

Fashion Retailing and Visual Merchandising

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This book contains the course content for Fashion Retailing and Visual Merchandising.

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Index

I. Content	II
II. List of Figures	VI
III. Abbreviations	VII
IV. Case Study	115
V. Bibliography	121
VI. Self Assessment Answers	124

Book at a Glance

Contents

Chapter I	1
Introduction to Fashion Retailing	1
Aim	1
Objectives	1
Learning outcome	1
1.1 Introduction.....	2
1.2 Fashion Fanship	2
1.3 Number of Fashion Brands	4
1.4 Indian Fashion Retail Industry.....	6
1.5 Fashion and Sustainability	7
Summary	9
References	9
Recommended Reading	10
Self Assessment	11
Chapter II	13
Retail Market	13
Aim	13
Objectives	13
Learning outcome	13
2.1 Nature of Fashion Retail Market.....	14
2.2 Products Being Sold.....	14
2.3 Retail Venues.....	14
2.4 Price Determination	15
2.5 Searching and Matching	15
2.6 Market Makers, Competition and Consumers	16
2.7 Effects of Fashion on Consumers and Consumption.....	18
2.8 Stigmatising and Stereotyping	19
2.8.1 Divide between People	19
2.8.2 Reflects Expectations that Come Along with Occupational Status and Prestige	20
2.8.3 Fashion Blurring the Line	20
2.9 Fusion of Western and Asian Culture in Fashion	20
2.10 Fashion Deviance.....	21
2.11 Creation of Consumer Culture	21
2.12 Fashion Fitting into the Larger Product World	22
2.13 Influence of Fashion into Other Industries and Markets	22
2.14 Integration of Fashion into Other Markets and Industries	22
2.14.1 Complementary Products.....	22
2.15 Market Size, Economy and Operations	23
2.16 Operation of the Fashion Retail Industry Fitting into the Larger Economy	23
2.16.1 Consumer Goods Market	23
2.16.2 Industrial Market.....	23
2.17 Predicting the Future of Fashion Retail: Online Shopping.....	23
Summary	24
References	24
Recommended Reading	25
Self Assessment	26
Chapter III	28
Visual Merchandising	28
Aim	28
Objectives	28
Learning outcome	28

3.1 Introduction to Visual Merchandising.....	29
3.2 Virtual Visual Merchandising	29
3.3 Dynamic Visual Merchandising.....	29
3.4 Visual Merchandising Problems	30
3.5 Visual Merchandising Failures in India	30
3.6 Visual Merchandising, Handloom and Home Textiles: A Historical Perspective.....	31
3.7 Visual Merchandising in Handlooms.....	31
3.8 Value and Margin Additions	32
3.9 Merchandise Seasons: Plans and Schedules	33
3.10 Life Expectancy of Visual Displays	34
3.11 Types of Visual Merchandise Displays	35
3.12 Industrial and Exhibition Visual Merchandising	35
3.13 E-Visual Merchandising: An Emerging Visual Technology Trend	35
Summary.....	36
References.....	36
Recommended Reading.....	37
Self Assessment.....	38
Chapter IV.....	40
Element of Display	40
Aim	40
Objectives	40
Learning outcome	40
4.1 Introduction.....	41
4.2 Exterior Presentation.....	41
4.2.1 Exterior Signs	41
4.2.2 Walks and Entries.....	42
4.2.3 Landscaping	43
4.2.4 Window Displays.....	43
4.3 Interior Presentations	44
4.4 Display Design.....	45
4.5 Principles of Design used in Display	45
4.5.1 Balance.....	45
4.5.2 Emphasis.....	46
4.5.3 Proportion	48
4.5.4 Rhythm.....	49
4.5.5 Harmony	50
4.5.6 Lighting.....	50
4.5.7 Signage.....	52
4.5.8 Composition	53
4.5.9 Props	53
4.6 Store Layouts and Visual Merchandising	54
Summary.....	55
References.....	55
Recommended Reading.....	56
Self Assessment.....	57
Chapter V.....	59
Fashion Visual Merchandising: The Face of Fashion.....	59
Aim	59
Objectives	59
Learning outcome	59
5.1 Introduction.....	60
5.2 Visual Display Tool Box	60
5.3 Elements of Effective Visual Merchandising.....	60

5.4 Components of Visual Merchandising.....	61
5.5 The Retailing Picture	62
5.6 Types of Retail Stores	62
5.7 Secret Shoppers at the Store	65
5.8 Retail Store: Design and Site	66
5.9 Image Mix: The Top Six Elements	66
5.10 Don'ts in a Retail Store.....	67
Summary.....	69
References	69
Recommended Reading.....	70
Self Assessment.....	71
Chapter VI.....	73
Evaluating Visual Merchandising Proposals/Ideas.....	73
Aim	73
Objectives	73
Learning outcome	73
6.1 Introduction.....	74
6.2 Visual Merchandising Planning	74
6.3 Strategic Approach.....	75
6.4 Layout and Presentation.....	76
6.5 Visual Merchandising Ideas	79
6.5.1 The Store and Environment	79
6.5.2 Displaying the Merchandise	80
6.5.3 Displaying Signage and Ticketing	80
6.5.4 Most Valuable Tools.....	80
6.5.5 Paper Crafts.....	81
6.5.6 Decorating with Balloons	81
6.5.7 Decorating with Flowers.....	81
6.5.8 Dealing with Styrofoam.....	81
6.5.9 More Techniques for Various Materials	82
6.5.10 Cloth Styling Techniques.....	82
6.5.11 Painting Techniques	82
6.5.12 Lighting Techniques.....	83
6.5.13 Extra Embellishments and Finishing Touches	83
6.5.14 Integrating Sensory Input.....	83
Summary.....	85
References	85
Recommended Reading.....	86
Self Assessment.....	87
Chapter VII	89
Style Advising in Fashion Retail.....	89
Aim	89
Objectives	89
Learning outcome	89
7.1 Introduction.....	90
7.2 Fashion Advisor	90
7.2.1 Role of Fashion Advisor	90
7.2.2 Need of Fashion Advisor	90
7.2.3 Requirements for Becoming Fashion Advisor/ Fashion Stylist.....	91
7.2.4 Components of Fashion Advising.....	92
7.2.5 Fashion Designer	92
7.2.6 Typical Work Activities.....	93
7.3 Wardrobe Stylist.....	93

7.4 Visual Merchandising	94
7.4.1 Visual Merchandiser Job Description	94
7.4.2 The Work.....	95
7.4.3 Steps to become a Visual Merchandiser	97
7.4.4 Skills Needed to Become a Visual Merchandiser	98
Summary.....	101
References	101
Recommended Readings	102
Self Assessment.....	103
Chapter VIII.....	105
Visual Merchandising Strategies and e- tailing.....	105
Aim	105
Objectives	105
Learning outcome	105
8.1 Introduction.....	106
8.2 Visual Merchandising Strategies.....	106
8.3 Visual Merchandising Rules	106
8.3.1 Visual Merchandising in General Websites	107
8.3.2 Visual Merchandising in Apparel Websites	108
8.4 Importance of Visual Merchandising in e-tailing	109
Summary.....	111
References.....	111
Recommended Reading.....	112
Self Assessment.....	113

List of Figures

Fig. 4.1 Traditional balance	46
Fig. 4.2 Informal balance	46
Fig. 4.3 Intensity	47
Fig. 4.4 Optical center.....	47
Fig. 4.5 Left to right movement.....	47
Fig. 4.6 Pyramid.....	48
Fig. 4.7 Flow	49
Fig. 4.8 Progression of sizes	49
Fig. 4.9 Continuous line movement, rhythm	50
Fig. 6.1 Planogram.....	76

Abbreviations

B2C	-	Business-to Consumer
RTW	-	Ready-to-Wear
AMC	-	American Motors Corporation
D.C.	-	Direct Current
A.C.	-	Alternating Current
KVIC	-	Khadi and Village Industries Commission
VM	-	Visual Merchandising
CFL	-	Compact Fluorescent Lamp
LED	-	Light-Emitting Diode
CAD	-	Computer-Aided Design
SME	-	Small and Medium Enterprises
IGDS	-	Intercontinental Group of Departmental Stores
POPAI	-	Point of Purchase Advertising Institute
POP	-	Point of Purchase

Chapter I

Introduction to Fashion Retailing

Aim

The aim of this chapter is to:

- introduce the term fashion retailing
- evaluate the number of fashion brands
- classify the types of fashion brands

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- elucidate the Indian fashion retail industry
- explain the roles and responsibilities of the employee
- describe the factors responsible for shaping fashion retail industry

Learning outcome

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand the fashion retail business
- recognise the markets for fashion retail business
- identify the scope of fashion retail industry

1.1 Introduction

Retail involves the sale of physical goods or merchandise from a permanent location, such as a department store, boutique and mall, in small or individual lots for direct utilisation by the purchaser. Retailing may include other services, such as delivery. Purchasers may use it personally or for business.

A retailer purchase goods or products in huge quantities from manufacturers or importers, either directly or through a wholesaler and then sells smaller quantities to the end-user. Retail establishments, where the product is sold, are often called shops or stores. Retailers are at the end of the supply chain. Manufacturers perceive the process of retailing as an essential part of their overall distribution strategy. The term retailer is also applied in services, i.e., where a service provider serves the needs of a large number of individuals, such as a public utility, such as electric power. Shops may be on residential streets, shopping streets or in a shopping mall. Shopping streets may be for pedestrians only. Online retailing is a type of electronic commerce used for business-to-consumer (B2C) transactions and mail orders are forms of non-shop retailing as the products are directly available to the consumers, without any physical hindrance.

Shopping generally refers to the act of buying products from the stores. Shopping is largely done according to the physical need such as food and clothes but sometimes, it is done as a recreational activity. Recreational shopping often involves window shopping (just looking, not buying) and browsing which may or may not result into purchase. Complexity and speed have dramatically changed fashion retailing. With supply cycles longer than demand cycles, the importance of being on trend with the right combination of size, style and colour is more challenging than ever. Additionally, fashion retailers need to rapidly clear end-of-season merchandise to accommodate an increasing number of seasons. With thousands of possible style, size and colour combinations that must be optimised down to the store level—as well as shoppers who seek a personalised experience – fashion retailers are challenged to manage an explosion of data.

Humankind has hardly remained unfashionable on earth. Right from loin-clothes to cloaked garbs – and then coats, gowns and accessories in the early 19th century – fashion has had many seasons. It was largely linked to elite fantasies and remained so till mid-1850s, when a professional called fashion designer came up. Paris-based British designer, C. F. Worth was the first to be tagged so. First, it was Paris that reigned supreme, but London and Milan soon caught up, creating their own fashion niche. Fashion becomes unstylish if it does not keep changing. By now, there are a galaxy of designs and customer segments. Not a century back, in the 1950s, the fashion industry was abuzz about haute couture (a French term for elevate dressmaking). It meant for exclusive high-quality clothes, cut and sewn with meticulous precision – obviously for elite and wealthy clients. Then came prêt-à-porter' (ready-to-wear) – not for individual customers, but great care was given to choice and cut of fabric. Fashion industry soon was visibly altered. Fashion houses migrated away from their homeland and set up new retail locations for revenues – mass retailers rapidly emerged. Fast-changing fads and ever-rising customer demand busied fashion merchandisers and retailers. Everyone does not go for haute couture; most want reasonably priced fashions.

At a generalised level, the term fashion is often used to denote trends in consumerism (Bakewell et al., 2006). The notion of fashion also involves consumption behaviour that displays an individual's tastes and values to others, given that fashion styles are usually accepted by a large group of people at a particular time and signify both social identification and distinction (Gronow, 1997). This term further refers to clothing and other physical and material objects put on the human body (Kaiser, 1997). Taking the perspective put forward by Schindler and Holbrook (1993), we perceive fashion as embracing all the components mentioned above, including the entire range of visual elements that may lead to perceptions of fashion (for example, hairstyle, clothing, jewellery and accessories). Thus, the term fashion can be applied to all aspects of someone's personal appearance that provide both hedonic and utilitarian value to the consumer.

1.2 Fashion Fanship

It is recognised that the value to retailers regarding fashion purchases is strongly related to the extent to which a consumer is engaged with and devoted to consuming fashion. Such attentiveness to fashion may be described as an individual's interest in and attention to the latest trends (Wells and Tigert, 1971). Often termed fashion consciousness and used to measure a person's perceived degree of fashionability; this consciousness incorporates the hedonic,

cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of fashion (Bakewell et al., 2006). This consciousness is related to (but often separated from) such concepts as fashion awareness, innovativeness and leadership (Goldsmith and Stith, 1992). Fashion involvement is similar to fashion consciousness and refers to the extent to which an individual is caught up in a number of fashion-related concepts, including awareness, knowledge, interest and reactions. Given this range of concepts, fashion can become a central focus for a meaningful and engaging activity in an individual's life (O'Cass, 2004). For example, O'Cass (2004) contends that the continual and cyclic nature of fashion means that people are often drawn into the style of the moment and such consumers place great emphasis on their clothes being fashionable.

While both consciousness and involvement make valuable contributions to the fashion literature, we contend that both these concepts can inform a broader concept that may have more value for retailers in terms of expenditure. For this research, it is argued that the notion of fashion fanship refers to the passion with which someone is significantly conscious and/or involved in the consumption of current fashion, which leads to an increased spend. To this end, we partially draw on the work of Redden and Steiner (2000), who laid the groundwork for research into how consumer behaviour can be measured or interpreted in terms of the level of fanaticism involved. In developing their research framework, Redden and Steiner (2000) review literature suggesting that fanatical behaviour, retains aspects of normal behaviour, based on the degree of enthusiasm, excitement, passion and commitment and/or extremes to which an individual is prepared to go to consume an identified product or service.

Researching branding, they suggest behaviours such as loyalty or worshiping, potentially denotes a fanatical consumer. Thus, higher degrees of fanship can relate to higher degrees of consumption. We argue that fans portray distinctive behaviour that means they are not necessarily fashion leaders but very enthusiastic fashion followers. Such insights are relevant when exploring the relationship between the degree of devotion to consuming fashion and subsequent behaviour. Parks et al. (2005) inferred an association between fanship and behaviour when they found a positive relationship between fashion consciousness and expenditure, with such a relationship influenced by hedonic consumption value. Thus, fashion fanship, which encompasses both consciousness and involvement towards fashion, is likely to influence behavioural outcomes such as impulse buying and purchase decisions (Bakewell et al., 2006; Han et al., 1991; O'Cass, 2004; Rook and Fisher, 1995). The major premise of the fanship construct is that such a characteristic will influence consumption behaviour. To test the construct of fashion fanship in this study, the following hypothesis is stated:

Fashion fanship will have a significant positive influence on fashion expenditure. One cannot deny the importance of attitudes in personal consumption given that attitudes are a predisposition to respond and have a positive relationship to consumption (Allport, 1935). The core essentials of attitudes are that they are evaluative in nature (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Fiske and Taylor, 1991). Being a superset of consciousness, attitudes also contain cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects (Rosenberg and Hovland, 1960; Zimbardo et al., 1977), even though these need not be consistent with each other (Zanna and Rempel, 1988). Parks et al. (2005) found that for hedonistic products the emotional response to the product was a powerful antecedent to evaluations of the product and subsequent attitudes. This can also apply to the consumption of fashion, often perceived as a hedonistic product, given the strong relationship between attitudes and behaviour (Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Zimbardo et al., 1977). Looking at attitudes, debt and spending on clothing, Weekes (2004) found that while personal debt was increasing in the United Kingdom, the majority of the younger generation would not reduce their spending on items of clothing if they had to reduce their overall spending. This would then imply that, at least within the younger generation, attitudes towards clothing have a positive relationship with expenditure, even if consumers are burdened with debt. Based on the foregoing, the following hypothesis is stated:

The glitz and glamour of an apparel store, the dazzling display of jewellery store windows and the plush interiors of a footwear store are the adornments that are must-haves for every popular mall. They are must-haves because retail mix is a very important aspect of any mall. The success of a mall largely depends on this. Some mall developers make the mistake of accepting everyone who shows interest in hiring the retail space irrespective of whether or not the product of that retail goes with the target market. For a mall to do well, developers need to choose what the target market is and go after it.

1.3 Number of Fashion Brands

Having a right mix of tenants and brands in fashion retail and their space allotment are crucial to a mall's success. So what percentage of overall space is allotted to fashion brands while zoning a mall? To this, Susil S Dungerwal, Chief Mall Mechanic, Beyondsquarefeet Advisory replies, "Area wise, it is 48-52 per cent, as an off-hand figure." However, Arif Sheikh, President Retail, Advance India Projects Limited, states, "As many as possible, it is fashion, which brings in footfall and business both." It seems that malls try to attract as many fashion brands as they can, given that the figures go up to as high as taking up half of the mall space.

Category-wise

Zoning a mall on the basis of category is also a trend that's fast catching up with real estate developers. The fashion zone is further bifurcated on the basis of product category. Categories in fashion like footwear, jewellery, apparel, innerwear, and so on are allotted space after conducting a detailed study on the catchment area.

While some developers exclusively rely on specific researched data for the segmentation that they want in their malls, others follow some tried and tested formulas. Dungerwal avers, "We do a consumer profiling within a 3 km radius of the upcoming mall. It is purely research based and very specific." Sheikh on the other hand specifies the percentage allotment, he says, "For shoes it is 2 per cent, sports brands have 5 per cent occupancy, jewellery and accessories take up 1 per cent, apparel has 53 per cent, lingerie covers 1 per cent, bags & leather occupy 0.50 per cent of the total fashion space."

Format-wise

It is observed that some mall developers follow the international practices, wherein the ground floor is allotted to luxury and international brands. The reason behind this is that the ground floor has the highest rentals and highest footfalls. However, if a mall does not target elite customers there would be fewer or no luxury brands.

As the fashion retail is all about the local customers' preferences so the space allotment as per the value formats, lifestyle and luxury formats, needs to be in synch with the type of people visiting it. Dungerwal feels, "It is again something that is decided by research data. It depends on the mall positioning." Sheikh however, believes, "Segmenting place for fashion based on value is not fair. Today even ready-to-eat meal comes in fashionable packs."

Gender-wise

Experts say that generally the first floor is allotted to women's and kidswear brands. On this floor, the rentals are lower than that for the ground floor, but sales are hit by up to 30 per cent, in general. How about the menswear stores? How do developers segregate the allotment based on menswear, women wear and kidswear brands? Looking at the fashion retail space with a bird's eye view, it is women's fashion and women's wear that dominate the overall ratio of this category distribution. Dungerwal substantiates, "We usually look at the break up as--- women's wear – 40 per cent, men's wear – 30 per cent, kidswear – 20 per cent and generic/mixed/unisex – 10 per cent." Sheikh gives away the details as "Mixed Fashion – 40 per cent, woman's fashion – 9 per cent, men's fashion – 2 per cent while children's fashion – 2 per cent."

Big and small

The Forum Mall in Bangalore is zoned in a 'dog bone' fashion, an anchor tenant is present at each end (Landmark and Westside) while vanilla retailers in the middle. Forum Mall continues to be one of the most successful malls in the city in terms of annual revenues. The success of this mall is accredited to its perfect zoning and superior tenant mix vis-à-vis other malls in the city.

Following this set example, a lot of developers are giving due importance to the space allotment based on the size of stores, that is, vanilla stores and big-box stores. Dungerwal replies, "Vanilla stores are spread across an area of 800 – 1500 sq. ft, mini anchor/category pillar stores occupy 5000 – 10000 sq. ft and big box stores cover 20000 sq. ft."

Sheikh states, “Vanilla stores forms 500 SBA for accessories to 5000 and big box could go to any many sq. ft as possible but looking at current SKU build up in India one should stay within 50000 to 75000 sq. ft and edit SKUs for best optimisation of retail space.” The anchor tenant is the largest occupier in a mall in terms of square feet. Vanilla retailers cluster around the anchor and feed off the shopping traffic it generates.

Rentals

The store rental in malls varies from place to place and city to city, but it is mainly the footfalls that determine how high the rentals may climb. Dungerwal confirms, “It differs a lot from area to area, depending upon footfalls. Usually in metro cities it is around Rs 120 – 300/sq. ft for ground floor, 20 per cent less than ground floor for first floor, 20 per cent less than first floor for second floor and so on. This pattern changes, when there is a parking lot on every floor. Then each floor becomes a ground floor; or when there is a food court or a movie hall on a specific floor.”

Sheikh does not agree with it and says that rentals vary from location to location. A space on the ground floor in a mall at a good location in metro may be rented for Rs 400 to Rs 600 per sq ft. on an average. Tier II and out of town locations have rentals of Rs 60-100 per sq ft for a similar space.”

Local retailers

Not everyone visiting a mall intends to shop. Commonly, there are two types of consumers visiting a mall. One type is focused-buyer and another is impulse-buyer. The time spent by focused buyers in malls is relatively small while impulse buyers hang-out for a long time. Impulse buyers enjoy window shopping. Though there is little that retailers can do to attract focused buyers. But impulse buyers can be lured by including retailers and products they are regular with and fond of.

It is heartening to note that mall developers pay special attention to local retailers, as they believe that local retailers bring in a traditional flavour to the retail space of a mall and spruce it up. Dungerwal exclaims, “Definitely! We give a lot of emphasis to attracting local retailers to our malls as they add glamour to the retail space and make it lively. We try and provide them with reasons why they should take up space in malls and help them grow with a ‘red carpet treatment.’”

Sheikh too says with a grin, “Definitely, all our malls have got special zone for local fashion retailers and are doing extremely well. They are offering differentiated products with higher margins but at lower MRP than national brand to the customers.”

Franchised versus company owned

Malls seem to prefer more of company owned outlets, compared to franchised ones. According to Susil Dungerwal, some malls also get into a tri-party agreement where the company finalises the details of the retail space booked and then hands it over to the franchisee.

