee Day to have coffee and do her work there, as she was having coffee, she felt the place very warm and she started feeling very uncomfortable. She was not able to concentrate on her work . She noticed that the temperature inside was unbearably hot and humid and realised air conditioning was not working so, rather than sitting there, she left the place.*

The same results were consistent with the study undertaken by Davidson et al. (1988), where the researcher mentioned that ambient conditions were noticeable in extreme conditions. Rather than spending more time on shopping, the customer tends to make a fast purchase and leave the store.

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Baker (1986) mentioned that if the temperature levels are normal, they seem to be unnoticed by the customers, while extreme levels i.e. rather too high or low lead to avoidance behaviour or leaving the environment.

Color: 45.6% respondents believed that whenever one goes for shopping, one is attracted by beautiful color schemes. One notices the new color trends and further gets an idea about what will match the product, style and color combinations with one's taste and personality.

Different respondents expressed different views. From in-depth interview, it was analysed that colours used in the background, store interiors or colour schemes featuring in the window play a major role in attracting customers. These color schemes inspire customers to enter the store and make a purchase. The Similar findings have been interpreted by Babin et al., 2003; Chebat and Morrin, 2007) where they mention that colour schemes applied in the store interiors have shown to have an effect on shopping behaviour of customers. One of the respondents mentioned in 'Lifestyle Store' she found a nice display of colour schemes. Spring display appealed her eyes as the colour used in background matched with the outfits in the window, It felt like a story. The display of color schemes impressed her to the extent that she purchased a pair of Jeans and Kurta from the store on an impulse.

The present study shows compatibility with the findings of Babin et al. (2003). In their study the researchers interpreted that color and lighting used in combination/separation has an effect on customer behaviour. Their findings correspond with the findings of a study undertaken by Bellizzi et al. (1983), where they expressed that lightning and color strongly attract customer attention and make them walk towards a retail display.

Diamond and Diamond (2007) was of a similar view. He found that using appropriate background colours catches the viewer attention thus leading to a favourable impact towards making a purchase.

Lighting: 22.5% respondents considered lighting to be an important factor. Most of the respondents preferred soft lights as this lighting created a pleasant mood. Some of respondents preferred funky tattoos with dark lights in the stores.

The respondents even expressed that retailers should have different types of lighting suiting tastes of different customers. They admitted that they were attracted by lighting in the stores. They said lighting is an important part of a store environment. They expressed that casual clothes look good in good lighting.

The same results were found by Meer (1985) where he expressed his views about soft lighting. His study implied that retailers should employ different types of lights to suit customers of different types.

Music: Music was considered important by 20.6% of the respondents. These respondents said they were attracted by the back ground music playing in the stores and this influenced their purchase decision. Some of the respondents preferred listening to soft rhythmic music, whereas other said that they enjoyed loud music. Some respondents were of the view that music playing in the stores made them recall past memories. They further believed that music changed their mood, instilled excitement in shopping and thus led them to stay longer in the store and affected their buying behaviour.

Some of the narratives which show the impact of music on buying behaviour are as under:

One of the respondents mentioned that *She went to Black Lotus Restaurant in Hotel Taj where she was actually attracted by the Chinese slow music playing in the restaurant. She actually wanted to stay in the place due to good music. She felt that even when one goes to just browse the store one ends up buying as attracted by music, Even if you have just come to browse the store you end up buying products as one stays longer to listening to music.*(R70/28)

Another respondent said that Music is the biggest factor. She remember the music playing at a South Indian Restaurant where she made her feel as she was actually in Kerala.

Another respondent said that music was very important to her. It give her a feeling of good ambience. Good music made shopping an exciting experience for her. She particularly found that had good ambience with loud music.

The present findings were consistent with the studies undertaken by Milliman (1982). Music running in the back ground influence the purchase behaviour; Bruner (1990) found that High pitched music was more exciting ; Baker et al. (1992) In store music plays an important role in consumer buying decision; Engel et al. (1995) asserted softer rhythmic music played in the background increases time spent in the store; (Hui et al. (1997) opined that Presence of music induces emotional reaction and Ortiz (1997) asserted that retailers use in-store music to create links with customers past experiences.

Scents: 13.1% respondents agreed that Scents are also considered to be very important part of promoting products in stores. They believed that scents bring a feeling of freshness. They enhance a shopping experience. Further they expressed that the products with a beautiful fragrance are perceived to be of higher quality. The respondents expressed that they were attracted by the presence of congruent scents in the stores and they are likely to stay for longer period in the store.

