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Impact of Visual Merchandising on Consumer's Impulse Buying Behavior

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Abstract:

Visual merchandising is used as an effective promotional tool by Retailers in order to make their stores/products more attractive and appealing. It has the ability to influence the consumer to visit the store and buy the products. This study examines the impact that Visual merchandising has on the customer's impulse buying behavior in malls. To determine this, we have examined both the customers and the respective nearby retailers. The consensus was that visual merchandising is an important segment of the retail business; it is one of the most effective ways to promote and market the brands/products. To gain an understanding of the customers' view, a survey was executed to understand the important factors of visual merchandising that influence the shopper's buying behavior.

1. Importance of the Study

Researchers have opined that impulsive buyers usually do not set out with the specific purpose of visiting certain store and purchasing certain item; the behavior occurs after experiencing an urge to buy, and such behavior is influenced by internal state and external factors. Retailers place more importance on visual merchandising in order to differentiate their offers from others due to immense similarity of merchandise.

Visual Merchandising has emerged as a powerful marketing tool that acts as a strong external motivator in the consumer's impulse buying behavior. Indeed, impulse buying is significant for increasing sales revenue; infact, it represents a substantial amount of goods sold in a retail format. Considering the huge importance of visual merchandising on the retail business, it becomes even more imperative to engage and inspire customers and encourage them to buy more of the products which would ultimately increase sales, build profit margin and return on investment. Retailers have gradually realized that simply just selling the product will not solve the purpose of running a retail business but customer satisfaction and loyalty is an equally important factor to be sustainable in today's tough and competitive business environment. Hence, the paradigm shifts towards visual merchandizing is indispensable and is an extremely inexpensive and an effective way of promotion.

Visual merchandizing has a powerful and compelling effect on consumer's mind and emotion. Therefore, even if they have not decided to purchase an item, but if the visual merchandizing or the display of the product appeals to the customer, he/she might buy the product. Hence, Retailers must try to take advantage of this emotion and increase the footfall and sales of the store, by just working on enhancing the display and the aesthetics of the store.

2. Scope of the Study

With the business of fashion in the country getting more competitive, Visual Merchandizing is the only possible differentiator, especially in a situation where consumers experience the same fashion clothing almost everywhere.

Indian consumers are increasingly becoming global in their outlook having more knowledge about the current trends and fashion and are demanding the same levels of design and innovation from Indian retail outlets. The idea is to create exultation and exhilaration in the apparel and fashion market by trying out new retail techniques and building on store presentations. Fashion companies must make sure that they use effective Visual Merchandising (VM) techniques to create a distinct identity for the retailer.

The year 2006, for instance saw many big spends with large department stores like Shopper's Stop, Lifestyle and Westside spending an approximate expenditure of Rs. 30,00,000 - 40,00,000 per season on visual merchandising.

3. Literature Review

3.1. What is Visual Merchandizing?

Visual merchandising is defined as "the display of products which makes them appealing, attractive, accessible, engaging, and enticing to shoppers in a retail store". Visual merchandisers have the potential of making shopping an eventful experience for the customer.

Effective visual merchandising will increase the amount of pleasure a consumer receives from their shopping experience. Visual merchandising must act as a persuasive method of convincing the consumer to purchase a product or brand. The term "displays" is a word that embraces almost every promotional item in a store. Floor layouts, internal displays, window displays, signs, banners, and even the interior and exterior designs of a retail outlet are all managed by a visual merchandiser. For an example, if a consumer enjoys the atmosphere in Starbucks or Macy's, they are more likely to spend a favorable amount of time browsing and purchasing products in that outlet. They are also more likely to visit the store again if their shopping experience was a satisfying one. There are primarily four dimensions of visual merchandizing viz. window display, mannequin display, floor merchandizing and promotional signage.

3.2. The Need for Visual Merchandising

The dynamic economic and consumer environment is making visual merchandising a pre-eminent part for the retail outlets. Despite an increase in the amount of retail space available to consumers, they are spending less money on products per square foot. This means consumers are more selective than ever when purchasing products, especially during tough recession times. The recent recession has changed the way consumers manage their money because they are heavily and directly impacted by a staggering economy. When economic times are bad, consumer's attitude towards spending wobbles down.

Further, visual merchandising is extremely important for simply catching consumer's attention. Eighty-three percent of the information absorbed by a human brain comes from viewing a particular object. As a result, attractive displays, visuals and window displays have the greatest potential of impact on consumer's impulse buying behavior. Window displays can easily grab a consumer's attention even before they enter a store.