On a different note he says, “It is usually a mix of both with franchised outlets having 20-22 per cent occupancy as against company owned outlets having 78-80 per cent occupancy. Though, there are some brands, which operate largely through franchised outlets, like Archies, Adidas and The Loot to name a few.” Specifying details regarding his mall, Sheikh states, “Almost 28 per cent of the space is occupied by franchised outlet at our mall.”

Having the right tenant mix and zoning help attract and retain shoppers by offering them multiple choices and satisfying multiple needs. It also facilitates the smooth movement of shoppers within the mall, avoiding clusters and bottlenecks. It results in influencing shoppers’ mall preference and frequency of visits.

1.4 Indian Fashion Retail Industry

It is the augmentation in fashion trends in India that revolutionised the merchandising system in retail industry. Brands in apparel, textiles, jewellery, accessories, footwear, cosmetics and salons raised the business more than Rs. 40,000 crore. The Indian retail market is evolving rapidly. It is palpable that now Indian retail industry requires lots more of fashion. The organised retailing is developing at breakneck speed. It is amicable to all that fashion is a vital part of both the retail industry as well as the brands. Fashion has led the retail industry boom and it has sustained its dominance in every malls, markets and stores.

Since the spread-out of malls is increasing, the major issue will be how to organise fashion retails industry, has potential of making Rs. 50,000 crore business by the year 2007. Indian retail would cover-up 50 mn sq. ft. by 2007 of sales space countrywide and nearly 50 % of the total space would be assigned for fashion retailing. It is anticipated that about Rs 20,000 crore retail sales would be coming-in from the fashion retailing. A population of over one billion, a massive consumer class, India is considered as the most preferred destinations for investments. Apparel and textiles makes the biggest segment in retailing sectors and if we accumulate all the other related segments such as jewellery, cosmetics, watches, health and beauty care etc at one single platform, then fashion would account nearly 60 % of the total retail sector. With radically changing fashion and retail industry, the Indian consumers are facing considerable transformation. With an increase income levels and increasing attitude “Look Good - Feel Good”, fashion is offering huge potential to penetrate deeper into the untouched Indian markets.

Fashions will account nearly 95% in total sales in the department stores, while in hypermarkets such as Big Bazaar; the share could be about 70%. Fashion apparel has been the significant segment in the terms of evolution in Indian retail industry, not due to its size but the way it has influenced lifestyle of the Indian people. It was apparel that led multi-national brands to explore and invest in the Indian market, which led the ball rolling to rearrange the retail industry.

Few key factors that shaped the fashion retail industry are listed below:

- Massive spread-out of the malls, hyper markets and supermarkets throughout the country, even in non-metro cities.
- Mergers and acquisitions, which let huge brands to participate in the local market
- The advantages by the elimination of global textile quotas in 2005.
- Expansion strategies of brands and retailers.
- Many international brands march into domestic markets.
- Many brands performed well in the mass segment.
- Boom in luxury retail segment.
- Indian fashion designers marked their names at International platforms.
- Considerable expenditure on ad and marketing by apparel brands.
- Enhanced merchandising let the companies to enhance consumer relations.

Few points on which retailers and brands should mull over:

- Collaborative tie-ups with non-competent services providers and brands.
- Offer value-added products, not cash discounts.
- Offer uniform sizing throughout the country.
- Offer personalised services.
- Concentrate on particular buyer or market segment.
- Take action to fulfil the demands.
- Try to become exclusive stores for specific brands and adopt shop-in-shop system.
- Place well behaved, polite and trained sales staff to manage counters.
- Go for organised merchandising format for your company.

- Avoid offering all at once. Introduce products assortments in a phase manner with latest trends.
- Try to get feedback from the consumer on “What they want?”

1.5 Fashion and Sustainability

Most of us know what fashion is. Many of us know what sustainability is. But when it comes to exploring the relationship between the two, we can very quickly find ourselves on new ground. For the relationship between fashion and sustainability to be active and complex and each time we look at the key ideas or issues at stake, different aspects seem to come to light. Sometimes what is emphasised is technical information about toxic chemicals or working conditions in mills and factories on the other side of the world. At other times, the fashion and sustainability relationship seems best understood by looking at what goes on locally: networks of handcrafters; dyes made from species of plant found only in local hedgerows; our individual laundering practices.

The truth is, of course, that sustainable fashion is all of these and more. It is a celebration of ingenuity, vitality, care, resourcefulness and strong relationships between us and our world, expressed in garment form. These sustainability values will help shape the future of fashion and give us a mental picture and sensory way markers about the direction in which we should head. Part of this “shaping” involves reducing the impact of the fashion sector as it exists today—and is a massive job. The production and consumption of fashion impact hard on ecosystems, communities, workers and consumers in a variety of challenging and sometimes surprising ways.

Producing fashion clothes and the textiles they are made from, is one of the longest and most complicated industrial chains in manufacturing industry. It starts in fields with the cultivation of fibre crops such as cotton and wool or in chemical plants where fibres like polyester are extracted; and ends up in homes, on our bodies and in landfill sites continents away from where they started out. The journey in between involves the use of lots of labour, water, energy and processing chemicals and produces waste and pollution.

Indeed in a recent pollution risk assessment by the Environment Agency of UK, the fashion and textile industry was rated worst. Thus, it makes sense that sustainable fashion activity is underpinned by a deep awareness of the use of resources and how these resources are organised to meet people’s needs.

Central to this is “lifecycle thinking”, an approach that sees garments as a mosaic of inter-connected flows of materials, labour and as potential satisfiers of needs that move through phases of a garment’s life from fibre cultivation, to processing and transportation and into garment use, reuse and eventual disposal. Such lifecycle thinking is inspired principally from the study of ecology, where each part of a system influences every other and where overall system effectiveness is prioritised over the individual parts.

When fashion is looked at from a lifecycle perspective, what is revealed are “hotspots” of harmful impact and opportunities for the greatest whole system improvement. For some (though certainly not all) fashion clothes, these hotspots of harm are linked to material choices.

Traditional views of sustainable fashion focus their attention almost exclusively on materials and their provenance; on whether fibre is organically grown and fairly traded, or whether materials are from rapidly renewable sources or from recycled yarn. Today, for example, over 20 major brands and 1200 smaller ones now sell organic fibre products. Yet for many other fashion clothes, choice of materials has only limited effect on overall product sustainability.

In the case of frequently laundered clothes for instance, the overwhelming hotspot of harm is the use phase of a garment’s life. Here it is our laundering choices, washing, drying and ironing behaviour and perceptions of cleanliness that have most influence over our clothes’ sustainability.

Yet these flows of resources are only part of the story. Fashion clothes are much more than the fibre and chemicals needed to make them. They are signs and symbols, expressions of culture, newness and tradition. They link us to time and space and deal with our emotional needs, manifesting us as social beings, as individuals. Thus, sustainability issues in fashion are as much about cultural, economic and social phenomena as material and manufacturing ones. They are also about decadence, consumerism, expression and identity and if sustainability is to become a real possibility in fashion, then the sector has to work with these big issues and their difficult implications as well as the more bounded fibre-specific or production focused ones. In order to make sustainability happen in the fashion sector, changes should be made at many levels: we need both root and branch reform.

Summary

- Retail involves the sale of physical goods or merchandise from a permanent location, such as a department store, boutique and mall, in small or individual lots for direct utilisation by the purchaser.
- Shopping generally refers to the act of buying products from the stores.
- Shopping is largely done according to the physical need such as food and clothes but sometimes it is done as a recreational activity.
- It is recognised that the value to retailers regarding fashion purchases is strongly related to the extent to which a consumer is engaged with and devoted to consuming fashion.
- The glitz and glamour of an apparel store, the dazzling display of jewellery store windows and the plush interiors of a footwear store are the adornments that are must-haves for every popular mall.
- Fashion involvement is similar to fashion consciousness and refers to the extent to which an individual is caught up in a number of fashion-related concepts, including awareness, knowledge, interest and reactions.
- It is observed that some mall developers follow the international practices, wherein the ground floor is allotted to luxury and international brands.
- As the fashion retail is all about the local customers' preferences so the space allotment as per the value formats, lifestyle and luxury formats, needs to be in synch with the type of people visiting it.
- The store rental in malls varies from place to place and city to city, but it is mainly the footfalls that determine how high the rentals may climb.
- Commonly, there are two types of consumers visiting a mall. One type is focused-buyer and another is impulse-buyer.
- Having the right tenant mix and zoning help attract and retain shoppers by offering them multiple choices and satisfying multiple needs.
- Fashions will account nearly 95% in total sales in the department stores, while in hypermarkets such as Big Bazaar the share could be about 70%.
- Fashion apparel has been the significant segment in the terms of evolution in Indian retail industry, not due to its size but the way it has influenced lifestyle of the Indian people.
- It was apparel that led multi-national brands to explore and invest in the Indian market, which led the ball rolling to rearrange the retail industry.

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Self Assessment

1. Which of the following statements is false?
 - a. Retailers are at the end of the supply chain.
 - b. Manufacturers are at the end of the supply chain.
 - c. Manufacturers perceive the process of retailing as an essential part of their overall distribution strategy.
 - d. Retail establishments, where the product is sold, are often called shops or stores.

2. Which of the following refers to the extent to which an individual is caught up in a number of fashion-related concepts, including awareness and knowledge?
 - a. Fashion involvement
 - b. Fashion merchandise
 - c. Fashion brands
 - d. Visual merchandising

3. Which of the following is not a basis of zoning a mall?
 - a. Category wise
 - b. Space wise
 - c. Format wise
 - d. Gender wise

4. Which of the following determines the store rentals in a mall?
 - a. Space
 - b. Ambience
 - c. Footfall
 - d. Brands

5. _____ has been the significant segment in the terms of evolution in Indian retail industry.
 - a. Digital revolution
 - b. Fashion apparel
 - c. Food retail
 - d. Economy

6. _____ generally refers to the act of buying products from the stores.
 - a. Shopping
 - b. Retailing
 - c. Business
 - d. Marketing

7. Commonly, there are two types of consumers visiting a mall. One type is focused-buyer and another is _____ buyer.
 - a. unfocussed
 - b. lenient
 - c. young
 - d. impulse

8. _____ has been the significant segment in the terms of evolution in Indian retail industry, not due to its size but the way it has influenced lifestyle of the Indian people.
- Fashion retailing
 - Fashion involvement
 - Retailing
 - Fashion apparel
9. Having the right _____ and zoning help attract and retain shoppers by offering them multiple choices and satisfying multiple needs.
- customers
 - branding
 - tenant mix
 - ambiance
10. _____ is an approach that sees garments as a mosaic of inter-connected flows of materials, labour and as potential satisfiers of needs that move through phases of a garment's life from fibre cultivation.
- Fashion approach
 - Development
 - Retailing
 - Lifecycle approach

Chapter II

Retail Market

Aim

The aim of this chapter is to:

- introduce the nature of fashion retail market
- evaluate the factors determining the price value of products
- classify the categories of product sold

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- elucidate various theories determining the buyers and sellers meet
- explain the competition between the leading fashion retailers
- describe various retailers ruling the Indian fashion retail industry

Learning outcome

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand the effect of fashion on consumer and consumption
- recognise the various moral issues raised due to fashion industry
- identify the various expectation raised due to fashion industry

2.1 Nature of Fashion Retail Market

Fashion retail is typically a consumer goods market. It is characterised by very short product life, fickle consumer preferences, numerous competitors, relatively easy entry and exit, and a myriad of manufacturing, marketing and retail alternatives (Richardson, 1996). Over here, we will mainly make references to U.S and Europe where the fashion capitals - New York, Milan, London and Paris - resides. One of the reasons for their leading role in the apparel sector is that they are able to acquire information on future trends in colour, theme and styles in advance, preparing their own collections by combining and interpreting such information with market data.

2.2 Products Being Sold

Products being sold can be divided into three distinct categories - couture, ready-to-wear (RTW) and mass production.

Couture wear

Couture wears are exclusively tailored by in-house designers and are produced in limited numbers of expensive, high quality garments. Couture houses are organised according to long-established principles, with the couturier (or designer) providing an identity and direction, supported by assistant designers and a premier de l'atelier (head of the work room). Couture houses are regulated by national organisations which ensure that members meet stringent design; manufacturing and commercial regulations. These regulations make couture garments affordable by very few consumers (Wigley, 2004).

Mass production

Mass production of clothing was pioneered during the early twentieth century. The process of manufacturing a large number of garments involves fabric testing, pattern cutting, sizing, and assembly. Today, this process is often computerised, using design software to plan the process and automatic machinery to carry it out. Typically, independent companies undertake mass production on behalf of the brand under which the garments are sold, usually high street brands such as Marks and Spencer. As the fortunes of this company illustrate, predicting styles sizes and delivering consistent quality to the customer is challenging. The most successful mass-market retailers have sophisticated forecasting techniques, just-in-time manufacturing, efficient distribution and effective marketing (Wigley, 2004).

A related concept to mass production is fast fashion. They are clothing collections emulating the latest trends on the catwalk that are designed, manufactured swiftly and are priced at an affordable range. It mostly targets mainstream consumers as “they want to be able to buy the things celebrities are wearing or they want to be able to buy into the trends that they’ve seen from the catwalk as quickly as possible” (Fast Fashion, 2004). Some well-known brands that are riding on the fast fashion bandwagon are Zara, H&M, Forever 21, TopShop and Mango.

2.3 Retail Venues

All these are sold in departmental stores (for example, U.S: Bloomingdale's, Target, Wal-Mart, Nordstrom. Europe: Marks and Spencer, Printemps, H&M), boutiques, chain stores, outlet stores and malls.

A study conducted by Fowler & Clodfelter (2001) compared the garments sold at outlet and departmental store and found that there were only minor differences in their outward appearance as well as the materials used. To differentiate garments sold at the outlet store from the departmental store, both labels were slightly different. For instance, Ralph Lauren outlet shirts have a cream-coloured dot woven into the label; Tommy Hilfiger outlet shirts bore a crest while those from the departmental store had a flag. Despite the variations, only savvy consumers will be aware of these differences. In terms of pricing, garments sold at the outlet store were about 30% lower than in the departmental store since no middleman is involved. However, fashion merchandise offered at the departmental store might not be found at outlet stores simultaneously, only basic merchandises are.

2.4 Price Determination

Pricing strategies are determined by: market factors - market and city characteristics (metropolitan, small city, urban, suburban; chain factors - chain size, positioning, with regards to corporate mission and policies; store factors - store size, category assortment; category factors - size assortment, storability, extent of necessity; brand factors - brand equity or preference, relative brand advertising, relative trade deals and customer factors - consumer sensitivity to price changes (Shankar & Bolton, 2004).

Price tiers

Prices can also be determined by price tiers. The number of tiers is either market or product specific. Market specific prices can be placed on 3 different levels: national brand, store brand and generic brand. Product specific prices are determined by perceived value and their price, whether they are in the economy, middle market or premium. (Shankar and Bolton, 2004). Taking Gap, Inc. for example, it is a specialty retailer, who enacts a three-tier price strategy, targeting three specific price and consumer markets through diverse retail formats: Old Navy (economy), Gap (middle), and Banana Republic (premium). Although Gap, Inc. retailers are specialty apparel and accessory retailers, all are distinctly positioned and priced based on a price tier. Retail formats are characterised by price point, product type, positioning, and life stages (Gap, Inc., 2004). Another example would be Levi's, where Levi's Signature is in the economy tier, Red Tab is in the middle tier and Levi's Premium is in the premium tier (Author, 2005).

Theory of clearance sales

According to the Theory of Clearance Sales, sales can be categorised into 3 types: pre-season, within-season and clearance sales. The phenomenon of clearance sales is much more prominent and it arises from the unpredictability of style, color, pattern and consumers' preferences. Since retailers are clueless about consumers' preferences, the apparels are offered in the first period at an initial price. Once consumers' choices are known, apparels sell out fast when consumer reservation prices exceed the initial price. On the other hand, if the consumers' reservation prices below the initial price, the store then picks an optimal markdown price (Pashigian, 1988).

Price and consumers

Consumers also use price as an indicator of product quality because they believe market prices are determined by the forces of competitive supply and demand. They assume that a garment with a high price meets high quality standards and vice versa. Consumers use price as a cue to quality because it is visible and known. That is, prior to the purchase, price is easier to compare as opposed to the quality features and durability of the garments. When the consumer can't readily see other differences in two identical garments, price is the vital piece of information available for use in evaluating quality (Fowler & Clodfelter, 2001).

2.5 Searching and Matching

Buyers and sellers find each other through a number of ways:

Trickle down theory

The upper class in a society is the leader of new fashion (Law, Zhang and Leung, 2004). Fashion that is adopted by the upper class will soon be imitated by each succeeding lower class until they have "trickled-down" to the lowest class (Sproles, 1981).

Mass market theory

The mass production combined with mass communications make new styles and information about new styles available simultaneously to all socioeconomic classes. Fashion diffusion has the opportunity to begin essentially the same time within each class (Sproles, 1981).

Collective selection theory

New fashions emerge from a process of collective selection, where collective tastes are formed by many people. During this process, many new styles will compete for acceptance by consumers. The styles that are welcomed and acknowledged as fashionable will gain a competitive edge over others. Consumers' tastes are vaguely defined initially, but the selections of innovators will give more precise statement of appropriate tastes. The designer's prestige may also further legitimise his/her choice in adopting the new fashion (Sproles, 1981).

Subculture leadership theory

Fashion originates from different subcultures in the society (e.g. blacks, youths, blue collar workers and ethnic minorities)(Law, Zhang and Leung, 2004). Their unique style will eventually emerge; noticed by the larger population and become admired for its creativity, artistic excellence, or relevance to current lifestyles. The style then diffuses into the mass population through either the trickle-down process or mass market mechanisms (Sproles, 1981).

2.6 Market Makers, Competition and Consumers

A myriad of factors define the fashion retail market, namely the interactions among fashion companies and the interaction between fashion companies and the consumer. On the surface, it may seem like there are many fashion brands competing with one another. In reality, some of the brands selling similar products are actually owned by the same fashion company. The profile of some of the Indians fashion retailers who are in neck to neck competition with each other are described below. These retailers are today ruling the fashion retail industry.

Pantaloon retails

It is headquartered in Mumbai with 450 stores across the country employing more than 18,000 people. It can boast of launching the first hypermarket Big Bazaar in India in 2001. It is an all-India retail space of 5 million sq. ft. which is expected to reach 30 mn by 2010. It is not only the largest retailer in India with a turnover of over Rs. 20 billion but is present across most retail segments - Food and grocery (Big bazaar, Food bazaar), Home solutions (Hometown, furniture bazaar, collection-i), consumer electronics (e-zone), shoes (shoe factory), Books: music & gifts (Depot), Health & Beauty care services (Star, Sitara and Health village in the pipeline), e-tailing (Futurbazaar.com), entertainment (Bowling co.)

K Raheja Group

They forayed into retail with Shopper's Stop, India's first departmental store in 2001. It is the only retailer from India to become a member of the prestigious Intercontinental Group of Departmental Stores (IGDS). They have signed a 50:50 joint venture with the Nuance Group for Airport Retailing. Shoppers Stop has 7, 52, 00 sq ft of retail space with a turnover of Rs. 6.75 billion. The first Hypercity opened in Mumbai in 2006 with an area of 1, 20,000 sq. ft. clocking gross sales of Rs. 1 bn in its first year.

Crossword brand of book stores, Homes stop a store for home solutions, Mothercare, a concept stocking merchandise related to childcare are also owned by them. Recently, Raheja's have signed an MoU with the Home Retail Group of UK to enter into a franchise arrangement for the Argos formats of catalogue & internet retailing. The group has announced plans to establish a network of 55 hypermarkets across India with sales expected to cross the US\$100 million mark by 2010.

Tata group

Established in 1998, Trent - one of the subsidiaries of Tata Group - operates Westside, a lifestyle retail chain and Star India Bazaar - a hypermarket with a large assortment of products at the lowest prices. In 2005, it acquired Landmark, India's largest book and music retailer. Trent has more than 4 lakh sq. ft. space across the country. Westside registered a turnover of Rs. 3.58 mn in 2006.

Tata's has also formed a subsidiary named Infiniti retail which consists of Croma, a consumer electronics chain. It is a 15000-17000 sq. ft. format with 8 stores as of September 2007. Another subsidiary, Titan Industries, owns brands like "Titan", the watch of India has 200 exclusive outlets the country and Tanishq, the jewellery brand, has 87 exclusive outlets. Their combined turnover is Rs. 6.55 billion. Trent plans to open 27 more stores across its retail formats adding 1.5 mn sq ft of space in the next 12 DLF malls.

One of their recent innovations include e-commerce' hybrid format of 'small' shops , the area for these stores will be 150 sq. ft. fitted with 40 digital screens. Customers will be encouraged to browse through the entire range of products on digital screen. They will be able to place the order, the delivery of which will be arranged by the shop to their homes within a few hours.

The retailers seem to have the most power in defining the market as they possess the power to market goods at prices desirable to them. However, the market price is in fact also determined by consumers. According to basic economic theory, the price of a good is determined by the demand by consumers and supply of the good by the producers in the economy. Especially for the fashion retail market, fashion trends are forecasted by analysing results of consumer's emotions towards the previous trend. Hence, consumers do play a vital role in forming the fashion retail market as well.