One of the respondents said that she felt very fresh as she enters a store environment in sector 17 due to fragrance of lavender in the store. She said she had the same feeling in Life style anchor store in Elante Mall so she

stayed in the store for long just to feel the fragrance in the environment.

Stores selling herbal stores have very peculiar scents and one tends to stay longer at that place if one likes these perfumes (R72/27/UNM/J.F).

The similar findings were narrated by Liard(1932) pleasant scents are perceived to be of higher quality; Bone and Jantrania (1992) opined that Congruent scents attract customers, and they are likely to spend more time in the stores, for example the scent of bread attracting customers to a bakery.

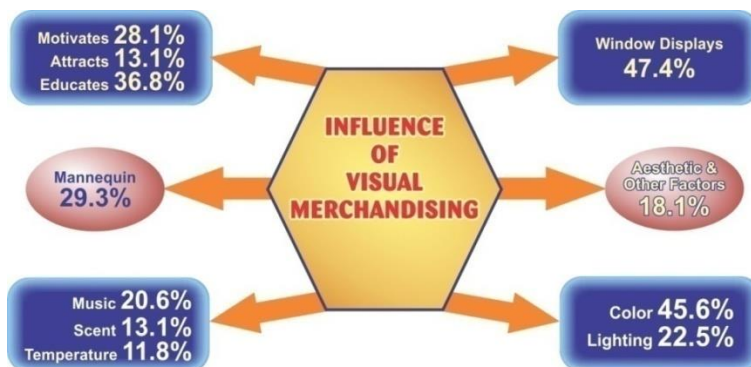


Figure 1.3: Influence of Visual Merchandising in the Buying Process

Aesthetic and other factors: Some of the respondents considered other factors more important. 13.1% of the respondents mentioned that stores which are clean and where products are organised according to age and sex make person to shop and buy products easily. They further mentioned that they liked stores with welcoming staff, Clean floors, attractive decorations and flower arrangements.

- 5% respondents reported other factors more important
- Comfort and price matters, and how the product look on me matters.
 - Discount and promotions advertised at the store front so that people can buy products according to budget.

A respondent said she liked to try on a garment first, then negotiates the price and buys it if it suits her budget.

One of the respondents said that fit and style of a product make her buy that product.

For another one purchase depended upon her budget and her requirement.

Hefer and Cant (2013) conducted a study in Tshwane(city of South Africa) on focused groups and examined that Visual Merchandising displays influence their buying behaviour, They further mentioned that there are other factors like price that affect the final decision. More than V.M. displays, there are also other factors like colours, textures, styles, decor, sizes, and budgetary constraints that affect the final decision for buying.

CONCLUSION

Visual Merchandising is used to define everything that is seen when a customer enters a store. The major findings showed that the factor which was considered most important was that VM is a useful way of displaying information .The results of the study revealed that atmospherics refers to store’s physical characteristics that project an image and draw

customers. A retailer’s sights, sounds, smells and other physical attributes all contribute to customer perception. A retailer’s atmosphere may influence people’s shopping enjoyment as well as time spent browsing, willingness to converse, tendency to spend more than actually planned, and likelihood of future patronage (Berman and Evan, 2009). Store front has a powerful impact on customers, it is the total physical exterior of the store. A store is often judged by its exteriors. People generally form impression of a retailer before entering its facilities by having a look at the store front, window display and mannequin display . Various pictures showing different atmospheric dimensions were viewed by all the respondents interviewed. Windows play a very significant role and act as a critical medium to communicate between the store and the customer.The magic of displays is delivered with the spectacular effect and innovative use of forms, Graphics, mannequins and digital media. Sale sign itself entice the customers to visit the store and make a purchase. Visuals / posters are initiated by almost all the brands to create sparkling felling in the customers and to create high scale image and class of that brand(Bawa, Sinha, Kant, 2022). The atmospheric dimensions colour, lighting levels, appearance of objects(size and shape), volume, pitch tempo and style of sounds; nature and intensity of scent play an important role in affecting the mood of a customer in a store. Display is simply the method by which a retailer’s assortment is presented to the shopper. The primary goal is to gain shoppers’ attention and fulfil shoppers demand.Shoppers regardless of their shopping motives are more attracted by safe, attractive and comfortable shopping environments. Since more store design are being 'tailored" for this new generation of shoppers, continuous investigation into consumer's needs in the store environment is required.

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Abbreviations:

R- Respondent
M- Male
Mar – Married
N.F. – Nuclear Family
S- Sciences
UNM- Unmarried

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