Visual merchandisers need to determine whether they are going to choose a display with salient stimuli or vivid stimuli. Salient stimuli draw consumer's attention involuntarily. For example, an extravagant display in a small local grocery shop may seem more interesting than the same display in a large grocery store where these kinds of displays are common. Salient stimuli depend on their novelty, intensity, and complexity to attract consumers' attention. Vivid stimuli are also involuntary, but vivid stimuli are more emotionally interesting for the customer.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Objective

The present study was conducted with the following objectives:

- To find out the effect of visual merchandising on impulse buying behavior of customers.
- To determine the important factors of visual merchandising influencing customers' buying behavior and in-store promotion activities

4.2. Type of Research

Qualitative Research

The inferences will be collected mainly from primary source by making them fill the questionnaire.

4.3. Sample Size:

281 respondents filled the questionnaire

4.4. Data Source:

Secondary data and primary data. Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation

5. Data Collection

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. The data collected for this report is through questionnaire by sending mails and using the help of Facebook and LinkedIn, the link has been shared with the people and their responses are collected to do the analysis.

Sending mails and links via Facebook for filling the questionnaires helped me to collect large number of responses in a very short period of time.

6. Data Analysis

6.1. Analysis Tool: SPSS

Case Processing Summary ^a						
	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
1. What is the most influencing feature driving you inside the store?	281	100.00%	0	0.00%	281	100.00%
2. What is the most noticed feature inside store display?	281	100.00%	0	0.00%	281	100.00%
3. You choose to enter in a store because of Attractive Mannequin and Window display?	281	100.00%	0	0.00%	281	100.00%
4. You choose to shop in an outlet with good layout, moving /browsing space and ambiance?	281	100.00%	0	0.00%	281	100.00%
5. Exterior Store Signage and graphics compel you to enter a store?	281	100.00%	0	0.00%	281	100.00%
6. Promotional offerings at store entrance is driving force to enter a store?	281	100.00%	0	0.00%	281	100.00%
7. In store lighting and music enhances your shopping experience?	281	100.00%	0	0.00%	281	100.00%
8. In store Merchandise and Mannequin display promotes impulsive buying?	281	100.00%	0	0.00%	281	100.00%
9. Do you think in store communication elements like tent cards, banners, floor vinyl, and graphics enhance merchandise display and affect customer purchase decision?	281	100.00%	0	0.00%	281	100.00%
10. Which according to you is the most effective silent selling tool and has strongest impact on customer purchase decision?	281	100.00%	0	0.00%	281	100.00%
a. Limited to first 291 cases.						

Table 1

6.2. Case Summary

This summary will let us know if the questionnaire was duly filled by the respondents or not.

The Case Summary tells us that the questionnaire was dedicatedly filled by the respondents and there are no errors while putting the input in the SPSS tool.

6.3. Reliability

It is very essential to find out the reliability of the questionnaire before proceeding with the research, hence we do the reliability test. This analysis gives us the Cronbach's value.

Cronbach's value is a measure to find the reliability of the questions asked.

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

		N	%
Cases	Valid	281	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	281	100.0

Table 2: Case Processing Summary

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.617	22

Table 3: Reliability Statistics

The Cronbach's value is used to see if the questionnaire is reliable or not.

The Cronbach's Alpha Value is greater than 0.5 hence this questionnaire is reliable.

1. What is the most influencing feature driving you inside the store?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Store Exterior Graphics and Signage	29	10.3	10.3	10.3
	Window Display Setting	82	29.2	29.2	39.5
	Outer Glimpse of Store	61	21.7	21.7	61.2
	Brand Name and Logo	85	30.2	30.2	91.5
	Promotional Offering at the entrance	24	8.5	8.5	100
	Total	281	100	100	
2. What is the most noticed feature inside store display?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bold Graphics	4	1.4	1.4	2.1
	Music and Lighting				
		26	9.3	9.3	11.4
	Mannequin Styling	171	60.9	60.9	72.2
	Creative Product Display	78	27.8	27.8	100
	Total	281	100	100	
3. You choose to enter in a store because of Attractive Mannequin and Window display?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	14	5	5	7.5
	Neutral				
		63	22.4	22.4	29.9
	Agree	148	52.7	52.7	82.6
	Strongly Agree	49	17.4	17.4	100
	Total	281	100	100	
4. You choose to shop in an outlet with good layout, moving /browsing space and ambiance?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	10	3.6	3.6	3.6
	Disagree	90	32	32	35.6
	Neutral	105	37.4	37.4	73