Diversification

One method in which fashion companies compete with one another is through diversification. In order to gain a larger market share, a company may set up different kinds of shops, retailing clothings of varying prices to target different groups of consumers. The fashion retail industry may be segregated into three tiers: economy, middle market or premium, depending on the range of prices of the fashion piece. Fashion companies have various strategies to attract consumers to purchase their products. For example, American Apparel, though at the lower end of the price scale, generate revenue by mass production of designs which are in the current trend. On the other hand, premium fashion brands such as Prada has already established classic designs of fashion products such as the handbags, which are targeted at less price-sensitive consumers who do not mind paying more to purchase a product early in the season (G.M. Allenby et. al., 1996).

Some large companies diversify to tap into all three markets in order to capture different market shares. Also, fashion companies may choose to diversify into specific fashion apparels such as athletic apparels, fashion accessories such as handbags, shoes etc. One good example is Gap Inc., which has 5 different brands under its company's name: GAP, Banana Republic, Old Navy, Piperlime and Athleta. Old Navy is targeted at the economy price-tiered market; GAP is targeted at the middle-market price-tiered market while Banana Republic is targeted at the premium price-tiered market. Piperlime is an online shop managed by Gap Inc.

Extrapolating the trend

Companies have a group of designers to plan, nearly half a year ahead, what the trend for the next season will be. Fashion pieces designed, will be modelled down a runway at fashion shows typically held at fashion hubs around the world to showcase the new collection. The biggest fashion weeks are held regularly according to the seasons in the top fashion capitals in the world, namely Paris, London, Milan and New York. (British Fashion Council, 2008) These centralised fashion shows are meant to showcase the new collection to the press, which will subsequently be disseminated to the public through the media, thus setting fashion trends and fashion statements through such avenues (N. M. Rantisi, 2001).

Branding and advertising

According to John Durrel (1998), branding represents "a consistency of quality and meaning associated with a designer's collections that will carry over from year to year". Despite changes in design from one season to the next, these changes in fact reinforce the particular company's image. (N. M. Rantisi, 2001) For example, most Louis Vuitton fashion accessories like their handbags and purses would carry its logo, which represents not only the brand, but also the prestige attached to the luxury brand. Thus, many fashion companies in the industry use advertising to appeal to selective rather than primary buying motives (W. R. Smith, 1956).

Vertical integration

Some of the bigger fashion companies are vertically integrated with their line of production so as to be able to shorten production cycle and be able to adapt to the current demand as well as customer satisfaction. (J. Richardson, 1996) In rapidly changing and highly competitive industries such as the fashion retail market where products have short product life and differentiation advantages may be quickly imitated, it is important for fashion companies to be sensitive to changes in fashion trends and to be able to swiftly change their line of production when the need arises. This concept is called "Quick Response", a philosophy in management which refers to a mode of operation for the entire supply chains that produce consumer products so that customers receive the products they want in the desired timeframe (S. Daskalaki).

Horizontal integration

One of the methods of competing with other fashion companies would either be to cooperate with them and form an alliance, or to take over smaller firms, a process known as acquisition. One good example would be PPR, one of the fashion conglomerates in the fashion retail market. In 1999, PPR bought over 42% of the Gucci group, entering the luxury goods sector. Since then, PPR has slowly acquired more of the shares such that it currently holds 99.4% of stakes of the Gucci Group. Also, in 2007, the fashion conglomerate acquired 62.1% stake in Puma, one of the world leader in sports lifestyle (PPR, 2010).

Media

One of the most powerful tool to enhance its brand image and raise awareness of one's fashion brand is through mass media. From fashion magazines such as Vogue, to television channels dedicated only to fashion such as FTV.com, it can be seen that media plays an important role in promoting one's fashion brand or company. At fashion shows held around the world in fashion hubs, the press is present to document the release of the newest collection from various fashion brands. Through newspapers, fashion magazines and even fashion websites, the new season's fashion trend is being broadcasted to millions of people through these media.

Fashion companies also collaborate with media artistes to enhance its brand image, through endorsements and advertisements. For example, in 2009 for their spring/summer collection, Louis Vuitton engaged Madonna, the pop music icon to be featured on their advertisements together with their products (LVMH, 2009).

Factory outlets

Usually, retail stores such as Prada clear the stocks of past seasons or unsold goods through the factory outlets where prices of goods will be decreased by a significant percentage. There is an increasing trend of companies to use this method to raise awareness of their brands as consumers nowadays would not mind obtaining a branded good, even if it was past the season, at a lower price. For example, brands like Tommy Hilfilger, Puma and United Colours of Benetton set up factory outlets in India to suit economic needs of price-conscious consumers by selling their goods at lower prices (Chaudhary, 2008).

2.7 Effects of Fashion on Consumers and Consumption

The consumption of fashion can be traced all the way back to the 16th and 17th Century Europe and took off amongst the European nobility. Queen Elizabeth I used the dramatic spectacle of fashion as a display of governmental power. She also forced competition between the nobility by removing them from their locality where they were clearly superior, forcing them to attend the London Court where they had to compete with equals. In the past, commodities were chosen because of their ability to appreciate in value as time passed with the idea that they would be passed down to succeeding generations as inheritances, while newness and novelty were seen as marks of commonness. However, the Elizabethan noblemen now began to spend less on his family and began to spend more to secure his place in this new social competition. Goods selected as markers in a social competition require very different characteristics than those purchased to be handed down. Now, consumers focus on the ability of the commodity to express the individuality of the consumers, his/her difference from others of the same social rank. By the 17th and 18th Century, this competitive consumption spread beyond the London Court to create new institutions and lay the foundation of consumer culture.

Individuals began to assume the role of a consumer in the economy. Consumers interpret fashion and use it to create personalised consumption meanings. Western fashion patterns, which are categorised by novelty, constant renewing and updating, infused with advertising and mass media is considered an important basis of the ideology of consumption. Consumers actively combine and adapt culturally established fashion discourses to fit the conditions of their daily life, using fashion discourses to forge self defining social distinctions and boundaries. They use fashion to construct narratives of personal history, and interpret the interpersonal dynamics of their social sphere, helping us to understand their relationship to the consumer culture.

The fashion phenomenon has raised many issues:

- Morality of consumerism
- The conditions of self worth
- The pursuit of individuality
- The relation of appearance
- Character traits
- The dynamics of social relationships
- Reinforcing of gender roles
- Standards of taste
- Economic inequality and
- Social class standing

2.8 Stigmatising and Stereotyping

Fashion affects the way people perceive each other. We perceive a person's personality through the fashion or the style that one may have. Fashion acts as a symbolic representation of one's gender, culture and even a person's characteristics, creating stigma and stereotyping of a person background, and so on. For example, it is stereotypical to think that Indian women wear saris, while Scottish men wear kilts.

Fashion intertwines into the consumers' self-identities and social relationships. In Craig J. Thompson and Diana L. Haytko's article, "Speaking of Fashion: Consumer's Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Culture Meaning", one sees that people judge and have perceptions of others through others' fashion and style. Through the right fashion and style, it may represent creativity, organisation, competence and conscientiousness, while the outdated fashion or wrong style may represent "the undesirable... broader implication of not being able to effectively put one's life together".

The searching and matching in certain organisations such as fashion industries depend greatly on the selling of an individual's appearance and 'first impressions'. Employment becomes intertwined with the bias due to stereotyping. Skill sets are placed second place to one's ability to 'speak' through their physical appearance. There is a dependency of the society on fashion to create distinctions and justify class division.

2.8.1 Divide between People

Fashion emphasises on the divide between classes in a society, reinforcing class stratification. It acts as a statement of wealth and prestige, or the lack thereof. The ownership of labels and branding of products serves as distinguishing markers of social economic class. For example, the upper class will naturally seek to establish their wealth and social standing through donning haute couture or using high-end products while the lower classes make do with mass produced items and street fashion.

The creation of new social classes, the subcultures and/or countercultures, is apparently evident through fashion and style. Subcultures and countercultures adhere to a distinctive set of values, norms and practices within a larger culture that may oppose the dominant culture. Fashion works to distinguish social circles, class status (mainly based on socio-economic status) and subcultures. For instance, hip hop fashion with its trademark heavy gold or bling-bling jewellerys, sneakers, baggy pants and more importantly, attitudes have been long established and easily recognisable throughout the world.

It becomes relatively easy to identify some subcultures' in a society through their styles such as punk, grunge or hip hop as soon as they have become widely known and as long as they are used consistently, but there are no dictionaries in the language of fashion. As such, fashion puts a society's social hierarchy on display when it makes it easy for one to identify a person's social background or social culture through one's dressing. It was once easy to judge, by the quality and amount of fabric or the amount of labour-intensive lace and embroidery, the social status of a person, which only knew the dimensions of "up" or "down". However nowadays there are many more dimensions to consider, e.g. progressive or conservative, high or low educational level, high or low ecological awareness and more. They all seek expression through consumer goods.

2.8.2 Reflects Expectations that Come Along with Occupational Status and Prestige

Consumers, while giving price for the product carries certain expectations with the product bought. Retailers have to duty to fulfill these expectations, if they want the repeated footfall of the consumers. Fashion industry is also a source of job opportunities. All these points are further discussed in details so as to explain and proved a better picture of the industry.

Expectations

Fashion reflects expectations that come along with occupational status and prestige. Different occupations demand different fashion style. High end job position holders are expected to possess designer products as a reflection and a symbol of their power and prestige. For example, the fashion that a CEO has is immensely different from that of a road sweeper. The CEO, being at the top of the occupation ladder, would be expected to wear branded apparels and drive high-end cars, while a road sweeper, being at the bottom of the occupation ladder, would not be expected to possess anything fashionable or stylish to reflect his wealth and status. Fashion sells the ideals on what a CEO should wear and possess. It is rare to find fashion defining dressing ideals of a road sweeper. More importantly, with the advent of the World Wide Web, one can easily outfits suitable for their job scope. Mass media is extremely important in the definition of job appropriate attire, for example, the teaching profession.

Fashion as a reflection of job scopes and titles

By fulfilling expectations of one's job, fashion is constantly used as an identification of job scopes purely through what we observe and interpret from one's attire.

2.8.3 Fashion Blurring the Line

While fashion acts as a representation of gender and culture everywhere and acts as a divide for social spaces, it subtly advocates equality within gender and sexuality. In the past, men's fashion was masculine with dark colour shades like black or dark shades of grey. The 20th Century ushered a new era of fashion for females and males. As fashion evolved, we see the blurring of the line between the strict male-female fashion styles.

Before the 20th Century, females were expected to wear dresses and skirts as a symbol of their being female, and wearing pants or suits was unthinkable. The 1960s Women's Liberation in the United States of America saw, for the first time in American history, the giving of women the freedom to dress as they had never been able to before. Since then, we have witnessed the evolution of fashion for not only females but for males as well. For example, in the 21st Century, we see the fusion of female and male fashion styles together, with men's fashion adopting some characteristics of the women's fashion, and vice versa. Now, we see tote bags are not only fashionable in the women's fashion sphere, but also in the men's fashion sphere as well; while we see the rise in popularity of women's pants suits.

2.9 Fusion of Western and Asian Culture in Fashion

Fashion has permeated from the West into Asian culture as early as the 19th Century when Japan began to emulate Western fashion. Since then, western fashion has integrated itself together with Asian culture and fashion to form what is now called street fashion in several Asian countries, like Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. In Japan, Western brands like American brand Abercrombie & Fitch and Swedish fast fashion brand H&M have become popular among aspiring American-preppy Japanese teens as Abercrombie & Fitch opens its first flagship store just steps away from H&M in Ginza, Japan's upscale shopping district. The fusion of Western culture with Asian culture can

be seen in several Japanese street fashion brands such as Uniqlo, A Bathing Ape and Comme des Garçons. These Japanese street fashion brands have reached international success, with the most popular brands having flagship stores in the West. Western fashion has also influenced Indian high fashion culture, with the Indian traditional attire and fashion taking the backseat.

2.10 Fashion Deviance

Over the years, we see the rise in a different sort of fashion all together; the idolising of fashion deviant behaviour. The portrayal of fashion-deviance has been gaining popularity with the rise in the mass media. Avant-garde fashion is fashion that is seen as experimental fashion or innovative fashion, and one of the most prominent avant-garde fashion designers is French haute couture fashion designer, Jean-Paul Gaultier. Gaultier has been known for using unique looking models in his fashion shows of all different shapes, sizes and ages.

Fashion deviance is not only seen in famous fashion designers but also in celebrities such as Lady Gaga, who is famous for her outrageous sense of dressing and her avant-garde music style. Such fashion deviance is a way of portrayal of one's own personality through originality and individuality. Furthermore, such deviant fashion behaviour serves as effective marketing strategy with free publicity due to the different and outrageous style that will capture people's attention.

2.11 Creation of Consumer Culture

Consumer culture or consumerism, defined by Webster's dictionary, is *"the movement seeking to protect and inform consumers by requiring such practices as honest packaging and advertising, product guarantees, and improved safety standards"*, or *"the theory that a progressively greater consumption of goods is economically beneficial"*. Fashion creates a desire for ownership. Coupled with mass media and advertising, market makers sell lifestyles and consumers consume such products and lifestyles in hope for upward mobility in the social hierarchy. This creates a culture of hedonism through the impression that one can purchase a status and in turn, 'happiness'. As such, this new consumer culture lays the foundations for consumption, and demand and supply, of fashion in a society.

Along with this, individuals learn how to be 'consumers', needing to purchase products that essential to their socio-economic status. As a result, there is a creation of consumer concepts such as 'savings', 'budgeting' and 'overspending', where people learn the concepts of saving, budgeting and overspending with the increase in consumption. Fashion often starts from the fashion designers and celebrities themselves. As people have the desire to emulate celebrities who are major role models in fashion, such fashion often begins from the celebrities themselves, with people consuming products that have been endorsed, worn or used by the celebrities. More importantly, fashion provides a way for one to create an image they desire others to perceive. In this sense, fashion does not serve as an accurate tool of identifying class.

The fashion industry's main way of advertising is through endorsements, where companies typically contract athletes or celebrities to release a written or spoken statement approving their products. Endorsements are used as promotional tools and grant the brands exposure that yields short term benefits and long term rewards. It creates exposure for brands, positions and repositions existing brands as well as new brands. It gives extensive public relations leverage and opportunities to the brands and promotes the brand appeal, hence encouraging people to buy the products and increasing the sales for the brands' companies.

However, fashion, as they say, comes and goes and is never constant. For example, in long running TV shows like the 'US sitcom' *'Friends'*, we see the gradual change in fashion and style in the clothes that the characters wear throughout the show. But with the ever changing trends and fashion, we see that people have to constantly buy and consume new goods and services to stay in fashion. The frequent renewal of fashion in our capitalistic society makes it an effective marketing strategy as the constant updating of 'trends' and the human desire to fit in keeps the fashion industry alive.

Fashion, in a sense, is change. The reactions of fashion on changes in activities and life styles can be found in sports. It is unusual to see athletes today performing at high levels without the appropriate accessories and apparels designed to provide comfort and protection under extreme conditions. Specialised apparels and accessories have been designed and made popular and essential, such as basketball shoes, tennis rackets, or golf clubs. Another example can be seen in how smart-casual outfits have become more popular with professionals, given the increasing need of socialising after work. (Hines et al.). This has been a utilitarian response from fashion to society's changes. Koenig's '*neophilia*' can be understood as the acceptance of human beings to new things. It is at this stage where fashion finds the opportunity to change and innovate in order to satisfy people's need to wear new things.

2.12 Fashion Fitting into the Larger Product World

As fashion is defined as a general term for the style and custom prevalent at a given time, it is itself a very broad-based concept where any prevailing style or custom in tangible goods can be purchased. It extends its characteristics into the larger product world as for consumerism to take place; it depends highly on what is fashionable then/now. Fashion, hence, is one of the main driving forces of consumerism. Most of the revenue in the market is driven by people's consumption of products and services that are fashionable due to their desire for acceptance by society.

2.13 Influence of Fashion into Other Industries and Markets

While fashion may be a term that is associated mostly with clothes, it has huge impact on other industries and markets, such as the Hollywood industry, digital games industry and the sports industry.

2.14 Integration of Fashion into Other Markets and Industries

It will be entirely wrong to illustrate fashion only by clothes. Due to better financial conditions and aspiring youths in the country fashion has flowed from clothes to accessories which include cell phones, shoes, automobiles and so on. These all products together build a fashion statement.

2.14.1 Complementary Products

We see the influence of fashion on several complementary products, such as cell phones and automobiles.

Cell phones

In the recent years, there have been several tie-ups between luxury fashion brands and cell phone manufacturers. The most popular one being the tie-ups between LG Electronics and Prada, creating the LG Prada touch screen mobile phone. Others include a tie-up between Samsung and Giorgio Armani, named Samsung Armani. Also recently, fashion label Versace announced on January 19, 2010, that it'll be designing and releasing a Versace-branded cell phone in spring of 2010.

Automobiles

Fashion can be seen evidently in automobiles as well, and has always been around since the 1970s. In 1972 and 1973, Gucci paired up with American Motors Corporation (AMC) to produce the AMC Hornet Compact "Sportabout" station wagon that became one of the first American cars to offer special luxury trim package created by a fashion designer. Ford Motor Company's Lincoln Town Cars also offered Emilio Pucci, Bill Blass, Gianni Versace, Hubert de Givenchy and Valentino designer editions during the 1970s and the 1980s. More recently in 2006 is the Lamborghini Murciélago LP640 Versace edition that became the very first ever designer car, with only twenty black and white cars featuring two-tone black and white trim inside and out, with interiors finished in custom Versace leather, along with Gianni Versace logo plaque. Twenty black and white Lamborghini LP640 Murciélago Versace Roadsters were produced as well. In 2009, Jinyoung Jo, a talented car designer at Hong-ik University, South Korea, created a Chanel Fiole concept car, branded with the name of famed French luxury brand.

2.15 Market Size, Economy and Operations

The global fashion apparel industry is one of the most important sectors of the economy in terms of investment, revenue, trade and employment generation all over the world.

2.16 Operation of the Fashion Retail Industry Fitting into the Larger Economy

An economy is made up of market exchanges which consist of market, actors and products. Operations of the fashion retail industry include activities related to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. To look at how the fashion retail industry fit into the larger economy, we will discuss about the industry's participation in the various markets, namely consumer goods markets, industrial markets, business service, and labour market.

2.16.1 Consumer Goods Market

It is a market whereby a seller, typically an organisational actor sells products, a major component of which is a physical good, to buyers, which are typically individual consumers who typically buy products to consume them, rather than to resell them. This is the consumption whereby the consumer consumes the goods produced by the fashion retail industry, where the various retail shops sell their apparels, accessories and shoes to the buyers in the market, where the buyers consumes the good and not sell it to another party. Such shops are usually located in shopping malls and at times online shopping, from the websites of various major brands to no-brand shops that functions on a smaller scale. The layout of this online shop actually look like the layout of a real shopping mall and it provides greater convenience to consumers as they can purchase their items online without stepping out of their homes. Before consumers can purchase the products, the goods have to be produced; this leads us to the industrial market.

2.16.2 Industrial Market

Both the buyer and the seller are organisational actors. Products consist of physical goods and services and are typically not bought for individual consumption but for their role in further creation of a product. Manufacturers are mainly the buyers in this industry and the sellers are the ones selling the raw materials. Raw materials are require to produce apparels and accessories, such as textiles. This is the production part of the fashion retail industry, which is the first step in almost all the products in the fashion retail industry. The largest apparel manufacturers and exporters were countries from the Asia-Pacific region such as China, India and Thailand. The other major apparel manufacturing nations were USA, Italy, Germany and Mexico. In the fashion retail industry, production is almost the most important process in the industry, without production, there will be no goods produced.

2.17 Predicting the Future of Fashion Retail: Online Shopping

Online shopping is the process whereby consumers directly buy goods, without an intermediary service over the Internet. Online shopping provides many advantages such as convenience, price and selection and information and reviews, where ratings from other fellow shoppers are given as an indicator of how popular an item is.

In the realm of fashion retail, we look to fashion blogs as the key to online shopping. A fashion blog can cover many things such as clothing and accessories. They cover fashion at all levels from the biggest names to the smallest indie designers and clothing worn by people on the street (Newman, Andrew Adam, 2006). Influential fashion blogs include Catwalk Queen and Style Bubble in the United Kingdom, with the latter named among the Evening Standard's 'London's 1000 most influential' in the Fashion category.

Recent media reports mentioned that many fashion blogs have become increasingly profitable, and that the influence of fashion blogs within the fashion industry is expanding. As fashion is driven by trends and fashion blogs provide new ways to follow these trends, it is most certainly they will have a considerable long-term influence on the fashion retail industry. It could also be said that fashion blogs are now developing from a hobby, to a viable new media business.

Summary

- Fashion retail is typically a consumer goods market. It is characterised by very short product life, fickle consumer preferences, numerous competitors, relatively easy entry and exit, and a myriad of manufacturing, marketing and retail alternatives.
- Products being sold can be divided into three distinct categories - couture, ready-to-wear (RTW) and mass production.
- A study conducted by Fowler & Clodfelter (2001) compared the garments sold at outlet and departmental store and found that there were only minor differences in their outward appearance as well as the materials used.
- According to the Theory of Clearance Sales, sales can be categorised into 3 types: pre-season, within-season and clearance sales.
- A myriad of factors define the fashion retail market, namely the interactions among fashion companies and the interaction between fashion companies and the consumer.
- According to basic economic theory, the price of a good is determined by the demand by consumers and supply of the good by the producers in the economy.
- Fashion affects the way people perceive each other.
- Fashion acts as a symbolic representation of one's gender, culture and even a person's characteristics, creating stigma and stereotyping of a person background, and so on.
- Fashion emphasises on the divide between classes in a society, reinforcing class stratification. It acts as a statement of wealth and prestige, or the lack thereof.
- It becomes relatively easy to identify some subcultures' in a society through their styles such as punk, grunge or hip hop as soon as they have become widely known and as long as they are used consistently, but there are no dictionaries in the language of fashion.
- Fashion reflects expectations that come along with occupational status and prestige. Different occupations demand different fashion style. High end job position holders are expected to possess designer products as a reflection and a symbol of their power and prestige.
- By fulfilling expectations of one's job, fashion is constantly used as an identification of job scopes purely through what we observe and interpret from one's attire.
- Consumer culture or consumerism, defined by Webster's dictionary, is "*the movement seeking to protect and inform consumers by requiring such practices as honest packaging and advertising, product guarantees, and improved safety standards*", or "*the theory that a progressively greater consumption of goods is economically beneficial*".
- The fashion industry's main way of advertising is through endorsements, where companies typically contract athletes or celebrities to release a written or spoken statement approving their products.
- Fashion, in a sense is change.
- The global fashion apparel industry is one of the most important sectors of the economy in terms of investment, revenue, trade and employment generation all over the world.

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Self Assessment

1. Which of the following is not one of the categories of product being sold?
 - a. Couture wear
 - b. Ready to wear
 - c. Retail venues
 - d. Mass production

2. Which of the following is not one of the levels in specification of market price?
 - a. Fashion brand
 - b. National brand
 - c. Generic brand
 - d. Store brand

3. According to _____-, sales can be categorised into pre-season, within-season and clearance sales?
 - a. Theory of clearance sales
 - b. Trickle down theory
 - c. Mass market theory
 - d. Collective selection theory

4. According to _____-, the upper class in a society the leader of new fashion?
 - a. Theory of clearance sales
 - b. Trickle down theory
 - c. Mass market theory
 - d. Collective selection theory

5. Which of following fashion retail company introduced first hyper market?
 - a. Pantaloon retails
 - b. K. Raheja Group
 - c. Tata Group
 - d. Reliance group

6. Which of the following is not a characteristic of competition in fashion retail industry?
 - a. Diversification
 - b. Extrapolating the trend
 - c. Branding
 - d. Consumer satisfaction

7. _____ acts as a symbolic representation of one's gender, culture and even a person's characteristics.
 - a. Price
 - b. Quality
 - c. Fashion
 - d. Diversification

8. When was Trent group established?
 - a. 1992
 - b. 1998
 - c. 1988
 - d. 1996

9. According to _____, fashion originates from different subcultures in the society?
 - a. Subculture leadership theory
 - b. Collective selection theory
 - c. Mass market theory
 - d. Trickle down theory

10. _____ wears are exclusively tailored by in-house designers and are produced in limited numbers of expensive, high quality garments.
 - a. Couture
 - b. Ready to
 - c. Fashion
 - d. Ethnic

Chapter III

Visual Merchandising

Aim

The aim of this chapter is to:

- define visual merchandising
- evaluate the virtual visual merchandising
- classify the problem faced in visual merchandising

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- elucidate the historical perspective of visual merchandising
- explain the scope of visual merchandising in handlooms
- describe the aims of visual merchandise in handloom and home textile

Learning outcome

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand the importance of festivals and holidays in visual merchandising
- recognise the life expectancy of visual display
- identify the types of visual merchandise displays

3.1 Introduction to Visual Merchandising

A successful retailing business requires that a distinct and consistent image be created in the customer's mind that permeates all product and service offerings. Visual merchandising can help create that positive customer image that leads to successful sales. It not only communicates the store's image, but also reinforces the stores advertising efforts and encourages impulse buying by the customer.

Visual merchandising is a major factor often overlooked in the success or failure of a retail store. It is second only to effective customer relations. Visual merchandising can be defined as everything the customer sees, both exterior and interior, that creates a positive image of a business and results in attention, interest, desire and action on the part of the customer.

A story can be told that communicates to the prospective customer what the store is all about. It includes the dramatic presentation of merchandise as well as other important, subtle features that create the store's overall atmosphere. Eighty percent of our impressions are created by sight; that is why one picture is worth a thousand words. Each customer has a mental image of a store and its merchandise. A store should have an inviting appearance that makes the customer feel comfortable and yet eager to buy.

Some businesses maintain a minimum staff to reduce costs, which means, it is even more important for the merchandise to sell itself. Greater effort must be spent on merchandise displays that make it easier for the customer to find and purchase the items they want or need. The basic objective for visual merchandising is a desire to attract customers to a place of business in order to sell the merchandise. Visual merchandising is offered to the customer through exterior and interior presentation. Each should be coordinated with the other using the store's overall theme. Creating and maintaining a store's visual merchandising plan, however, is not a simple task. It is necessary to continually determine what the customer sees. This evaluation from the customer's perspective should start on the exterior and work completely through the interior of the store

3.2 Virtual Visual Merchandising

Virtual visual merchandising is a promising high-tech and emerging technique of visual merchandising. It may either be practiced by the e-stores on the net or may be used on computer monitors or screens in the stores themselves. Needless to say the dynamics, and spatial dynamics here are much different then otherwise and virtual reality techniques and special effects often add to the effects of visual merchandising and overall store experience.

Visual merchandising as a differentiator

Visual merchandising in the context of handloom and home textiles offers itself as a potent differentiator in that when other product parameters stored in store are comparable. Visual merchandising also provides a differentiated shopping experience and hence increases the probability of brands getting purchased at the point of differentiating experience. Visual merchandising also differentiates a showroom from an organised retailer. Visual merchandising adds value to many products where prices are not universal and the same is highly profitable when it comes to store brands and private labels.

3.3 Dynamic Visual Merchandising

While ambience generated is objective, its interpretation is subjective and conditioned by the psychic make up of the consumer. Further, there arises visual fatigue, when a consumer is exposed repeatedly to the same multi-sensory ambience. It is hence essential that a dynamic multi-sensory ambience be created so as to encounter effectively the factor of fatigue and provide freshness to retail.

Brand nuances and visual merchandising

When designing a visual merchandising experience for KVIC (Khadi and village industries commission), we had to factor in the brand associations consumers have for Khadi, similarly brand images and associations have to be carefully counted for before visual merchandising designs can be finalised. Brand projections have to be congruent with experiences created and in the context worth appreciating is the work of Zegna. Brand projections alter the experience of the ambience created in the store and hence not only strategic visual coherence has to be respected

across all communications but also conceptual congruence needs to be built, appreciated and often re-enforced. Naturalism and native aesthetics is of utmost importance to be observed and hence the necessity for an indigenous aesthetic research with a reference to consumer experiences

3.4 Visual Merchandising Problems

Often arising problems in the area of visual merchandising are either of the below:

Too much quantity on display

Too much quantity on display reduces the comfort levels of consumers and reduces his delight in the store. It also does not help him functionally purchase goods for most seem to him not relevant. Also here time taken to sample goes up exponentially and hence total purchase is often reduced.

Inadequate display

Inadequate display is just as adversely affecting as too much of display. If the best is not shown, why should the customer feel drawn? Also if display is not enough it does not tempt the consumer to sample and finally purchase.

Confusing display

Confusing display where classification of products and product categories is not respected, often leads to incoherence at the end of the consumer and takes away his moods of decisiveness for purchase. It also gives competition a greater score.

One product category overshadowing the other

In departmental or life style stores when one product category overshadows another, the shadowed category naturally not only suffers lesser sales and profits but also a loss of image which later reflects in the long run.

Colour distortion in the store leading to consumer grievances

Colour distortion often leads to sharp complaints from consumers of being cheated and being passed off, products, which they did not intend to buy. It reduces the re-purchase on the part of the consumer and hence affects the store image and sales.

Lack of brand congruence of the visual look and feel created

It leads not to immediate reduction in sale but in long term dilution of brand equity of product brands displayed through a confusion created in the design graphics and conceptual associations conveyed at the point of purchase. Visual coherence and conceptual coherence are hence important to observe while designing visual merchandising specifics.

3.5 Visual Merchandising Failures in India

India has been rich always in its visual merchandising although the corporate retail phenomenon is a relatively new one. Visual merchandising has been practised through times immemorial. Craft products, paintings, hangers and other elements have been always used to create an aesthetic or thematic visual merchandising ambience. It is profitable hence to explore the mythological and cultural and symbolic aesthetic richness of our civilisation nation. This forms the first lesson for visual merchandising and more specifically the thematic visual merchandising. Further it is necessary to remember that visual merchandise is only a part of the larger.

Visual experience

In this context it is necessary to factor in specific Indian choices and here our experience suggests us to:

- Respect softness and the light of colours
- Employ Paintings, Sculpture, Craft products enrich the ambience and Visual Merchandising
- Respect traditional symbolism and mythological richness of native nation

Hopefully an appreciation and practice of visual merchandising anchored in the Indian cultural matrix shall enrich march of Indian business in life style retailing to begin with, expanding slowly to encompass retail experience as a whole.

3.6 Visual Merchandising, Handloom and Home Textiles: A Historical Perspective

Visual merchandising has been always one of the weakest aspects of handloom and home textile marketing. For much of the time, Availability and opening of newer outlets was the prime objective rather than effective visual merchandising. Reach rather than visual quality of point of purchase was the consideration.

Government ownership of many of the points of purchase did not help the matters either. Contemporary visual treatment of the store and the merchandise was seldom an acute concern for the government, eager to preserve its down to earth (read crude and rustic) image. Lately however thinking seems to have undergone a change and KVIC and other government retail shops are tuning into times.

In the area of handlooms and home textiles, too the scene is not very different. Beginning with “bare” points of purchase and moving onto showrooms where display meant nothing more than visual exposure, now lately better retailers are considering effective visual merchandising a necessary must.

Historically too, India has always had a rich tradition of visual merchandising. Visual merchandising as seen in Melas, Haats, Peths and festival specific shops, shows a rich and diverse context of visual merchandising. Tradition and Mythology have been creatively re-interpreted across generations for a fresh visual merchandising. Hopefully the flame of creativity founded on indigenous foundations and richness should get translated into modern hi-technology aided visual merchandising, as a continuing inspiration.

Changing scenario

Way back to several decades the handloom business was operated in “safe” ways could hold the market due to many reasons, one of major reasons was the people belonging to the generation of those times who saw Indian independence and their nostalgia towards it could hold back them to use it, another was being in least competitive era. But with the emergence of rapid growth and development in various textile sectors and up gradation of technological environment handloom had to face severe challenges due to threats arising from the industries. But to survive and to face those challenges the initiative taken were not adequate and the sector reached into its present form where now it has become a necessity to adopt contemporary mode for existence and if continuous adaptation in this regard is not done, those days are not far that it would soon be talked as an examples into business textbooks as an exotic categories that may vanish. Countries like china and others have been even adapting our techniques and offering much better quality products in much effective prices. What is the reason? The reason that’s much evident is handlooms still struggling with its limited approach and exposure that pertains to the changing demands.

The inadequate attention leading from concept to consumer through various channels are not suffice and product keeps struggling at intermediate stages due to lack of resources that’s being build to support it. To get the benefits the ways that are evident to us are Either gets into the mode what globalisation demands or Sells and creates an image that exposes to the richness of our own culture/tradition by emphasising upon our strengths.

3.7 Visual merchandising in Handlooms

Why there is a need of visual merchandising? It is often understood that it’s a methodology of displaying, but far more than that it means initiating the complete process to a customer instead buying a product to possessing it, and creating an “aura” that meets consumer expectation with their changing taste. In India the image of handlooms are still associated to old, classic and handmade coarse materials. It’s the high time that even government should understands the realities and take sustainable decisions to monitor the product management chain starting from extraction of raw material to design/product development to selling it or making it reach to the end users through various channels and interfaces. One of possible ways is through multi level retailing, and through tourism promotions for the clusters existing. Emphasising upon special features these products has to offer with its cultural, traditional and historical significance, the visual merchandising can be on the models of department stores, heritage parks or contemporary Haat like Dilli Haat.

The run of profits

Value chain in home textiles and handlooms, displays today similar characteristics as are apparent in most mature businesses trying to appropriate new economy developments and increasingly ongoing globalisation, that being profits moving in absolute and in margin terms towards the consumer end of the value chain.

Retailing and marketing have therefore emerged as the preferred points in the value chain of home textiles and handlooms too, as in other sectors. Even as the downstream value points as spinning, weaving and processing struggle to survive, Retailing is booming as a sunrise sector in the country. Hence the importance of retailing and further have visual merchandising which stands as an important facet of effective retailing even for handicrafts and handlooms today.

The new competing advantages

Though the handloom product is in a way different from many other products, its technique, weave the experimentation with colours and motifs and most importantly the cultural value of the weaver has to reflect yet today for survival and growth every business has been undergoing a profound change accompanying the change in the market character as well in handlooms and home textiles brand, design and experience stand out as the new competing advantages, unfortunately however the deserved significance is hardly apportioned by Indian Business and particularly by this sector (handlooms) to it.

Results are not difficult to see. There are hardly any strong brands or hardly any firm, which is renowned, the world over for the world-class design work that it does. Hardly also, there are stores where handloom and home textiles are retailed and the experience is memorable or uniquely distinct. Few stores, such as, Home & Hearth have tried to change the course of status but the effort is far too small to requirements.

It is imperative hence for the sector and firms/individuals therein, to appreciate the new competing advantages and appropriate them most effectively and herein would come the role of Integrated Brand and Design Firms and Institutions.

3.8 Value and Margin Additions

Retailers today are the envied. Lot thanks to their profits and margins and the same have been built up through providing of unique shopping experiences. Even as the Indian industry and firms are obsessed with the tangible aspects of the product like quality and price, intangible value addition through brands and retail experiences is emerging as the most effective of profit adders.

Designer houses are perhaps showing a better appreciation of these realities. FabIndia and Bandhej and Designer brands like Rohit Bal and Ritu Kumar are extracting much value from the same Handloom fabrics which otherwise lie as a burdening inventory at government showrooms. KVICs recent foray into Shopper's Stop is yet another of the instances where the above thesis stands validated.

Conceptual brand/thematic experience management

In the context, visual merchandising needs to be appreciated as a potent value adder to Retail experience and from there to profits.

Aim of visual merchandise in handloom and home textiles

Visual merchandise in handloom and home textiles, focus at many objectives to be accomplished and the same below are enumerated:

Facilitating functional shopping experience-

Facilitating functional shopping experience through optimising display of varied, thereby, easing choices and sampling for the consumer.

Generate experience

Experience generation pertains to stimulation and management of the entire domain of the consumer's senses and managing sensuality so as to be congruent with the consumer's desires. Visual Merchandising helps manage the visual senses and thereby affect/constitute experience generation in retailing.

Strengthen the brand/identity

If properly managed, with due design congruence established, visual merchandise can add to the brand strength of the firms/cluster/zone whose brands are being retailed or the retail store brand, where the experience occurs. Visual coherence however needs to be observed for achieving visual merchandising-brand communications congruence.

Maximise sales generation

Effective visual merchandising helps in increasing sales through facilitation of consumer sampling and exposing the best of merchandise to the consumer. Sales have been proved to be effected by quality of visual merchandising, through many studies.

Help expansion of product categories through optimising display of varied variants

Effective visual merchandising also packs more punch in the pack through an optimum display of merchandise. Thereby devouring empty spaces where not necessary, making it feasible to display a larger number of products and product categories, enhancing the probability of higher total spending in the store and hence contributes to profits.

Jack up corporate image

Corporate Image in handloom sector can also get a boost like corporate brands if they get associations from effective visual merchandise of its products or if intra-store communications are adequately supported by store ambience and visual merchandise quality.

Effective visual merchandising employment

Visual merchandise in handloom and home textiles needs to be customised and employed with discretion when dealing with boutiques, specialty stores, departmental stores and store in store points. Visual merchandise is as much a function of merchandise aesthetics and their configuration as much it is a function of accompanying complementing elements of the overarching multi-sensory ambience created. Visual merchandise is also strongly a function of the merchandise or the store itself.

3.9 Merchandise Seasons: Plans and Schedules

These are discussed below.

Seasons

Seasons in visual merchandising determine the promotional calendar for developing themes for the visual presentations. There are broadly two international seasons across fashion and textile product categories that normally are followed:

- Spring and summer
- Fall and winters

Visual merchandising and merchandise promotion

Visual merchandising often has to support and be in congruence with promotional intentions and the same across the year occur under various contexts and schemes. Some of the main promotional occasions are listed under where customised visual merchandising has to be employed.

Holiday promotions

These include:

International festival/holidays

Promotion for regular merchandise occurs at holidays/festivals. The opportunities are:

- **Valentine's Day:** Displays are usually set up two weeks prior with RED and HEART as principle visual elements.
- **Easter:** Three weeks prior to Easter, Stores stock up Home goods along and spring flowers. Children's stores stock up eatables on props and attention catching chocolates, eggs, bunnies. Chickens are often used at times as props.
- **Christmas:** One of the most important festivals across the world, on this day, Christmas tree, stars, Santa clause, bells, reindeer and like elements are used as props. The whole ambience is soaked in red, green, snow white and gold. Lots of glitterati and music is released the favourite instrument used being piano and guitar. Surprise Gift packs are kept waiting for customers.

Indian festivals/holidays

These include:

- **Garba:** One of the most important festivals in Gujarat, on this occasion, stores in the state undergo a change in the flavour of visual merchandise display and themes are put up depicting Krishna and Radha or depicting the goddess 'Ambe' and her victory over demons. The whole ambience is filled with traditional 'ras-garba' fervor.
- **Kite flying:** The ambience is decorated with the various color of kite and bright colors fill the ambience. The festival signifies the change in the position of sun in the celestial orbits and the same is often seen at larger stores, making for the ambience.
- **Special sales:** For purposes of stock clearance, odd lot clearance, rejects clearances and unsold stock clearances, different visual merchandise is set up which is hardly of high standards. Since the objective is maximum display for maximum clearance and more so the display being extremely short lived, visual merchandising here mostly borders on store stacking of merchandise, however innovative approach to the same has resulted in multifold increases in clearances.
- **Thematic visual merchandising:** As in case of Selfridges, UK, where two festivals have been held in the last two years, being Tokyo Life and Bollywood bash, VM can turn completely thematic and then for the time of the festival or adherence to the theme, VM has to observe the overarching thematic dictates.

3.10 Life Expectancy of Visual Displays

Life of a visual merchandise display for handloom and home textiles should be ideally between one to three months in the Indian context, since the product life cycle of the said products is much longer compared to say garments. Furthermore, the following suggestions ought to be kept in mind concerning the same:

- Continuity of personnel involved should be maintained when it comes to overseeing the change in displays and putting up the same
- Periodic change has to be forced, since it assures better coordination between departments and helps increase the promotion of merchandise.
- A reasonable period of time for a display, assures that the customer gets aquatinted with most of the stock a store has to offer.
- Too long a period for a display results in items being too long on display and they then appear as faded, rusty, dingy and cannot be sold as first quality merchandise.
- Displays are most conspicuous part of the store and hence they should be kept interesting and fresh

3.11 Types of Visual Merchandise Displays

These include:

Window display

Window display essentially has to reflect corporate identity and should be visually powerful to invite, as “I must possess it”. These are broadly of two types depending on the back end of the display put up: closed-back window displays and open back window displays.

Interior display

It should relate to the theme seen in the windows, it effects the movement and traffic of customers and should lead to a total, effective and ergonomic visual concept of the store aiding a pleasant experience.

The trend away from window

Isolated displays are less frequently in use as too much of time and expense and far from the merchandise to which they relates. However as means of non-store visual merchandising, especially at Airports, leading premium end stores often puts up isolated visual merchandise displays.

Point of purchase display

It refers to a display or merchandise presentation at the point where an act of purchase happens and the sale is made. The display is designed to promote a particular product or brand name.

3.12 Industrial and Exhibition Visual Merchandising

Industrial and exhibition visual merchandising refers to many formats of visual merchandising and the same are below given along with specifics in brackets, further detailing the visual merchandise displays:

- Permanent exhibits (Craft and heritage museums)
- Temporary exhibits (handicraft/ handloom fairs, for example, organised by EPCH)
- Travelling Displays (mobile promotions)
- Outdoor exhibits (sponsored parks and store maintained public places like “Dilli Haat” and “Heritage park” in Kolkata)
- Industrial Products Visual merchandising (at factory gates or outlets)

3.13 E-Visual Merchandising: An Emerging Visual Technology Trend

E-visual merchandising has emerged as one of the most novel and versatile of visual merchandising formats and the same is employed either on the net or over a screen in the store. Varied interfaces are designed for an optimum interface of the consumer with the visual merchandise (virtual tours etc.). What cannot be achieved in real tangible domain can be created in the realm of virtual reality with the help of technological devices equipments and softwares, hence the high value add through a surreal addition to the tangible merchandise. Handloom too has to achieve broader exposures of products/merchandise through these means/channels and shall establish into the segment through the most reachable medium today.

Summary

- Visual merchandising is a major factor often overlooked in the success or failure of a retail store. It is second only to effective customer relations.
- Visual merchandising can be defined as everything the customer sees, both exterior and interior, that creates a positive image of a business and results in attention, interest, desire and action on the part of the customer.
- It is necessary to continually determine what the customer sees.
- A successful retailing business requires that a distinct and consistent image be created in the customer's mind that permeates all product and service offerings.
- Visual merchandising can help create that positive customer image that leads to successful sales. It not only communicates the store's image, but also reinforces the stores advertising efforts and encourages impulse buying by the customer.
- Visual merchandising is a major factor often overlooked in the success or failure of a retail store.
- Virtual visual merchandising is a promising high-tech and emerging technique of visual merchandising.
- Visual merchandising in the context of handloom and home textiles offers itself as a potent differentiator in that when other product parameters stored in store are comparable.
- While ambience generated is objective, its interpretation is subjective and conditioned by the psychic make up of the consumer.
- Too much quantity on display reduces the comfort levels of consumers and reduces his delight in the store.
- Confusing display where classification of products and product categories is not respected, often leads to incoherence at the end of the consumer and takes away his moods of decisiveness for purchase.
- Colour distortion often leads to sharp complaints from consumers of being cheated and being passed off, products, which they did not intend to buy.
- India has been rich always in its visual merchandising although the corporate retail phenomenon is a relatively new one.
- In India the image of handlooms are still associated to old, classic and hand made coarse materials.
- Visual merchandise in handloom and home textiles, aims at many objectives to be accomplished.
- For purposes of stock clearance, odd lot clearance, rejects clearances and unsold stock clearances, different visual merchandise is set up which is hardly of high standards.
- Displays are most conspicuous part of the store and hence they should be kept interesting and fresh.