	Agree	59	21	21	94
	Strongly Agree	17	6	6	100
	Total	281	100	100	
5. Exterior Store Signage and graphics compel you to enter a store?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	2.1	2.1	2.1
	Disagree	41	14.6	14.6	16.7
	Neutral	38	13.5	13.5	30.2
	Agree	116	41.3	41.3	71.5
	Strongly Agree	80	28.5	28.5	100
	Total	281	100	100	
6. Promotional offerings at store entrance is driving force to enter a store?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	11	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Disagree	41	14.6	14.6	18.5
	Neutral	89	31.7	31.7	50.2
	Agree	108	38.4	38.4	88.6
	Strongly Agree	32	11.4	11.4	100
	Total	281	100	100	
7. In store lighting and music enhances your shopping experience?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	23	8.2	8.2	8.2
	Disagree	47	16.7	16.7	24.9
	Neutral	102	36.3	36.3	61.2
	Agree	76	27	27	88.3
	Strongly Agree	33	11.7	11.7	100
	Total	281	100	100	
8. In store Merchandise and Mannequin display promotes impulsive buying?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	29	10.3	10.3	10.3
	Disagree	80	28.5	28.5	38.8

	Neutral				
		98	34.9	34.9	73.7
	Agree	48	17.1	17.1	90.7
	Strongly Disagree				
		26	9.3	9.3	100
	Total	281	100	100	
9. Do you think in store communication elements like tent cards, banners, floor vinyl, and graphics enhance merchandise display and affect customer purchase decision?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Disagree	60	21.4	21.4	22.8
	Neutral				
		78	27.8	27.8	50.5
	Agree	110	39.1	39.1	89.7
	Strongly Disagree	29	10.3	10.3	100
	Total	281	100	100	
10. Which according to you is the most effective silent selling tool and has strongest impact on customer purchase decision?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Store Exterior Graphics and Signage	15	5.3	5.3	5.3
	Window Display	55	19.6	19.6	24.9
	Kind of Merchandise on display				
		73	26	26	50.9
	Brand Name and Promotional Offering	93	33.1	33.1	84
	Point of Sale Display	45	16	16	100
	Total	281	100	100	

Table 4

Hence we see that for almost all the parameters the responses are towards Agree.

6.4. Mean & Standard Deviation

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. What is the most influencing feature driving you inside the store?	281	1	5	2.98	1.163
2. What is the most noticed feature inside store display?	281	1	5	4.14	0.689
3. You choose to enter in a store because of Attractive Mannequin and Window display?	281	1	5	3.78	0.88
4. You choose to shop in an outlet with good layout, moving /browsing space and ambiance?	281	1	5	2.94	0.956
5. Exterior Store Signage and graphics compely you to enter a store?	281	1	5	3.79	1.076
6. Promotional offerings at store entrance is driving force to enter a store?	281	1	5	3.39	0.998
7. In store lighting and music enhances your shopping experience?	281	1	5	3.17	1.099
8. Do you think in store communication elements like tent cards, banners, floor vinyl, and graphics enhance merchandise display and affect customer purchase decision?	281	1	5	2.86	1.107
9. In store Merchandise and Mannequin display promotes impulsive buying?	281	1	5	3.36	0.975
10. Which according to you is the most effective silent selling tool and has strongest impact on customer purchase decision?	281	1	5	3.35	1.124