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Self Assessment

1. _____ communicates the store's image, but also reinforces the stores advertising efforts and encourages impulse buying by the customer.
 - a. Visual merchandising
 - b. Brand
 - c. Retailing
 - d. Customer

2. _____ is offered to the customer through exterior and interior presentation.
 - a. Visual merchandising
 - b. Retailing
 - c. Marketing
 - d. B2B service

3. What provides a differentiated shopping experience and increase the probability of brands getting purchased?
 - a. Visual merchandising
 - b. Retailing
 - c. Marketing
 - d. B2B service

4. What should be created effectively so as to encounter the factor of fatigue and provide freshness to retail?
 - a. Virtual visual merchandising
 - b. Dynamic visual merchandising
 - c. Mall merchandising
 - d. Value chain

5. Which of the following is not a problem addressed in visual merchandising?
 - a. Inadequate display
 - b. Confusing display
 - c. Too much quantity in display
 - d. Symmetric display

6. Retailing and marketing have therefore emerged as the preferred points in the _____ of home textiles and handlooms too, as in other sectors.
 - a. value chain
 - b. virtual visual merchandising
 - c. dynamic visual merchandising
 - d. mall merchandising

7. Which of the following is not one of the aims of virtual merchandise in handloom?
 - a. Strengthen the brand
 - b. Generate experience
 - c. Visual coherence
 - d. Facilitating functional shopping experience

8. _____ in visual merchandising determine the promotional calendar for developing themes for the visual presentations.
- Themes
 - Promotions
 - Seasons
 - Demonstration
9. Which of the following is not a type of visual merchandise displays?
- Window display
 - Interior display
 - Point of purchase display
 - The trend near to the window
10. What refers to the display or merchandise presentation at the point where an act of purchase happens and the sale is made?
- Window display
 - Interior display
 - Point of purchase display
 - The trend away from the window

Chapter IV

Element of Display

Aim

The aim of this chapter is to:

- introduce the concept of store designing
- evaluate the quality of store front
- classify the methods of highlighting store exteriors

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- elucidate the importance of exterior signs
- explain the importance of windows displays
- describe the types of interior presentations

Learning outcome

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand the principles of designs in display
- recognise the importance of lightening in interior presentation
- identify the various store layout and different visuals

4.1 Introduction

Customers may get attracted by the physical nature of the retail environment. Product packaging is considered as ‘the silent salesman’ because it attracts the customer and provides basic knowledge of the product. Similarly the physical aspect of the retail outlet such as size, design, cleanliness, etc., has the same effect. Important aspect of the physical nature of a store includes the designing and appearance of both the exterior and interior environment.

4.2 Exterior Presentation

The quality of a store front is a major determinant for a customer, particularly a new customer, and should not be underestimated. The exterior appearance of one store, a block of businesses or a cluster, silently announces what customers can expect inside. Good exterior visual merchandising attracts attention, creates interest and invites the customer into the business. The exterior presentation can offer a conservative, progressive, and lavish or discount image to the customer. How a store visually welcomes customers has a lot to do with whether or not they enter the store. Although, good prices and positive word-of-mouth advertising is important, it is hard to overcome the negative image of a poor store exterior. When examining a store’s exterior, consider the following questions:

- How do customers locate the business?
- Are the sidewalks clean, safe and accessible?
- Are the exterior signs clean, fresh and readable?
- Does the store front need cleaning, painting or touch up?
- Are the outside entrances clean and accessible?
- Are the windows clean, bright and inviting?
- Are the window display preparation materials such as tape, pins and packaging materials removed?
- Are the window displays frequently changed?
- Do the window displays carry a theme?

4.2.1 Exterior Signs

A sign is a silent salesperson, and part of a shopper’s first impression of a store. In less than 10 seconds the sign must attract attention, tell who the business is and what it has to sell. An effective sign will communicate what type of business is being conducted.

Off-premise signs provide information and direction, especially for travelers and new residents. Signs can also help effectively communicate a poor location. The lettering should be large enough to read from 200 feet, which is the distance required to stop a car travelling 40 miles per hour. Signs with 8-inch letters can be read from a distance up to 250 feet. A car travelling 55 miles per hour needs about 400 feet to stop. A sign requires 12-inch lettering to be read at that distance. A sign’s design conveys a great deal about the business inside. A stark design and limited materials may suggest discount prices and no frills. Elegant and expensive sign materials may suggest luxury goods and services. Signs may also be used to target a specific market segment such as youth, women, senior citizens, singles, etc. Where many signs compete for customers’ attention, design and logo become even more important. They should be unique, noticeable and readable. When preparing a sign to draw the customer’s attention, consider size, shape, materials, lettering, height, placement and structure. For example, among several rectangular signs in close proximity to one another, construct an oval or circular sign that will stand out. Also consider a sign’s relationship with its surroundings. A sign may look good on an individual store front, but very unattractive when viewed in conjunction with other buildings on the street.

Simple, brief, well-designed, well-lettered and easy-to-read signs will convey a feeling of welcome. Design graphics appropriate for the nature of the business, and create a message that is clear and simple. Focus on one or two key words to describe the business. A clean, clear message will have more impact.

Signs with unlit or missing light bulbs, flaking or faded paint, or cracked and peeling backgrounds can hurt the overall store image. A shabby or dilapidated sign implies a lack of concern with the business image, and a sloppy, poorly managed business. Signs should be well maintained, and painted every three years or sooner if they weather or fade. A store's sign is its signature. It is personal, original and continuously recognisable to the public. It should create.

Marquees

This special type of sign is used to display the name of a store. An effective marquee must stand out from the other businesses to attract attention. A marquee on some older buildings is a permanent canopy projecting over an entrance that provides protection from the elements. It can be used to announce a change in seasons, a special event or a promotion. The top of the permanent canopy (marquee) provides an opportunity to showcase seasonal displays or special promotional banners.

Banners

Banners are used increasingly as an inexpensive but colourful, eye-catching means of promotion. A new and interesting appearance can be offered by changing the banners frequently. Consumers will think exciting changes are taking place, and be drawn into the store.

Banners can be hung from flagpoles, projected from the building or hung flat against the exterior. To provide continuity, the same banner design, reduced in size and scale, can be hung from the marquee and displayed inside the store. However, do not overuse banners because shoppers will stop noticing them. With each new banner, select a different size, shape and colour from those previously used. Consistency is an important aspect of retailing used to maintain a businesses' image and identification. The design concept used on the banners will be more effective if an attempt is made to carry the colours and graphics throughout the store, and on promotional materials and newspaper ads.

Awnings

Colour and appeal can be added to a store's exterior with the use of awnings. They provide the customer with protection from weather and makes viewing the window display more pleasant as it reduces heat, cuts down on glare and reflection, and prevents fading of the merchandise from exposure to the sun. However, an awning in poor condition may do harm by distracting from the total store image.

Where many signs compete for customers' attention, design and logo become even more important. They should be unique, noticeable and readable. Many businesses are updating their storefronts with new back-lit awning systems. Other names for these may include electric awnings, interior lit canopy signs, and back-lit conventional awnings. These modern-looking awnings are used on new as well as older buildings and are usually bright and attractive, especially at night.

A variety of styles exists such as concave, convex, long dome, square and coop style. Most are interior lit with an egg crate type bottom that allows light to shine through and yet will not allow birds, etc. to enter into it. The illuminated awning fabric is a translucent vinyl that comes in a wide variety of colours. The store name is incorporated into it with a translucent (vinyl) film. Sign and awning companies can assist you in selecting and installing the right style, colour and design of awning that would be appropriate for your building.

4.2.2 Walks and Entries

Approximately 75 percent of first time customers remember a store's entrance, which provides the first and last view of the store's interior. Picture walking up to an expanse of wall whose flat surface is pierced only by a plain glass door, as opposed to the protective feeling offered by walking under a porch or canopy. A properly designed canopy or porch not only protects the customer in bad weather, but can add to the aesthetics of the building. When adding an entryway, be sure it is designed to blend or be consistent with the architecture of the building.

A cluttered entryway causes shoppers to indefinitely postpone entering a store, while an attractive, well designed entrance is inviting to the customer. Entrances that allow shoppers to come into a store without being aware of their entering, is also becoming more popular. An example is a V-shaped window display that funnels window shopping traffic into the store.

4.2.3 Landscaping

Landscaping should lead the customer's eye to the focal point using color and texture to provide contrast and harmony. The focal point is the business sign and/or the building itself. Landscaping can also screen undesirable sights such as garbage receptacles, power transformers and refrigeration equipment. The essence of good landscaping is simplicity; simple landscape designs that are easy to maintain. For example, uninterrupted expanses of grass are easier to maintain than areas cut up by several small beds of flowers or shrubs.

Planters, flower boxes and plants used in front of a store add to the general appearance, regardless of what type of merchandise is being sold. Plants (especially flowering bedding plants) enhance the overall look of the store, and also add to the store's positive reputation in terms of beautifying the community.

Planters placed below and in front of a display window actually strengthen the display by adding greater depth to the setting. Real flowers and plants are recommended over artificial ones; high quality silk flowers may be used in some cases. During the winter, artificial flowers should be removed from stores located in parts of the country where flowers do not grow in the winter.

Because of location and other factors, many businesses may be limited in the amount of landscaping that can be done. The following guidelines are suggested for stores that have flexibility:

Concentrate hardy native tree species in groups at ends of buildings. This breaks long building lines and gives shade to the building and customers who have time to linger. One should plant low-branched trees in order to reduce noise and give privacy to buildings. Most shrubs should be planted as individual specimens or in small groups. Do not plant too close to buildings, and allow ample space along walks to permit normal growth without crowding.

Landscape fabric (black plastic, etc.) covered with rock, bark or other mulches under shrubs and small trees eliminate the tedium of mowing or weeding these areas. Hedges may be used at strategic points, such as street corners, where they must be kept low. Preference should be given to species that have an acceptable appearance and height without continuous trimming or pruning. Vines and other ground covers may be useful in shady spots and to protect banks against erosion.

Well chosen plants, properly placed and maintained, will go a long way toward welcoming customers. A landscape architect or horticulturist can assist in the layout and design of a landscaping program. Well designed and sturdy benches for resting and relaxing can be a part of the landscape and may encourage customers to stay longer. Aesthetically designed and strategically located garbage receptacles for customer use will help keep the grounds free from litter.

4.2.4 Window Displays

Special emphasis should be placed on a store's window displays because they are the information link to the potential customer. Window displays can be as important, if not more important, than advertising.

Window displays should attract attention, create interest and invite people into the store to purchase goods. There is less than 11 seconds to accomplish this, as that is the average amount of time an individual will spend looking at a window display. Be careful not to crowd too much merchandise into a window, as customers find it difficult to determine the message and what items are being promoted. Shoppers also lose interest when the same window display is left up too long. It is especially important to frequently change window displays in small towns where customers pass by several times a week. New displays indicate that new, up-to-date merchandise is available. In malls and larger towns, customers pass by less frequently.

Properly lighted window displays can help sell specific products or ideas that promote a store's image. Window lights should be strong enough to overcome the reflections from outside objects, such as parked cars and buildings. At night, additional lights on overhead marquees and projecting cornices can make the window area look larger. Closed-back windows require a high level of general illumination. Massed window displays are often lighted with overhead fluorescents which are supplemented by closely spaced clear incandescent lamps. Use miniature portable spotlights to accent small display areas, price cards and specific items in a massed display. Compact footlights help relieve shadows near the bottom of vertical displays. Window displays are more successful when a dominant theme is carried throughout the display, regardless of whether the featured products are fashion-oriented, institutional or promotional in nature. Suggested window treatments that have proven successful include:

- A single object against seamless paper.
- Merchandise displayed as it would be utilised in a realistic setting.
- A theatrical setting using fantasy and drama.
- Straight merchandise glamorised with props.
- Animation, such as in holiday windows that draws crowds of shoppers.
- The use of sculpture, paintings or art objects for a touch of class.
- Media tie-ins, with current area activities, films, stars or best selling books.
- Window displays should be in harmony with the entire surroundings; a whole is being created rather than a fragment. When planning a window display consider the building facade, street, people and their perceptions, colour harmony, lighting and viewing angle

4.3 Interior Presentations

Selling space is the most important part of a store and therefore, efforts to utilise each square foot will help to maximise sales. One proven way to do this is through interior displays that effectively show merchandise to the customer. When planning interior displays, remember that the theme and image presented on the exterior must be carried throughout the interior of the store to provide consistency for the customer.

The purpose of interior display is to develop desire for the merchandise, show what is available, and encourage both impulse and planned buying. Three major goals of a store should be to: motivate the customer to spend money, project the image of the store and keep expenses to a minimum.

Promotion and advertising dollars are less effective or even wasted when efforts are not made within the store to effectively merchandise the products. Well-designed displays and in-store promotions are essential for a consistent theme and to help the customer find advertised items.

Although the percentage of in-store purchase decisions may vary by type of store and product, this is a critical selling point. Information provided by the Point of Purchase Advertising Institute (POPAI) indicates that nothing influences the consumer's purchase decisions more than advertising used where the sale is actually made—the point of purchase. As an illustration, researchers found that 64.8 percent of all purchase decisions were made inside a supermarket.

This included impulse purchases along with substitutions and generally planned buys where the shopper had an item in mind, but no brand. Most people indicated they purchased the item because they saw it displayed. A National Retail Hardware Association survey indicated that 48 percent of all hardware customers purchased one or more items on impulse. Sixty-seven percent of items purchased in liquor stores are impulse items. Displays or advertising alone may not increase product sales substantially; however, combining advertising and display into an integrated promotional campaign will usually be more effective.

Some effective displays are created by suppliers or brand-name manufacturers, while others are developed from scratch. The main principles of design used in display are balance, emphasis, proportion, rhythm, color, lighting and harmony. These principles apply to all displays—window and interior.

4.4 Display Design

An effective way of attracting customers to a store is by having good displays, both exterior and interior. A customer will be attracted to a display within three to eight seconds; that is the time a customer spends to determine interest in a product. This is why it is critical to have a properly designed display. Every display should be planned and have a theme. Good design makes a visual presentation come together. This means the design attracts attention in a way that strengthens the store image, as well as introducing merchandise to the customer.

Before designing good displays, answer the following questions:

What is the store's image? Select an image to present to the public. The customer will identify a certain look with a store and expect that look to be carried throughout the business, be it trendy, elegant, off-price or discount. Do not mix images within one store; it will only confuse the customers.

- What type of customer is being attracted? Use a display that reflects the targeted consumer. A display that works well in one community may be ineffective in another community
- What is the concept of the merchandise to be presented in the display? Display and highlight the merchandise, do not merchandise an attractive display. Items should be displayed as they are meant to be used or worn. If formal wear is combined with day wear and kitchen accessories, the consumer is confused and sales are lost.
- Where is the display going to be set up and how will the location determine the design? There are many types of locations for display in every store: windows, walls, cases, gondolas or islands. The principles of display should help make the location work for the display.
- Why is this merchandise being put on display as opposed to other merchandise? This reason will determine the visual presentation and design. For example, if the merchandise is on sale, it will be displayed differently than regular price merchandise. Keep in mind there should be enough backup stock to warrant a display. If not, do not display it.

Place sale or promotional goods in the front of the store for short periods of time only. If the sale or promotion lasts for several weeks, move the merchandise to the rear of the store. Interested customers will search out a bargain. Introduce the customer to new, exciting and creative merchandise with a display at the front of the store

4.5 Principles of Design used in Display

To execute a display that will sell merchandise, it is necessary to have a working knowledge of the principles of design. The primary principles of design used in display include balance, proportion, rhythm, emphasis, colour, lighting and harmony. When applied appropriately, all parts of the display are pulled together to create a purposeful, effective and aesthetically pleasing presentation. An understanding of these principles will make it easier to design a display for all types of merchandise.

The principles are discussed separately to provide a clearer understanding of how each works. Five of the principles will be covered in this chapter, with colour and lighting featured in the next chapter.

4.5.1 Balance

Balance involves the equilibrium and weight of elements between two sides of a display. Balance is based on a theory of equals. Two types of balance include:

- Traditional or symmetrical balance is large on one side and large on the other. This can be effective where expensive and quality merchandise is being presented.
- Informal or asymmetrical balance creates flow or rhythm and a feeling of excitement. The two sides of the display appear to be of equal weight, but they are not replicas of each other. Something large can be balanced by several small items (Figure 4.2) or an expanse of empty space, a bright colour or a shot of lights. Several soft colours in a large space can be balanced by one bright colour because the intensity of the bright colour will compensate for its small size.

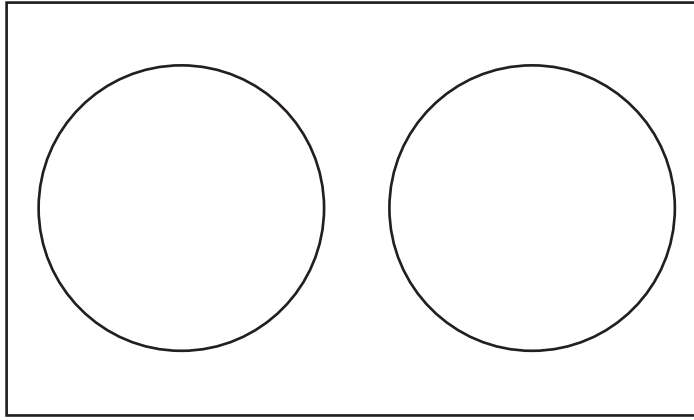


Fig. 4.1 Traditional balance

When planning a display, consider the following points concerning balance:

- If colors are too bright, they will overwhelm pastels.
- If several small objects are more exciting than the large object, they will overpower the large item.
- A large expanse of empty space will call attention to a single object placed within it.
- If an item is placed at an angle or to one side (off-center), the space on either side of that piece becomes important.
- If an object is centered, the empty space loses importance because its shape is predictable and therefore has less recognition as its own element.

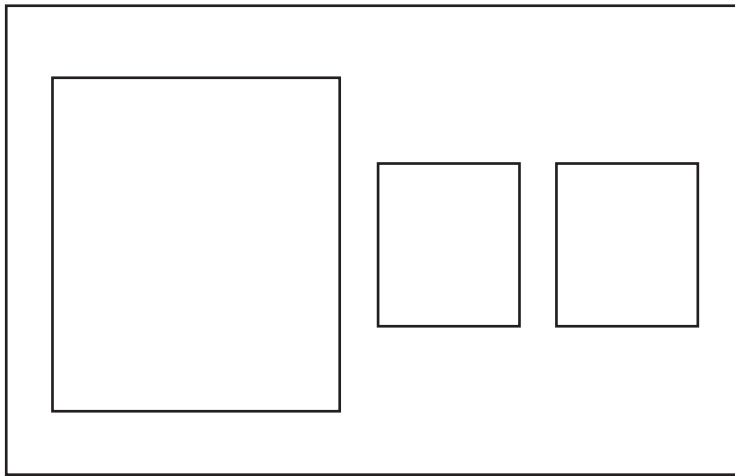


Fig. 4.2 Informal balance

A pleasing distribution of weight using merchandise of similar value will provide importance to both sides.

4.5.2 Emphasis

Emphasis is the point of initial eye contact. From this spot all other eye movements flow. Emphasis is therefore the formulation of a focal point, with all else in the display subordinate. There should be emphasis in all displays. This can be by virtue of the focal point's size, colour or position. The merchandise is the focal point in a majority of displays

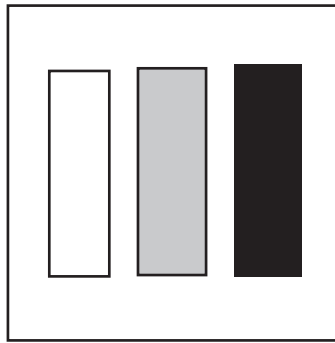


Fig. 4.3 Intensity

When planning a display, consider the following points concerning emphasis:

- A display needs to emphasise a theme or mood, such as the use of sports equipment, work equipment or leisure equipment set up in a lifelike situation.
- Themes may also depict seasons, anniversaries, celebrations, holidays and other special store events.
- All elements in a display must then reinforce one other and emphasise the mood created

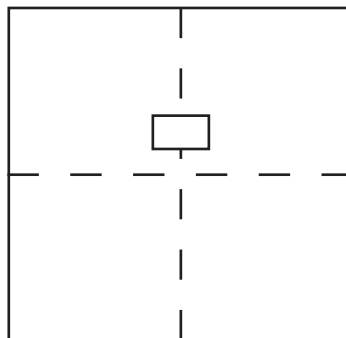


Fig. 4.4 Optical center

- The focal point is the small square. The eye movement is from the square to the space below the dashed line

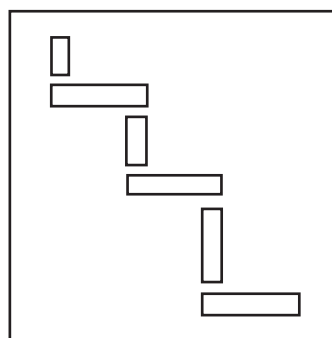


Fig. 4.5 Left to right movement

- The focal point is in the upper left and eye movement is to the lower right. An isolated item can be emphasised when surrounded by blank space.
- Shiny surfaces emphasise and enlarge objects.
- Dull surfaces absorb light and help to de-emphasise an area.
- Colour is a powerful medium for creating emphasis.

- Small amounts of advancing colour, bright intensities, extreme tints or shades contrasts in the right places will provide striking accents.
- Unusual textures highlight an area.
- Emphasis is diminished with receding variations such as thin, fuzzy lines; nondescript shapes; regular spacing; even light absorption; cool hues, dull intensities, medium tints or shades; dull, opaque textures; and small, all-over or no pattern.
- Repetition usually means something is important; so repeated shapes, colours or motifs grouped together reinforces their importance, creating emphasis. Make sure if goods are used in repetition that these goods are emphasised for sale. For example, if attempting to sell lawn mowers, does not use a grouping or repetition of gas cans, because gas cans are emphasised rather than lawn mowers.

4.5.3 Proportion

Proportion is the ratio of the parts to the whole display. It is a comparative relationship of distances, sizes, amounts, degrees or parts. Each item may look normal when isolated, but if it is inconsistent in area or dimension with neighbouring items, it seems out of proportion.

Each piece of merchandise must be considered in relationship to all the other merchandise

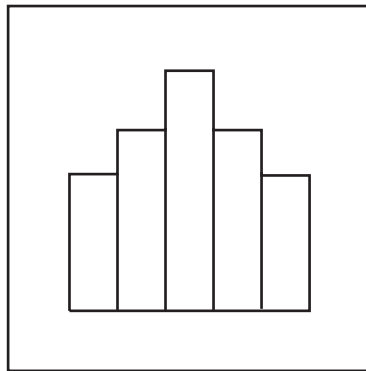


Fig. 4.6 Pyramid

The blocks in the pyramid are all in proportion to each other. If not in proportion, then people have trouble looking at it. When planning a display, consider the following points concerning proportion:

- Do not use all large objects, because there is nothing to break the monotony and sameness of that large feeling.
- Adding an odd number of smaller, related items to large pieces creates more interest and balance.
- Proportions take on more meaning when items define one another. For example the size of a dinosaur is defined when it is standing next to a two story house.
- Proportion and balance can best be accomplished when articles within the display play off each other through their size, shape and colour.

Ratio of merchandise to space is critical:

- Each piece of merchandise must be considered in relation to others.
- The ratio of props and show cards to merchandise must be in proportion to avoid the appearance of stressing or selling your props rather than your merchandise.
- Each object should not be too large or too small, nor too heavy or too light in proportion to other items in display areas.

Proportion and contrast are important elements of good display. Drastically changing the proportions and the color and texture can work wonders in attracting attention to a display. For example, a pair of baby shoes will appear smaller and more delicate when placed next to an enormous teddy bear.

4.5.4 Rhythm

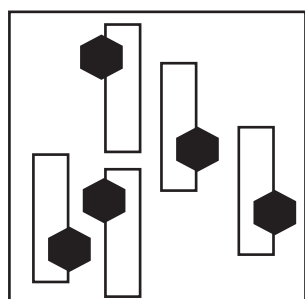
Rhythm or flow involves the measurement of organised movement; a self-contained movement from object to object, background to foreground, and/or side to side. The rhythm in a display should lead the viewer's eye from the dominant object to the subordinated object(s) or from the primary presentation of the grouping down to the arrangement of accessories or alternate parts of the display.

Rhythm may be broken-up or continuous; clearly stated or subtly suggested; repeated or vaguely similar. The initial pattern or design when repeated makes more of an impression on the viewer because it provides a continuous beat and completion, which is satisfying to the viewer. Rhythm entails an arrangement of organised motion and does not necessarily need repetition. However, it does gain impact from repetition.

A flow exists if the eye travels from one area of a display to another, covering the entire display. The eye should travel easily through the entire design. For example, if a very tall object, such as a mannequin, is placed next to several short baskets, there may be proportion but no flow. If dried or silk flowers or reeds are placed in the baskets (one and one-half times the height of the baskets), the height of the smaller objects is raised so the eye flows easily from the head and neckline of the mannequin to the baskets. A display can lead the eye with color, repetition, shadows created by light placement, lettering or texture.

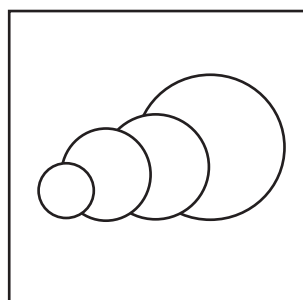
When planning a display, consider the following points concerning rhythm:

- English-reading people read from left to right. A left to right reading should be created in the display.
- Use elements that mean something together and relate to the merchandise.
- Create a pattern through the use of light and dark, either with color or light



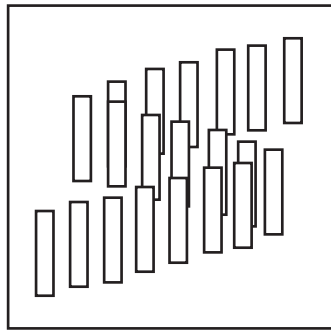
Flow is accomplished by repetition of items (shapes) which can be placed in a variety of positions in a display.

Fig. 4.7 Flow



Flow is created by a progression of sizes. For example, small to large.

Fig. 4.8 Progression of sizes



Flow is created by a continuous line movement created by the placement of the items in the display.

Fig. 4.9 Continuous line movement, rhythm

Overlapping of objects placed together in the display area can prevent the blank space that could exist with an even number of items in a display. Overlapping is one of the most effective tools for creating good flow. Generally, the following are recommended:

- Use an odd number of items when displaying multiples.
- Use a fabric or color that unifies the theme.
- Use props that are repetitious either in form or theme.
- Use the technique of flying merchandise to create flow.
- Use lettering with repetition of similar items or with dominance by using oversized items to create flow.
- It is important that the eye is led throughout the display and does not leave until all parts have been seen.

4.5.5 Harmony

Harmony is a coordinating umbrella principle that can cover and incorporate every other principle. Harmony is agreement in feeling and consistency in mood; i.e., the feeling that all parts of a display relate to each other and to the whole display. Without harmony, the observer is uncomfortable and will not be enticed to purchase merchandise. Three forms of harmony (functional, structural and decorative) must be in agreement in a display. Functional harmony deals with how something works physically, which means it must be realistic and must work. An example is a kitchen counter used in a display that is the appropriate height and depth for working.

Structural harmony is correctly fitting together all the pieces; merchandise should not be out of place in the display. For example, an electrical appliance is not structurally consistent in an outdoor or camping display. A good window display may have pots and pans, fishing gear and outdoor furniture all mixed together because these items truly would be used on a camping trip; hence a camping theme is carried out. All the merchandise is brought together as part of the trip and harmony would be created or a mood would be set. Decorative harmony includes the parts of a display that are included only for decorative purposes. If an atmosphere of spring is being developed, butterflies and/or flowers may be used as props. These items are attractive and add to the theme.

4.5.6 Lighting

Lighting conditions impacting merchandise viewing. These tend to achieve the following:

- Attract the customers attention
- Create an appropriate mood for the merchandise
- Contribute to a positive visual image of the merchandise
- Allow careful inspection of the merchandise

Types of lights

These include:

- **Ballast:** Electrical device that supplies the proper voltage and which is currently necessary to start and operate a discharge lamp. The most common is the electromagnetic type, which is typically the little black box, mounted inside the luminaries. Certain lamps are equipped with solid-state ballasts
- **Bee lights:** Miniature screw-base-type electric bulbs each of low wattage, used for example in strings of 20 or 36 for Christmas decorating; tiny tubular or globe-shaped replaceable bulbs.
- **Black light:** Special ultraviolet light bulb, incandescent or fluorescent, that will cause surfaces treated with ultraviolet paint or the like to glow in the dark. The black light is directed onto the treated surfaces, and the darker the area, the more intense and more brilliant the treated objects or surfaces appear. A theatrical device.
- **Border light:** A striplight hanging from an overhead batten, pipe, or ceiling grid and used to produce general overall lighting in a window or on a stag.
- **Chase lights:** Series of lamps that flash on and off in a set pattern, reminiscent of the lights that seem to run around theatre marquees. It usually comes with its own timing device that sets and controls the flashing or chase pattern.
- **Cove lighting:** Form of indirect lighting. Lighting source in the area is concealed from below by a recess, cove, cornice, or baffle, and sometimes by a partially dropped ceiling. The light is reflected by the ceiling or wall. A soft, subtle way of lighting an area or wall.
- **Dimmer:** Mechanism for changing the intensity of light in a given area by means of cutting down on the amount of electric current passing through the electrical wires to the lamps. The resistance dimmer is the only one that will work on direct current (D.C.) whereas autotransformer, electronic resistance, electronic, and magnetic amplifier dimmers will work on alternating currents (A.C.).
- **Downlight:** Light fixture with a reflecting surface, shade or shield that directs the beam or spread of light downward toward the floor area rather than toward the ceiling.
- **Flasher:** Device that screws into a light-bulb socket before the lamp is inserted and causes the light bulb to flash on and off by interfering with the flow of electric current. Sometimes a set of miniature light bulbs will come with a flasher bulb that causes the current breaks.
- **Flicker bulb:** Candle-shaped bulb with a filament that flickers and spurts, mechanically simulating a candle flame.
- **Floodlight:** Electric lamp or bulb that throws a broad spread or wash of light over a wide area. Floodlights are available in varying wattages, from 75 watts on up.
- **Indirect lighting:** Lighting arrangement in which the light is directed to the ceiling or any other reflective surface, from which it is bounced back to illuminate the general area, rather than being directed straight down to the area below
- **Lamp:** Complete light-source unit, that usually consists of a filament or arc tube, the accessory hardware, the glass enclosure or envelope for the assorted parts, and the base that fits into the socket; and electric light bulb.
- **Luminaries:** Complete lighting unit that includes the lamp socket, housing, frame, holder, reflector, shield and so on.
- **Primary lighting:** The basic, most elementary lighting of a store or selling area. This usually does not include special lighting effects such as spots, floods, filters, washes and so on, and is almost devoid of any sort of atmosphere or mood.
- **Projectors:** The projection process consists of a light source, objects or slides to be projected, and the surface or screen upon which the image is projected. A projector is the light source and the image may be projected by lens for a sharper effect, or by shadow, which is less complicated. Front projection places the projector in front of an opaque screen; rear projection places the projector behind a translucent screen. In either case, a certain amount of space is required between the projector and the screen
- **Reflector:** A polished or mirrored surface that is used to redirect light in a desired direction or onto a specific area. A baffle or screen used to reflect heated air.

- **Secondary lighting:** Spots, floods, filters, washes and so on that add depth, dimension and atmosphere to a lighting plan. Lighting beyond the basic or primary lighting plan.
- **Showcase lamps:** Long, thin, sausage-shaped incandescent lamps that are available in 25, 40 and 60 watt strengths.
- **Specific illumination:** Form-revealing, highlighting and attention-getting lighting that focuses the viewer's attention on a specific object or area. This form of lighting is usually accomplished with spotlights and/or concentrated beams of light, sometimes through a color filter.
- **Strip lighting:** Long lines of exposed fluorescent fixtures on a ceiling.
- **Striplights:** General term that includes border lights, footlights, cyclorama, and border and backing striplights. Usually consists of rows of individual reflectors, each containing one lamp and one round glass color medium that covers the entire mouth of the reflector. Striplights are often wired in three or four circuits for the primary colors (red, blue, green) and possibly one for white.
- **Switchboard:** Portable or fixed panel with switches, dimmers and so on, that controls all the lamps and outlets in a window or group of windows, or for a stage. By using a switchboard, it is possible to turn specific lights on or off without having to climb or reach for them.
- **Swivel socket:** Socket with 360-degree swivel joint between the screw-in socket end and the receptacle that received the lamp or bulb. When the lamp is screwed into the socket, it is possible to rotate and direct that lamp or bulb in any direction—up or down and to all sides. This socket sometimes comes with an extension pipe before the swivel device.
- **Track lighting:** A channel or track, usually attached to a ceiling or ledge, which is electrically wired and plugged into a source of electric current. The 4-, 6- or 8-foot lengths of channel will receive assorted spotlights and floodlights, in decorative holders or housing. This is selective lighting since it is possible to move these lamps about on the length of channel, turn the individual lamps on and off as needed, and direct the light where it is needed, thus making changes in light emphasis.

4.5.7 Signage

Signages are the visual and graphic form of communication in letters or any recognisable symbol that gives a message to customer in terms of stores/outlet image as well as for a smooth flow. These tend to:

- Assist customer in their flow across the store.
- Lead the customers in newer sections opened in the store if any
- Add to the visual ambience of the store through colour and contrast.

Most employed signage techniques are silk screening, sign machines and some other signage techniques (cut outs, hand-lettering, calligraphy).

Aesthetic factual of the merchandise

Often the aesthetic factual of the merchandise impose some constraints and conditions upon the overall visual merchandise design. Some of the factors in the context are:

- Look of the product (Area or zonal craft/country side/young/ethnic etc.)
- Print/texture/color or other embellishment (Batik, tie-dye, Ikat, embroidery etc.)
- Style/details (ruffled/straight/buttons/cut/fastening etc.)
- Fabrics (hand/feel/drape for hand-woven or handknitted)

Structural interior décor of the store

Overall structural interior décor (based on either 16th or 17th century architecture or mythology or contemporary India) of the store needless to say is a major guide to the overall design and implementation of the visual merchandise display. Some of the issues in the context bear mentioning are-

4.5.8 Composition

Product categories in the store, relative space allocation and mutual placement-

- No. of product categories in the store
- The percentage space allotted to each category
- The volume of merchandise in each category

The relative placement of each category versus others, often determines which merchandise gets the maximum of customer attention. Hence, its importance varies. Often it is observed in the handloom shops /outlet that chaos is created due to mixed merchandise placement, and product attention reduces.

4.5.9 Props

Prop characteristics are also important in determining the overall look and feel of visual merchandise display. Props can be made of different material, in varied forms and sizes. Three important characteristics of the props used which affect the visual merchandise quality are:

- Material
- Form
- Size/shape

Packaging of products/merchandise-

If product/ merchandise has to be packaged appropriately, that it adds value to a product. Packaging with type and graphic design again changes the entire approach towards the product range.

Special and other effects

Special high-tech effects and other effects generated by Entertaining gadgets also add to the overall visual merchandise display and ambience of the store. Chief elements, which fall under this ambit, are below listed. These kinds of establishments are yet far of imagination to where handloom sector is concerned:

- Movement/animation
- Audio-visual
- Live action
- Audience involvement

Aesthetic elementals in visual merchandising

Important aesthetic elementals in visual merchandising, from a design point of view are the following and the same need effective design management for generating an enriching experience.

- Shape- symmetry, composition and grouping
- Complementing aesthetic elements- lighting, warmth, colour
- Product display
- Layout- space, height, shelving, flow of goods, fixtures and fittings
- Design- co-ordination, lifestyle, theme
- Complementing aesthetic elements-lighting, warmth, colour

4.6 Store Layouts and Visual Merchandising

Store layout forms a framework for visual merchandise design and deployment to a great deal. Three basic structures are employed as frameworks for it and they are-

- **Open:** In open structure, consumer flow from one product category space into another is clear and open and often facilitated through appropriate interior design. Demarcation or specialisation of spaces is least employed here.
- **Grid:** Closed spaces are used here in accordance with the placement and display of products and product categories and enough privacy is conferred upon each of the product categories. When the assortment in the store is such that the product categories stored, varies widely then such separation is employed.
- **Boutique:** Unlike the above two, this arrangement does not deal with separate spaces for differing product categories; rather all of them are placed near to each other and very accessible to the consumer from either side. Such treatment of spaces becomes possible thanks to the small size of boutiques and by nature their focus on a particular or few related product categories.

Virtual visual merchandising

Virtual visual merchandising is a promising high-tech and emerging technique of visual merchandising. It may either be practiced by the e-stores on the net or may be used on computer monitors or screens in the stores themselves. Needless to say the dynamics, and spatial dynamics here are much different then otherwise and virtual reality techniques and special effects often add to the effects of visual merchandising and overall store experience.

Visual merchandising as a differentiator

Visual merchandising in the context of handloom and home textiles offers itself as a potent differentiator in that when other product parameters stored in store are comparable, Visual merchandising also provides a differentiated shopping experience and hence increases the probability of brands getting purchased at the point of differentiating experience. Visual merchandising also differentiates a showroom from an organised retailer. Visual merchandising adds value to many products where prices are not universal and the same is highly profitable when it comes to store brands and private labels.

Dynamic visual merchandising

While ambience generated is objective, its interpretation is subjective and conditioned by the psychic make up of the consumer. Further, there arises visual fatigue, when a consumer is exposed repeatedly to the same multi-sensory ambience. It is hence essential that a dynamic multi-sensory ambience be created so as to encounter effectively the factor of fatigue and provide freshness to retail.

Brand nuances and visual merchandising

When designing a visual merchandising experience for KVIC (Khadi and Village Industries Commission), we had to factor in the brand associations consumers have for Khadi, similarly brand images and associations have to be carefully counted for before visual merchandising designs can be finalised. Brand projections have to be congruent with Experiences created and in the context worth appreciating is the work of Zegna.

Brand projections alter the experience of the ambience created in the store and hence not only strategic visual coherence has to be respected across all communications but also conceptual congruence needs to be built, appreciated and often re-enforced. Naturalism and native aesthetics is of utmost importance to be observed and hence the necessity for an indigenous aesthetic research with a reference to consumer experiences.

Summary

- The quality of a store front is a major determinant for a customer, particularly a new customer, and should not be underestimated.
- A sign is a silent salesperson, and part of a shopper's first impression of a store.
- Simple, brief, well-designed, well-lettered and easy-to-read signs will convey a feeling of welcome.
- An effective marquee must stand out from the other businesses to attract attention.
- Colour and appeal can be added to a store's exterior with the use of awnings. They provide the customer with protection from weather and makes viewing the window display more pleasant as it reduces heat, cuts down on glare and reflection, and prevents fading of the merchandise from exposure to the sun.
- A variety of styles exists such as concave, convex, long dome, square and coop style. Most are interior lit with an egg crate type bottom that allows light to shine through.
- Colour and appeal can be added to a store's exterior with the use of awnings.
- A cluttered entryway causes shoppers to indefinitely postpone entering a store, while an attractive, well designed entrance is inviting to the customer.
- Landscaping should lead the customer's eye to the focal point using color and texture to provide contrast and harmony.
- Special emphasis should be placed on a store's window displays because they are the information link to the potential customer.
- An effective way of attracting customers to a store is by having good displays, both exterior and interior.
- Good design makes a visual presentation come together.
- To execute a display that will sell merchandise, it is necessary to have a working knowledge of the principles of design.
- Balance involves the equilibrium and weight of elements between two sides of a display. Balance is based on a theory of equals.
- Proportion is the ratio of the parts to the whole display. It is a comparative relationship of distances, sizes, amounts, degrees or parts.
- Emphasis is the point of initial eye contact. From this spot all other eye movements flow. Emphasis is therefore the formulation of a focal point, with all else in the display subordinate.
- Harmony is a coordinating umbrella principle that can cover and incorporate every other principle. Harmony is agreement in feeling and consistency in mood; i.e., the feeling that all parts of a display relate to each other and to the whole display.
- Prop characteristics are also important in determining the overall look and feel of visual merchandise display.
- Brand projections alter the experience of the ambience created in the store and hence not only strategic visual coherence has to be respected across all communications but also conceptual congruence needs to be built, appreciated and often re-enforced.
- Store layout to a great deal form a framework for visual merchandise design and deployment.

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Self Assessment

- Which of the following statements is false?
 - The quality of a store front is a major determinant for a customer, particularly a new customer, and should not be underestimated.
 - The exterior appearance of one store, a block of businesses or a cluster, silently announces what customers can expect inside.
 - Good exterior visual merchandising attracts attention, creates interest and invites the customer into the business.
 - It is not necessary to continually determine what the customer sees in a store.
- Which type of design uses sign to display the name of a store?
 - Marquees
 - Banners
 - Awnings
 - Interior
- _____ can be hung from flagpoles, projected from the building or hung flat against the exterior.
 - Marquees
 - Banners
 - Awnings
 - Interior
- Which of the following is not a type of awning?
 - Electric signs
 - interior lit canopy signs
 - marquees
 - back-lit conventional signs
- The purpose of _____ display is to develop desire for the merchandise, show what is available, and encourage both impulse and planned buying.
 - exterior
 - brand
 - space
 - interior
- Which of the following is not one of the principles of design used in display?
 - Balance
 - Interior
 - Emphasis
 - Proportion
- _____ is the ratio of the parts to the whole display.
 - Balance
 - Interior
 - Emphasis
 - Proportion

8. _____ involves the measurement of organised movement; a self-contained movement from object to object, background to foreground, and/or side to side.
- Rhythm
 - Balance
 - Emphasis
 - Proportion
9. A _____ is the light source and the image may be projected by lens for a sharper effect, or by shadow, which is less complicated.
- projector
 - reflector
 - lamp
 - luminaries
10. Which of the following is not one of the frameworks for store layout?
- Grid
 - Closed
 - Boutique
 - Open

Chapter V

Fashion Visual Merchandising: The Face of Fashion

Aim

The aim of this chapter is to:

- define fashion visual merchandising
- elucidate the elements of effective fashion visual merchandising
- explain the visual tool box used

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- explain the components of visual merchandising
- describe the types of retail stores
- elucidate the six elements of image mix

Learning outcome

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand the retailing pictures and trends
- identify the difference between different shopping centres
- describe speciality stores

5.1 Introduction

In a true sense, visual merchandising is the ‘face ‘ of fashion. Creating an attractive product display can draw the customer in, promote a slow-moving item, announce a sale, or welcome a season. If your store front is fortunate enough to feature one or more windows, then you have one of the most proven (and least expensive) forms of advertising at your disposal.