Table 5

My Study reveals that consumers are more concerned about inside store display, attractive mannequin and window display.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1. What is the most influencing feature driving you inside the store?	Between Groups	.937	2	.468	.350	.707
	Within Groups	52.206	39	1.339		
	Total	53.143	41			
2. What is the most noticed feature inside store display?	Between Groups	.688	2	.344	.430	.654
	Within Groups	31.217	39	.800		
	Total	31.905	41			
3. You choose to enter in a store because of Attractive Mannequin and Window display?	Between Groups	1.949	2	.975	1.100	.343
	Within Groups	34.551	39	.886		
	Total	36.500	41			
4. You choose to shop in an outlet with good layout, moving /browsing space and ambiance?	Between Groups	.236	2	.118	.133	.876
	Within Groups	34.550	39	.886		
	Total	34.786	41			
5. Exterior Store Signage and graphics compel you to enter a store?	Between Groups	.257	2	.129	.166	.847
	Within Groups	30.147	39	.773		
	Total	30.405	41			
6. Promotional offerings at store entrance is driving force to enter a store?	Between Groups	2.521	2	1.260	1.542	.227
	Within Groups	31.884	39	.818		
	Total	34.405	41			
7. In store lighting and music enhances your shopping experience?	Between Groups	.720	2	.360	.304	.740
	Within Groups	46.256	39	1.186		
	Total	46.976	41			
8. In store Merchandise and Mannequin display promotes impulsive buying?	Between Groups	.547	2	.273	.254	.777
	Within Groups	42.025	39	1.078		
	Total	42.571	41			
9. Do you think in store communication elements like tent cards, banners, floor vinyl, and graphics enhance merchandise display and affect customer purchase decision?	Between Groups	1.632	2	.816	.980	.384
	Within Groups	32.487	39	.833		
	Total	34.119	41			
10. Which according to you is the most effective silent	Between Groups	2.259	2	1.129	1.113	.339
	Within Groups	39.575	39	1.015		
	Total	41.834	41			

selling tool and has strongest Total impact on customer purchase decision?	41.833	41
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6.5. Factor Analysis

	Initial	Extraction
1. What is the most influencing feature driving you inside the store?	1.000	.726
2. What is the most noticed feature inside store display?	1.000	.689
3. You choose to enter in a store because of Attractive Mannequin and Window display?	1.000	.644
4. You choose to shop in an outlet with good layout, moving /browsing space and ambiance?	1.000	.723
5. Exterior Store Signage and graphics compel you to enter a store?	1.000	.698
6. Promotional offerings at store entrance is driving force to enter a store?	1.000	.669
7. In store lighting and music enhances your shopping experience?	1.000	.692
8. In store Merchandise and Mannequin display promotes impulsive buying?	1.000	.741
9. Do you think in store communication elements like tent cards, banners, floor vinyl, and graphics enhance merchandise display and affect customer purchase decision?	1.000	.623
10. Which according to you is the most effective silent selling tool and has strongest impact on customer purchase decision?	1.000	.656

Table 6

Output Created		02-Mar-2014 20:47:01
Comments		
Input	Data	C:\Documents and Settings\user\Desktop\CAPSTONE\data.sav
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	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	281
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	MISSING=EXCLUDE: User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	LISTWISE: Statistics are based on cases with no missing values for any variable used.
Syntax		<pre> FACTOR /VARIABLES q1 q2 q3 q4 q5 q6 q7 q8 q9 q10 /MISSING=LISTWISE /ANALYSIS q1 q2 q3 q4 q5 q6 q7 q8 q9 q10 q11 /PRINT=INITIAL EXTRACTION /CRITERIA=MINEIGEN(1) ITERATE(25) /EXTRACTION=PC /ROTATION=NOROTATE /METHOD=CORRELATION </pre>
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.047
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.047
	Maximum Memory Required	58024 (56.664K) bytes

Table 7

6.6. Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.242	14.738	14.738	3.242	14.738	14.738
2	2.109	9.588	24.327	2.109	9.588	24.327
3	1.863	8.467	32.793	1.863	8.467	32.793
4	1.593	7.242	40.036	1.593	7.242	40.036
5	1.383	6.288	46.323	1.383	6.288	46.323
6	1.243	5.649	51.973	1.243	5.649	51.973
7	1.166	5.302	57.274	1.166	5.302	57.274
8	1.088	4.945	62.219	1.088	4.945	62.219
9	1.015	4.616	66.835	1.015	4.616	66.835
10	.905	4.113	70.948			

Table 8: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix ^a									
	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. What is the most influencing feature driving you inside the store?	.206	-.085	.118	.514	-.491	.331	.182	.023	.111
2. What is the most noticed feature inside store display?	-.101	.351	.536	.165	-.125	-.067	-.184	.189	.390
3. You choose to enter in a store because of Attractive Mannequin and Window display?	.361	.127	.348	.461	-.138	-.160	.159	-.051	-.302
4. You choose to shop in an outlet with good layout, moving /browsing space and ambiance?	.388	.166	-.458	.186	.204	-.091	-.386	-.312	-.061
5. Exterior Store Signage and graphics compel you to enter a store?	.427	.415	-.017	-.161	-.465	-.051	-.239	.148	-.138
6. Promotional offerings at store entrance is driving force to enter a store?	.658	.139	.055	.007	.020	-.051	.129	-.432	.088
7. In store lighting and music enhances your shopping experience?	.563	-.251	.266	-.154	-.297	.055	.175	-.103	.291
8. In store Merchandise and Mannequin display promotes impulsive buying?	.430	-.614	.081	.027	.181	-.045	-.056	-.030	.364
9. Do you think in store communication elements like tent cards, banners, floor vinyl, and graphics enhance merchandise display and affect customer purchase decision?	.384	.495	.021	.382	-.181	-.041	-.196	-.033	.103
10. Which according to you is the most effective silent selling tool and has strongest impact on customer purchase decision?	.356	.402	-.133	-.402	.183	-.222	.002	.320	.055