Some stores located in a mall or other structure may lack windows, but don’t despair. There are many places throughout the store to build beautiful displays. Take a look at the flow of traffic in your store. Are there any areas that are a focal point for customers?

Your local community may have individuals or visual merchandising companies you can hire to dress your windows, but if you’re concerned with saving money, the following tips will help you create an attractive display.

5.2 Visual Display Tool Box

Before designing a product display, put together a visual display tool box to keep on hand. By having all of the following items in one location it will save time in actually preparing the display:

- Scissors, Stapler, Two-Sided Tape, Pins
- Hot glue sticks and glue gun
- Monofilament Fishing Line
- Tape Measure
- Razor Blade/Utility Knife
- Hammer, Nails, Screwdriver, Screws
- Notepad, Pencil, Marker
- Signage, Sign Holders
- Glass Cleaner/Paper Towels
- Props (Non-merchandise Items)

Take time to plan the display. Consider what you want to accomplish, develop a budget and determine a central theme. You may even want to sketch your display on paper. Gather your visual display tool box, the merchandise and any props. Make sure all materials and location (tables, windows, racks) are clean. Choose a slow time of the day or build the display after hours.

5.3 Elements of Effective Visual Merchandising

The basic elements of effective visual merchandising are summarised as below:

- **Balance:** Asymmetrical rather than symmetrical balance with the display.
- **Size of objects:** Place the largest object into display first.
- **Colour:** Helps set mood and feelings.
- **Focal point:** Where product and props/signage and background come together.
- **Lighting:** Should accent focal point, if possible.
- **Simplicity:** Less is more so know when to stop and don’t add too many items.

Once the display is finished, add appropriate signage. Take photos of the display and keep record of the product sales during the display’s existence. Save your information in a file folder for easy reference. By documenting its success, you can re-create the display next year or if it flops, you can make sure you don’t repeat the same mistakes.

Like any other aspect of retailing, creating an attractive display takes a little skill and lots of trial and error. As your store changes, so will your opportunities for visual displays. Keep working at designing eye-catching and innovative ways to make your retail store profitable through visual merchandising.

Visual merchandising is the art of displaying merchandise in a manner that is appealing to the eyes of the customer. It sets the context of the merchandise in an aesthetically pleasing fashion, presenting them in a way that would convert the window shoppers into prospects and ultimately buyers of the product. A creative and talented retailer can use this upcoming art to breathe in new life into his store products. Passion for design and creativity are essential to be a good visual merchandiser. A perfect design process and the ability to create ideas that are different are required. Awareness of happenings in fashion world is needed so as to keep up-to-date with the dynamics of the market constantly.

Visual merchandising includes window displays, signs, interior displays, cosmetic promotions and any other special sales promotions taking place.

5.4 Components of Visual Merchandising

There are certain things which a retailer needs to take care while proceeding with the process of displaying his products. These components when combined together in a proper ratio will make a successful outcome.

Make merchandise the focal point

The main goal of display is to showcase the products within the overall display area. Customers give three to five seconds of their attention to window display. The retailers' visual message should be conveyed to the customer in that short period of time. It should not be like an unsuccessful TV advertisement, where the product is forgotten altogether and only the concept of the commercial remains in the mind of the viewer. The arrangement of window display should go with the product and should not suppress them to make it discernable to the eye.

Right choice of colours is vital

Colour is one of the most powerful tools in the Visual Merchandising segment. It is a visual perceptual property. Colours can be associated with emotions, special occasions and gender. It attracts attention and pulls more customers into the store. A retailer has to focus on the right choice of colour that would match with the theme of display. It is not possible to satisfy everyone all the time, but it is possible to cultivate the taste of customers gradually and purposefully. A right choice of colours in the display items can turn walkers into stoppers and significantly convert them into customers. It is therefore mandatory to choose the right colour for the right theme of display. A Halloween display would require black colour in the display theme. Valentines theme should be ruled by red colour supplemented with pink and white. A display of baby's accessories should reflect light shades of pink and blue colours. A Christmas display should contain colours of red, green, gold and silver.

Display themes to appropriately support the product

A theme is a display of sale items of similar categories e.g. a display of kitchen accessories. It is essential to have themes for all retail displays. They can be romantic, wild, or capricious, and capture peoples imaginations.

A good theme will lure the customer with a shopping mood into the store. Themes mainly depend upon the retailer's imagination and creativity. Focusing on the right theme rather than creating a display with expensive raw materials is the key to successful window display. A shoe store theme can be a group of elves buying shoes. A theme for display of casual wears can be a group of mannequins sitting casually at a get together in different poses. Related themes will tug the heartstring of the customers and will pay off.

5.5 The Retailing Picture

The retail industry is a sector of the economy that is comprised of individuals and companies engaged in the selling of finished products to end user consumers. Multi-store retail chains in the U.S. are both publicly traded on the stock exchange and privately owned.

There are two basic forms of retailers: wholesale and specialty. Wholesale retailers, also known as “big box” retailers or department stores, are companies like Wal-Mart and Target that sell a wide variety of items at discounted prices. Specialty retailers offer a limited scope of products in order to serve a smaller market more effectively, such as consumer electronics retailers like Best Buy or office supply retailers such as Staples.

Department stores are getting ready to try “fast fashion” on for size, but can they be nimble enough to pull off the new look.

5.6 Types of Retail Stores

Most of the world’s top retail stores started from centres like Paris, London, Tokyo, Rome, Milan or New York. Certain streets, like Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue in New York, have become popular centres for shopping.

The different types of retail stores are as follows:

Department stores

A department store is a set-up which offers wide range of products to the end-users under one roof. In a department store, the consumers can get almost all the products they aspire to shop at one place only. Department stores provide a wide range of options to the consumers and thus fulfil all their shopping needs.

Merchandise:

- Electronic appliances
- Apparels
- Jewellery
- Toiletries
- Cosmetics
- Footwear
- Sportswear
- Toys
- Books
- CDs, DVDs

Examples: Shoppers Stop, Pantaloon

Discount stores

Discount stores also offer a huge range of products to the end-users but at a discounted rate. The discount stores generally offer a limited range and the quality in certain cases might be a little inferior as compared to the department stores. Wal-Mart currently operates more than 1300 discount stores in United States. In India Vishal Mega Mart comes under discount store.

Merchandise

It is almost same as department store but at a cheaper price.

Supermarket

A retail store which generally sells food products and household items, properly placed and arranged in specific departments is called a supermarket. A supermarket is an advanced form of the small grocery stores and caters to the household needs of the consumer. The various food products (meat, vegetables, dairy products, juices etc) are all properly displayed at their respective departments to catch the attention of the customers and for them to pick any merchandise depending on their choice and need.

Merchandise

- Bakery products
- Cereals
- Meat products, fish products
- Breads
- Medicines
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Soft drinks
- Frozen food
- Canned juices

Warehouse stores

A retail format which sells limited stock in bulk at a discounted rate is called as warehouse store. Warehouse stores do not bother much about the interiors of the store and the products are not properly displayed.

Mom and Pop store

It is also called kirana store in India. Mom and Pop stores are the small stores run by individuals in the nearby locality to cater to daily needs of the consumers staying in the vicinity. They offer selected items and are not at all organised. The size of the store would not be very big and depends on the land available to the owner. They wouldn't offer high-end products.

Merchandise:

- Eggs
- Bread
- Stationery
- Toys
- Cigarettes
- Cereals
- Pulses
- Medicines

Speciality Stores

As the name suggests, Speciality store would specialise in a particular product and would not sell anything else apart from the specific range. Speciality stores sell only selective items of one particular brand to the consumers and primarily focus on high customer satisfaction.

For example -You will find only Reebok merchandise at Reebok store and nothing else, thus making it a speciality store. You can never find Adidas shoes at a Reebok outlet.

Shopping centres

A shopping centre is defined as a group of retail establishments that is planned, developed, owned, and managed as a single property. A mall is enclosed with a climate controlled walkway between two facing strips of stores.

Many retail stores operating at one place form a mall. A mall would consist of several retail outlets each selling their own merchandise but at a common platform.

Strip centre

A strip centre is an attached row of stores or service outlets managed as a coherent retail entity, with on-site parking usually located in front of the stores. Open canopies may connect the storefronts, but a strip centre does not have enclosed walkways linking the stores. A strip centre may be configured in a straight line, or have an “L” or “U” shape.

Neighbourhood centre

This centre is designed to provide convenience shopping for the day-to-day needs of consumers in the immediate neighbourhood.

According to ICSC's SCORE publication, roughly half of these centres are anchored by a supermarket, while about a third have a drugstore anchor. These anchors are supported by stores offering pharmaceuticals and health-related products, sundries, snacks and personal services. A neighbourhood centre is usually configured as a straight-line strip with no enclosed walkway or mall area, although a canopy may connect the storefronts.

Community centre

A community centre typically offers a wider range of apparel and other soft goods than the neighbourhood centre does. Among the more common anchors are supermarkets, super drugstores, and discount department stores. Community centre tenants sometimes contain off-price retailers selling such items as apparel, home improvement/furnishings, toys, electronics or sporting goods. The centre is usually configured as a strip, in a straight line, or “L” or “U” shape. Of the eight centre types, community centres encompass the widest range of formats. For example, certain centres that are anchored by a large discount department store refer to themselves as discount centres. Others with a high percentage of square footage allocated to off-price retailers can be termed off-price centres.

Regional centre

This centre type provides general merchandise (a large percentage of which is apparel) and services in full depth and variety. Its main attractions are its anchors: traditional, mass merchant, or discount department stores or fashion specialty stores. A typical regional centre is usually enclosed with an inward orientation of the stores connected by a common walkway and parking surrounds the outside perimeter

Superregional centre

Similar to a regional centre, but because of its larger size, a superregional centre has more anchors, a deeper selection of merchandise, and draws from a larger population base. As with regional centres, the typical configuration is as an enclosed mall, frequently with multi levels.

Power or value centres

Value retail centres, malls or strip shopping centres, made up entirely of discount stores, are growing in number, size and popularity. When older malls start facing challenges from the new malls, they should be converted into value centres. Power centres are those dominated by large discount, off-price, or warehouse clubs with only a minimum of small specialty stores.

Outlet centres

Manufacturer and retailer outlet or clearance stores are usually found in specially designed malls around the country. These malls are located away from the traditional department and specialty stores to avoid competition with them.

Recreational or theme centres

Competition has caused new malls to use entertainment to draw customers and capitalised on the recreational connectivity to shopping. These malls have other recreational sections like movie theatres and restaurants etc.

Town centre malls

These malls in addition to shops provide restaurants, libraries, meeting rooms and a range of other services to create one stop shopping and a destination where families want to go.

Vertical malls

To give city malls the convenience of a shopping malls, some developers have developed vertical malls of specialty stores in downtown areas. This shops many shops to be built on a small are of high cost real estate. Customers take escalators from one level of shops to her.

Transportation centres

Some airport and railway stations are being transformed into shopping centres. They make ideal mall because they have a steady floe of customers, resulting in much sales in per square inch than the traditional malls.

E retailers

Now days the customers have the option of shopping while sitting at their homes. They can place their order through internet, pay with the help of debit or credit cards and the products are delivered at their homes only. However, there are chances that the products ordered might not reach in the same condition as they were ordered. This kind of shopping is convenient for those who have a hectic schedule and are reluctant to go to retail outlets. In this kind of shopping; the transportation charges are borne by the consumer itself. The examples are EBAY, Rediff Shopping, Amazon.

Concept store

Art of presentation is crucial for retailing. Retailers have embarked on a new trend to come closer to their customers. 'Concept Stores' are now an upcoming trend in the sector which is giving retail a new spin. In par with current trends, they give a complete solution to the consumers as they not only include a sales model which convinces the shoppers and turns them into their customers, but also possess an emotional model which will satisfy the customers and retain them for a long time.

Concept stores are designed with an intention to give a complete brand experience to the customers employing all tools, and resources to connect with the customer; providing them with a complete brand experience. It appeals to the sense of the shoppers by offering products in a way that blends with the environment. It is a platform combining quality and choice across all merchandise under a single roof. They are designed specially to give first hand shopping experience to their customers. Staffs at the concept store will have good knowledge and experience in cycling. They take time to discuss regarding the customer preferences, and guide them to make the buying decis

5.7 Secret Shoppers at the Store

Retailers adopt diverse strategies to survive the game. Driven by competition, retailers have realised that satisfying their customers is the key to win the business. They also need to keep abreast of the market conditions, and the strategies of their competitors. Apart from evaluating their competitors, significant self appraisal is also necessary. Mystery shopping is an efficient tool for evaluating the product quality, performance level, knowledge, attitude, and behaviour of the sales staff.

Generally mystery shoppers are used for evaluating customer service efficiency. They visit the retail store and behave like any other normal customer, while they keep an eye on the happenings at the store. Once the mystery shopper completes his assignment, he fills in a detailed questionnaire about the store, and submits it to the store owner. This data is used by the retailer to enhance his business such as; improving the store appearance, customer service, staff training, deciding on employee rewards and motivation. Mystery shopping turns out to be an effective tool for measuring sales performance, and customer satisfaction.

5.8 Retail Store: Design and Site

As already known, the most important factor in retail store is location. Retailers should know that good retail style is important in ensuring a healthy profit stream. Even the best retail store having the best merchandise is of no importance; if the store does not conform to what its customers want and expect.

The entire concept of store- location, interior, layout, etc, must be designed around its target customers. It is important for the store to fit into the marketplace, As already discussed, before building a store, the retailers should:

- Know which location offer the most long term profit potential
- Arrange product to increase multi product purchases
- Understand how store layout affect the over all shopping experience
- Change product location and layout so as to reduce the threat of theft and loss.

5.9 Image Mix: The Top Six Elements

For a successful retail business, it is required that a distinct and consistent image of the store is created in the mind of the customers. The image of store should be different from that of the competitor. Visual merchandising helps in creating that consistent image in customer's mind. Store image is created by visual merchandiser through the design and decor of the store.

The retailer and visual merchandiser should always understand the target market. All the decisions taken by the visual merchandiser depends on the kind of image the retailer wants in the customer's eye. The understanding of the consumer's behaviour is must. Visual merchandising is the science and art of selling more.

Keeping the store image in mind, all other aspect of retail is defined. There are certain elements which define retail's image. They influence the way a customer thinks of a brand. Mainly, there are six elements influencing a store's image. All the six elements of image mix are specific to the kind of retailer a customer goes into.

These include:

Employee

The retailer employs sales staff to match the selling and image needs of his stores. A speciality store such as BMW showroom will have low density of staff- about 1 person per 500 sq ft. Moreover, the sales person will speak well and very presentable. In contrast, in a large department store, the density of staff would be one per 300 sq ft. They would be well educated and well dressed.

Merchandise

The type of merchandise determines its density in a store. The supermarket is very dense and averages about 8000 items per sq ft, whereas a large departmental store would have about 750 items per 100 sq ft. In contrast a speciality store would have low density so as to make the merchandise more exclusive. The density of merchandise also determines the margin of profit planned on the merchandise. Lower the density, higher the margins.

Fixture

The fixtures have to compliment the value of the merchandise. A jeweller uses a lot of expensive woodwork and stones like marble and granite to add value to his or her merchandise, where as the sports product uses more of a metal or plastic. The density of fixture is measured as the number of fixtures per 100 sq ft of store space. This would compliment the density of the merchandise as it has a big effect on the shopping.

Sound

Sound can be pleasant or unpleasant; thus, can have a direct impact on the atmosphere of the store. A pleasant sound, like music in a departmental store, adds to the intensity of the experience. An unpleasant sound like motor traffic can have negative effect. Departmental store plays according to the category of merchandise. Soft instrumental music is generally played in the jewellery store and cosmetic while contemporary sound tracks complement the casuals and youth fashion wear segments.

Odour

Like sound, odour also has a positive or negative effect on the atmosphere of a store. Positive odour, like fresh coffee beans or flowers, adds to the shopping experience in the men wear and cosmetic departments of the store. Negative odours like that of a musty carpet, can drive customers away. While the strength of the odour is also important, often if the right odour can have a negative effect if it is too strong.

Visuals

These are as a result of the overall presentation of the store, i.e., interior design, display and visual merchandising. Elements and lightening can cause a customer to buy more. Natural shades of gold in the gold jewellery or natural lights in the garment stores add to the richness of the colour of the product. Bright colours like bright red or yellow are said to increase the pulse rate in human beings and trigger impulse purchases. Soft colours like pastels keeps the pulse rate comfortable and are used in merchandise backdrops that need a longer time for inspection and selection, like jewellery and watches.

There is no hard and fast rules as the customers have their own little pet peeves. Retailers, however, cannot afford to turn off even single customer as the image is everything. Keeping the stores neat and clean is the easiest and inexpensive way to attract customers and creating a pleasant customer base. The atmosphere of a store is made up of physical characteristics and surrounding influences, that are used to create an image in order to attract customers.

5.10 Don'ts in a Retail Store

These include:

Dirty toilets/ washrooms

Retail store washroom should always be sparkling clean, weather they are open for public use or not. Plenty of paper towels, soaps, trash receptacles should be stocked in the bathroom, which should be cleaned multiple times daily.

Messy trial room

Keeping the trial area free of discarding hangers, tags, empty packaging is a complete no. basic necessities of trial room includes a stool, 2-3 hooks behind every door, size charts, etc.

Loud music

Music that is too loud inappropriate or of poor quality can ruin a positive shopping experience.

Handwritten signs

It is best to use computer printed or pre printed signs, as in this era of technology there is not use of displaying handwritten signs. Moreover, printed signs look more professional whereas the sign with hard to read writing can turn off a customer.

Stained floor and ceiling tiles

Dirty carpets, stained floorings and ceiling tiles can turn off any customer. Sweeping, vacuuming and mopping should be done on a regular basis.

Poor lighting

Ample lighting should be ensured in all customer areas of the store, taking into consideration shoppers with aging or less than perfect eyesight. Burned light bulbs should be removed immediately. Stores should be well illuminated all the times.

Unpleasant odours

Some odours are understandable and may even appeal to the customer's sense of smell. Neutralisers should be used to combat any such offensive odours.

Crowded aisles

Stores should be designed to allow appropriate space between aisles and between the fixtures: walkways should be kept free of merchandise. Cramped space can ruin a shopping experience and turn off customers.

Disorganised cash counters

A stack of hangers, returned merchandise, and sloppy work areas behind the cash counter are a huge customer turn offs. This area should not show any signs of disorganisation. It can also increase the probability of theft.

Lack of shopping cart and blanket

An adequate supply of carts and bags should be available on the hands of the customers.

Summary

- In a true sense, visual merchandising is the ‘face ‘ of fashion. Creating an attractive product display can draw the customer in, promote a slow-moving item, announce a sale, or welcome a season.
- Once the display is finished, add appropriate signage. Take photos of the display and keep record of the product sales during the display’s existence.
- Visual Merchandising is the art of displaying merchandise in a manner that is appealing to the eyes of the customer.
- Visual merchandising includes window displays, signs, interior displays, cosmetic promotions and any other special sales promotions taking place.
- There are certain things which a retailer needs to take care while proceeding with the process of displaying his products.
- The main goal of display is to showcase the products within the overall display area.
- Colour is one of the most powerful tools in the Visual Merchandising segment. It is a visual perceptual property. Colours can be associated with emotions, special occasions and gender.
- A theme is a display of sale items of similar categories e.g. a display of kitchen accessories.
- A good theme will lure the customer with a shopping mood into the store. Themes mainly depend upon the retailer’s imagination and creativity.
- The retail industry is a sector of the economy that is comprised of individuals and companies engaged in the selling of finished products to end user consumers.
- There are two basic forms of retailers: wholesale and specialty.
- A department store is a set-up which offers wide range of products to the end-users under one roof.
- Discount stores also offer a huge range of products to the end-users but at a discounted rate.
- A retail store which generally sells food products and household items, properly placed and arranged in specific departments is called a supermarket.
- A retail format which sells limited stock in bulk at a discounted rate is called as warehouse store.
- Mom and Pop stores are the small stores run by individuals in the nearby locality to cater to daily needs of the consumers staying in the vicinity.
- Speciality stores sell only selective items of one particular brand to the consumers and primarily focus on high customer satisfaction.
- A shopping centre is defined as a group of retail establishments that is planned, developed, owned, and managed as a single property.
- A strip centre is an attached row of stores or service outlets managed as a coherent retail entity, with on-site parking usually located in front of the stores.
- A community centre typically offers a wider range of apparel and other soft goods than the neighbourhood centre does.
- Similar to a regional centre, but because of its larger size, a superregional centre has more anchors, a deeper selection of merchandise, and draws from a larger population base.
- Visual merchandising helps in creating that consistent image in customer’s mind. Store image is created by visual merchandiser through the design and decor of the store.