Table 9

7. Recommendations

This research study has proved that Visual Merchandizing positively manipulates consumer impulse buying behavior. The analysis showed that the consumer impulse buying behavior was significantly influenced by the window display, store environment, floor merchandising or even by the store's brand name. This study denotes that the consumer's impulse buying behavior has a positive relationship with the window displays of the store because the research study found out that when the consumer views the products which were displayed aesthetically, it definitely attracts the customer and hence it arouses an urge to show an emotion of impulse buying behavior. The forum display also has a strong relationship because when the customer steps into the shop and sees the products displayed on the shelves in such a way that the customer tends to buy an unplanned product. The floor merchandising also has a relationship with consumer's impulse buying but according to the data it was moderate because when the customer walks into the store for shopping they want to do it with focus and concentration and while the floor merchandising is being performed the people tend to get disturbed and hence hesitate to shop in an impulsive manner. The consumer's impulse buying behavior and the store brand name has a very strong relationship because when the store succeeds in developing its loyal customer base of its brands then, the customer's would invariably buy the product even if the purchase of the product was not planned. All this data effectively suggests that visual merchandising like window display, forum display, floor merchandising and store brand name serve as strong stimulus, reminding and inspiring the customer to indulge impulse buying whenever they shop in a store. Effectively, this study shows the value of visual merchandising on consumer's impulse buying behavior.

8. Conclusion

Visual Merchandising is a silent salesperson, as its tools does not speak but definitely conveys the message through visual appeal. In order to change according to today's customers, retailers need to place greater emphasis on presentation of the merchandize. VM acts have an efficacious influence on the retail shopping experience of the customer and strongly influences their decision making process. It produces competitive advantage and helps in boosting the overall image of the store. Due to Visual merchandising the customers gets attracted towards the store which eventually increases the stores footfall and finally triggers sales figure positively. The research also threw light on the fact that visual merchandising has the capacity to invite people to enter the store and motivate the shopper to indulge in impulse buying. The results proved that there is a relationship between customers' buying behavior and in-

store form/mannequin display, window display and promotional signage. The study also provided insights about types of visual merchandising that can influence customers' buying behaviors. Three most important factors of visual merchandising namely attractiveness of window display, innovative assortments and cleanliness and neatness of store/ store environment have been identified. Hence, Visual merchandising has become a crucial parameter in the present scenario of the Retail industry today.

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Annexure

Questionnaire

1. What is the most influencing feature driving you inside the store?
 - Store Exterior Graphics and Signage
 - Window Display Setting
 - Outer Glimpse of Store
 - Kind of Merchandise on display
 - Brand Name and Logo
 - Promotional Offering at the entrance (Sale / Discounts)
2. What is the most noticed feature inside store display?
 - Bold Graphics
 - Music and Lighting
 - Mannequin Styling
 - Creative Product Display
3. You choose to enter in a store because of Attractive Mannequin and Window display?
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
4. You choose to shop in an outlet with good layout, moving /browsing space and ambiance?
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
5. Exterior Store Signage and graphics compel you to enter a store?
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
6. Promotional offerings at store entrance is driving force to enter a store?
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
7. In store lighting and music enhances your shopping experience?
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
8. In store Merchandise and Mannequin display promotes impulsive buying?
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

9. Do you think in store communication elements like tent cards, banners, floor vinyl, and graphics enhance merchandise display and affect customer purchase decision?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. Which according to you is the most effective silent selling tool and has strongest impact on customer purchase decision?

- Store Exterior Graphics and Signage
- Window Display
- Kind of Merchandise on display
- Brand Name and Logo
- Promotional Offering
- Point of Sale Display
- Ceiling suspended props and talkers
- Display table
- Floor Vinyl and in store wall graphics
- Lighting, Music and Store Space