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Self Assessment

1. Which of the following is not one of the effective elements of visual merchandising?
 - a. Odour
 - b. Balance
 - c. Colour
 - d. Focal point
2. _____ is the art of displaying merchandise in a manner that is appealing to the eyes of the customer.
 - a. Visual merchandising
 - b. Signage
 - c. Creativity
 - d. Balance
3. Which of the following is not a component of visual merchandising?
 - a. Make merchandise a focal point
 - b. Right choice of colours is vital
 - c. The retail picture
 - d. Display themes to appropriately support the product
4. In a _____ store, the consumers can get almost all the products they aspire to shop at one place only.
 - a. Warehouse
 - b. Department
 - c. Mom and pop
 - d. Speciality
5. A retail store which generally sells food products and household items, properly placed and arranged in specific departments is called a _____.
 - a. warehouse
 - b. supermarket
 - c. merchandise
 - d. department
6. A _____ centre is an attached row of stores or service outlets managed as a coherent retail entity, with on-site parking usually located in front of the stores.
 - a. strip
 - b. shopping
 - c. mall
 - d. neighbourhood
7. What in addition to shops provide restaurants, libraries, meeting rooms and a range of other services to create one stop shopping?
 - a. Concept stores
 - b. Transportation centres
 - c. Town centres
 - d. Vertical malls

8. Which of the following is not one of the elements which influence a store's image?
 - a. Employee
 - b. Fixtures
 - c. Odour
 - d. Balance

9. The type of merchandise determines its _____ in a store.
 - a. value
 - b. density
 - c. interior
 - d. price

10. Which of the following is not one of the reasons to turn the customer off?
 - a. Dirty washroom
 - b. Interior richness
 - c. Handwritten signs
 - d. Messy trial rooms

Chapter VI

Evaluating Visual Merchandising Proposals/Ideas

Aim

The aim of this chapter is to:

- introduce the planning in visual merchandising
- elucidate the importance of planning in a store
- explain the methods of planning in visual merchandising

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- explain the strategic approach in visual merchandising
- describe the importance of layout and presentation
- elucidate various ideas on visual merchandising

Learning outcome

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand the importance of displaying in visual merchandising
- identify the cloth styling techniques
- discuss the customer's needs and interests in visual merchandising

6.1 Introduction

Visual appeal is an important component in the success of any retail store. Successful business owners understand that the impact of visual appeal cannot be overstated in retailing. Every visual detail can greatly influence a customer's decision to remain in the store and ultimately make a purchase. Even the simplest elements, such as the general colour scheme, can affect a customer's disposition and determine a purchase decision, as well as repeat business.

6.2 Visual Merchandising Planning

As stated above, planning is the core part of visual merchandising. The general methods adopted by most of the retailers include:

Evaluate overall colour schemes

Create a colour plan that visually paints the retail space by accenting focal points that draw customers to specific areas. Coordinate featured items to provide a core structure for a visual merchandising plan. Match store colour schemes to products. Use dominant store product colours in strategic areas, such as the entryway and exit. Find and use flattering colours that could evoke emotion. Include bright colours in aisles as well as in product displays.

Develop merchandising themes

Consider the themes of the products, incorporating holidays and special occasions into item groupings. Send visual messages through seasonal activity communication. For example, for spring, use floral arrangements with products as appropriate. Offer information for activities like outdoor parties for summer and fall, displaying product use. Floral shops and hardware stores could feature flower bulbs, seeds, pots, gardening tools and information on how to use them. Use themes to give customers incentives for projects and activities that relate to the products in the store.

Feature sale products creatively

Build product displays that showcase sale products with accents. Use vibrant colours that flow naturally with the colour scheme of the store. Use product add-ons for main products featured. For example, place every item that a customer would need to create the effect of the display within the grouping. Build on each item with merchandise to display suitable brightly coloured items as add-on sale products. Use accent lights for featured products, since light attracts attention. Study and examine other retail stores. Consider how to effectively adapt and create new themes to help design displays. This type of strategy can enhance visual merchandising plans for increased sales margins.

Keep a fresh perspective

Change all displays on a weekly basis. Use advertisements to guide display creation. Customers need to experience new products that serve to update old standards. Regular display changes can also entice customers to return regularly. Use aspects of entertainment to educate customers who can appreciate learning how to use products effectively. New displays are more relevant and interesting. Offer special display-only incentives and indicate them as such. This strategy may appeal to a customer's sense of the potential associated reward for frequent and regular store visits.

Today's successful retailers make the most profitable use of every square foot of space in the store and in the warehouse. Since this space is so costly, you must take a strategic approach to its use. Floor patterns, location of merchandise, levels of inventory and appropriate displays are all key factors in the proper use of space. Misuse of space can be as detrimental to your success as poor buying or careless hiring. It is very important for every store to create a suitable atmosphere and appealing presentations in order to trigger the consumer's buying decision. In a world where you can find identical merchandise in more than one store, layout and presentation become key differentiating factors.

Create your store for your target customer

You can have the most unique, creative and different store on the planet, but if doesn't conform to what your customers want and expect, then it is of no value. Retail has always been, and will always be, about the consumer. Your entire store concept must be built around your target customer. Succeed at satisfying this shopper and you win the game. Build and design a store that looks beautiful but doesn't fit the marketplace and the only people who will be happy are the architect and contractors.

6.3 Strategic Approach

Unfortunately, the days of running a traditional “Ma and Pa” operation, lacking any real business sophistication, are long gone. A haphazard approach to store layout generates less than desired results. You must squeeze every ounce of potential out of your store to make it a winner.

How you present your store is a very strategic part of your business. In order to position every item in its proper location, you must have a far more detailed plan than the usual “It was the only place left available, so that’s where it ended up!”

Give your best-selling merchandise the most favourable display areas in your store. There’s no point in making the job of selling products any more difficult than it needs to be.

Consider following suggestions:

High margin/high sales

If you have a winner, it can afford the “high rent” district in your store. Put it in your best selling spaces. These are your “hot zones”.

Demand merchandise

Customers make a point of coming to your store to get this merchandise, and they will hunt for it. Put it in less valuable spaces and make them walk by your more impulse-related items.

Impulse items

These are the unplanned purchases customers make on a shopping trip. Items with high impulse success get great locations in the store. The cash desk area is a prime location for these products.

Related merchandise

Even though it may be in separate departments, place products near each other if they are coordinating or complementary items. This will make them more visible to the customer and make shopping easier. Cross merchandising works.

Seasonal stock

Some stores designate an area of the floor for merchandise that is on hand for only a short time. This creates an efficient changeover of that area when a new season arrives. In most stores, seasonal stock requires high visibility.

Department size

In order to help customers find them, smaller departments typically get better positions in the store than larger departments. Placing a small department in a poor visibility area is like putting the “kiss of death” on that department.

New departments

If you’re testing a new department or line of merchandise, give it the best chance possible to succeed by placing it in a prime selling area. Keep in mind, though, that within a short period of time it will need to earn the right to maintain a position in your “hot zones”.

Planograms

A planogram is nothing more than a picture of how various fixtures, shelves and walls will present your merchandise. It is a relatively simple concept, but a very powerful one because it takes into consideration what is known about the psychology of consumer buying habits.

Creating a planogram forces the retailer to carefully evaluate which products go where and how many will be displayed. By forcing yourself to plan the presentation of each department, you will become a more successful and proactive retailer.

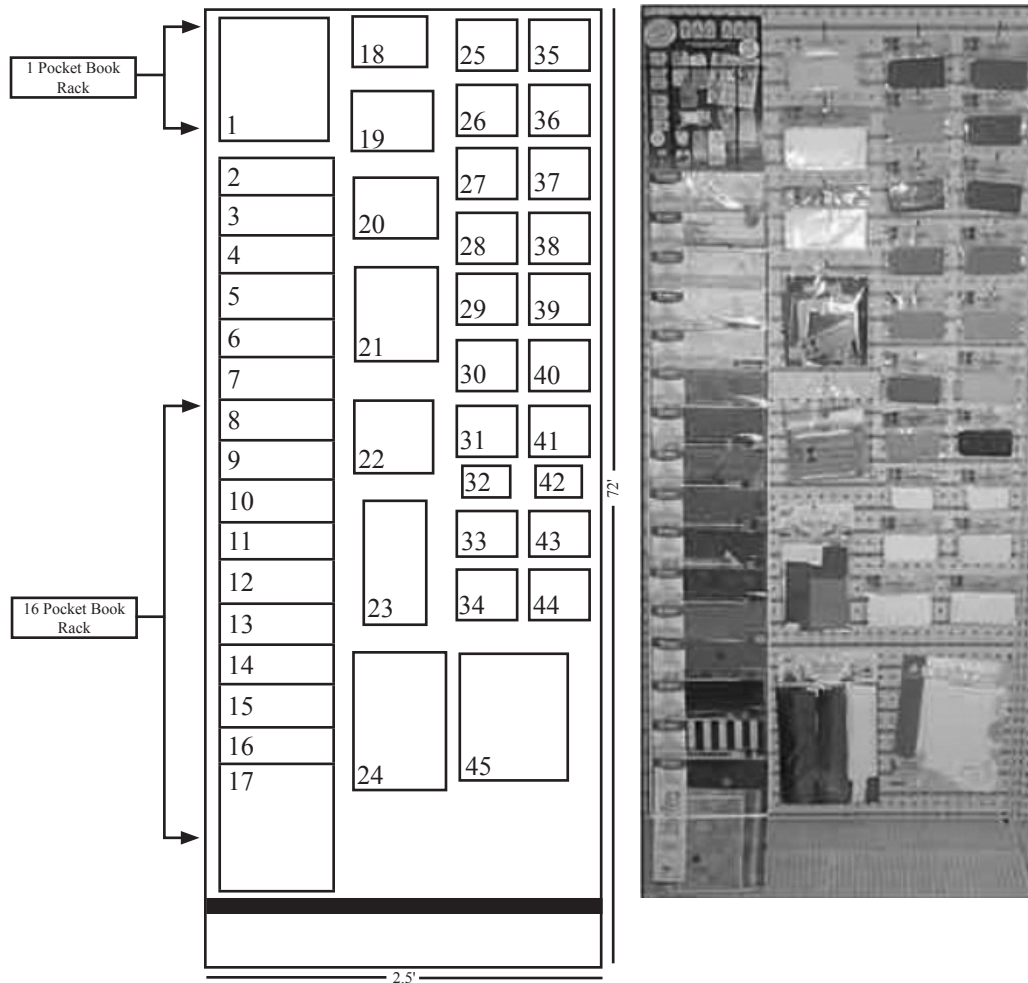


Fig. 6.1 Planogram

(Source: <http://www.pushpindigital.com/information/documents/Retail-VisualMerchandisingandSignage.pdf>)

Be original

Boredom, sameness and mediocrity pretty much summarises most retail store designs today. There is a lack of innovation. Too many retailers look at a store chain that is successful, and then try to “knock off” its look.

6.4 Layout and Presentation

You must give the customer as many reasons as possible to shop in your store. One of the key attractions is your store layout and presentation. If you look the same, or worse, than the competition, then the customer becomes less attracted to your store. Sameness (that’s when retailers look and act alike) is a curse for most stores. If you can’t be better than the competition, you might as well go work for them.

Lighting

An often overlooked and underestimated tool available to retailers is store lighting. Studies show that proper lighting can increase merchandise sales by up to 20%. Yet, all too often we let the importance of lighting go unrecognised.

Start with the basics: Aim your spotlights on the intended products and be conscientious about replacing light bulbs right away. Customers are definitely not impressed when they notice several burnt out bulbs as they walk into a store. It’s just a sign of neglect and complacency.

Lighting can be a costly investment and a complete renovation of the current system may not be feasible for many retailers. The following recommendations, however, can provide you with a good starting point:

- Use colour corrected bulbs. Improper bulbs make merchandise look grey and shabby.
- Make use of spot lights, preferably halogen, to highlight key selling areas.
- Point your lights where you want your customers to enlook. If your walls are supposed to show off your products, then flood them with “wall washing” light.
- Make the front of your store “glow” with light. You need to be noticed and a bright storefront is more attractive and appealing.
- Brighter stores are now the norm. Lighten up!

Address the senses

Create a sensual experience in your store by paying attention not only to sight, but also to smell, touch and sound. Think of how magical a bakery smells. Doesn't it make you want to buy? Remember how many times you've walked into the movie theatre, promising yourself there would be no popcorn this time, only to find yourself elbows deep in a super-sized bucket?

Pay attention to how your store smells. You can trigger emotional responses in customers that cause them to relax, energise, reminisce, and (hopefully) buy something.

Music is an essential element in any store. It helps accentuate and build your atmosphere. It can also add texture to the environment. Customers tend to stay longer in environments with appropriate music and if they stay longer, they typically buy more. A relaxed and fun work place will also increase the productivity and morale levels of your employees. Be sure that the music you choose fits the store and the customers. Stores attracting teens should play the lively music of the day. Nature-oriented retailers should use natural, soothing sounds blended with classical themes. As in all things, do it right. Avoid the radio station, since commercials and newsbreaks don't help at all. Compact disc systems are inexpensive and allow the music to play continuously without the risk of sudden silence. Digital music services are the best option.

Housekeeping standard

Your store's housekeeping must be impeccable. When we say impeccable, we mean flawless. A dirty store says you don't care. It says you've lost interest and you probably don't treat the merchandise with respect, either. It's tough enough to win over customers without adding to the difficulty by presenting a less than spotless store.

- Create a daily and weekly checklist of every housekeeping duty that must be completed. Assign these duties to various individuals and hold them accountable for getting them done.
- Polish the chrome.
- Dust the shelves.
- Clean the lights.
- Get rid of the tape on the windows.
- Remove the clutter behind the cash counter.
- Tidy up the back room.
- Chase those dust bunnies away. Vacuum daily.
- No smudges.
- No grease.
- No dust.
- No grime.

Store windows

Your storefront windows are an ideal opportunity to attract customers' attention and drag them into your store. Windows should be used for these main purposes:

- Sales promotions
- Image-building
- Seasonal changes
- New arrivals
- High demand items

Successful store windows are changed frequently! In a downtown area, potential customers pass by your store at least two or three times a week. Ask yourself "If my windows didn't attract them into the store this week, what makes me believe they will next week?" This frequent number of "pass by's" means that you must change your windows as often as every week.

Determine how many times your windows are seen by potential customers and rotate them to match that frequency. You must constantly present a fresh and exciting face. As a minimum, windows should be changed once per month. Just do it!

Creative displays

While individual creativity and artistic flair play a major role in merchandise displays, here are some main principles that you should consider:

- Good displays tell a story or have a theme.
- Keep displays simple. Don't include too many items.
- Try portraying your products in use.
- Focus on impulse items.
- Use proper lighting and props.
- Use well-stocked power walls/displays to show best sellers.
- Show complementary/coordinating items together.
- Integrate your advertising into your displays.
- Use motion to attract attention.
- Focus on best sellers/hot items.
- Unless you're a pro, keep it simple.

Signage

Too often, retailers spend big money on external advertising campaigns involving flyers, handouts, coupons, newspapers and other media then overlook the impact of in-store communication and presentations.

As much as 80% of all sales are generated at point of purchase by signage, displays and events within the store. This far outweighs any other type of promotion along marketing event. Signage is the "silent salesperson" for the retailer and must reflect your image. Handwritten signs are essentially taboo. Professionalism is everything in your store and the same holds true with your signage. There are four different types of signs:

- Promotional signs: For off-price events or specials.
- Location signs: For direction to specific departments.
- Institutional signs: For store policies, charitable events.
- Informational signs: For product related features/benefits/prices.

Consider the following ideas when designing your next signage campaign:

- Make your signs short and sweet. You have three seconds to tell the customer what you want them to know.
- Create a consistent look. Colour, size, type, style, and layout should be consistent.
- Use feature/benefit/price signs.
- Only post positive signs about your policies. If it's negative, either change it or don't post it.
- Say "Save \$10", instead of "10% off". It's usually much more powerful.

6.5 Visual Merchandising Ideas

Some of the general visual merchandising ideas are discussed as below:

- Do not limit your visual merchandising theme to the winter, spring, summer and fall. Try to use at least six different themes in a year. If you can use different themes in every month, much better but this is quite unmanageable. Six different themes a year are more flexible; this will let you change your theme every other month. You can inline your theme with special events like Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, Teachers' Day, Valentine's Day, festivals, anniversaries and other celebrations and holidays.
- Variation will support your theme to avoid boringness of your display and decoration. You can use the same theme every year but avoid using the same display concept and style. Also avoid using the same props for different themes consecutively. You may keep the materials you have recently used and use it again after few months or put it in other locations or to other branch of your store.
- Go unusual and big display. People love novelty, something they haven't seen before. You can search for some visual merchandising ideas in the internet. Collect different ideas, combine them together then modify. It is collect, combine and modify – not copy and paste.
- Don't forget to apply the elements and principles of design to your projects. The elements of design are line, shape, form, size, space, colour, value and texture while the principle of designs are novelty, variety, harmony, unity, balance, proportion, emphasis, contrast, rhythm and pattern. Effectively use colours, texture, shape forms and lines. Establish a focal point on your window display for easy viewing then harmonise each element of your display to maintain neatness and to direct the eyes of your viewer to each element of the display.
- Integrate dynamic techniques in your display. Integrating printed materials, multi-media, interactive installation and sensory input in your display are known to be dynamic techniques and are becoming the visual merchandising trend, not just for 2011 but also for 2012 and the coming years because of the fast moving digital civilisation.

6.5.1 The Store and Environment

Some of the general store ideas are discussed as below:

- Allocate extra budget to develop the facade and external appearance of your store because this is the first thing that will be noticed by the people at the street. Maintain the good look of your store – the marquees, awnings, signage, banners, entrance and landscapes are the areas you need to consider. You can use significant colour or unique carvings and mouldings that represent your business so that your store can be easily identified among others.
- If you have a big store, provide enough directional signs inside your store and don't forget to include the local language in your sign and signage system. Signs and signage are also known as visual cues that direct your customers to roam around your store which often results to unplanned purchase. Also, use light-directed signage in front of your store to attract people during the night, and don't forget to change the old signage.
- In addition to a good floor plan, enough height of the ceiling from the floor is also important; 10 feet is ideal but higher than this is better. If the distance between the floor and ceiling is lower than 10 feet, use shorter shelves to provide enough space for the eyes of your customers wander inside your store.
- Maintain the good appearance of your shelves, showcases, racks and other POP materials; if one is damaged, do not hesitates to repair it or decorate the part that is damaged. Radius shelving is also becoming a trend of visual merchandising, so it's better if you have one.
- Enhance the ambiance of your store by adding a little classic aroma, music and dramatic lighting.

6.5.2 Displaying the Merchandise

Some of the general ideas to display merchandise are discussed as below:

- Use the suggestive technique in displaying your products. Show the items in use, make a hamper or group items as one set, like displaying together the chopping board, knives and other cookware.
- Use appropriate rack or bin to suggest quality and price. Normally, customers expect that items in the offer bin have lower prices than those in shelves and showcases.
- Know of the important display points or hot spots inside your store. Display some items which have higher profit margin at the end cap, the hub at the end of an aisle or gondola especially in grocery stores. The third level, which is straight to eye level, of the shelves and cashier's point are the good areas to place the items that are usually forgotten, add-ons, less necessary and unbranded products – obviously you don't need to put rice and sugar in these areas.
- Vary the position, arrangement and style of your display once a month if can't manage to do it twice a month. Variation also helps to avoid boredom to your regular customers. Make use of shelving, hanging, pegging, folding, stacking or dumping merchandise display techniques depending upon which one works best for the type of your products.
- Add product information or answers to frequently asked question beside or near your items especially when your items have unique specification, unique quality or patented because more shoppers nowadays are wise buyers and are after of the product quality. This will also help to lessen the repetitive tasks of sales staffs on giving the same answer to the same question of different customers.

6.5.3 Displaying Signage and Ticketing

These include:

- Do not hide your price tag. If not the first, price is the second consideration of most customers after good quality, so make it easy for the customers to know the price even without the assistance of the sales staff by putting the price tag at highly visible and expected spot. Stick the price stickers at the upper right side of the items because eyes are naturally drawn in this area. For apparel, stick the price at the neck line or collar, at the back portion of the waist line of pants or at the brand or manufacturer's tag attached on the item.
- Avoid covering the important text and icons of the packaging with your price stickers and make sure that the price stickers are properly stuck and not slanted.
- Price tags should be readable. Don't make an insufficient ink as an excuse. Remember the rule for text readability for visual merchandising materials.
- Ignite the interest of your customers by using hanging price cards for special offers. Posters and other professionally made signage have greater impact and sell better than handwritten signage.
- Larger font size is advisable for signage that is intended to be placed inside a showcase. Make sure that the signage inside the showcases and on shelves is readable from at least 1.5 meters away and the price of the product should be 1/3 of total area of the signage while the price should be 2/3 of the total area of the signage.

6.5.4 Most Valuable Tools

These include:

- If you have a big store, provide enough directional signs inside your store and don't forget to include the local language in your sign and signage system. Of course, gun tucker and glue gun won't work without staples and glue stick respectively.
- Nylon string (fishing line) and cable-tie are also used to quickly fasten materials, to hang light objects and to bond parts of your project. This materials are effective when fastening materials that gun tucker and glue gun cannot do like tying and knotting.
- Cutter and scissors have obvious purpose, for cutting.
- Pliers and screw driver are necessary especially during the installation of lighting in your display.
- Steel tape and pencil should not be left behind when you start planning for and making your decoration, display and renovation.

6.5.5 Paper Crafts

Some of the paper crafts are:

- Origami is the art of paper folding from Japan. You can create animals, plants, vase and many more which you can add as decoration to your display.
- Paper beads are made from paper strips rolled and glued like beads.
- Paper mache is formed by wrapping a mould with wet paper strips with white glue and removing the mould when the paper is dry.
- Paper strip curls can be good space filler which may resemble grass and leaves of plants.
- Weaving papers have many ways. You can make basket, tray or vase by waving paper strips or paper straw.

6.5.6 Decorating with Balloons

The decorations with balloons can be as follows:

- Use helium to puff your balloon to let it float in the air. It is easy to form arcs by using helium balloon.
- Use different size, shapes and colour to avoid monotony.
- Make a balloon sculpture. This is not difficult to make nowadays because there are already available materials in the market to make an instant balloon sculpture. You can easily form a human figure by simply following instructions included.
- Use PVC tube as support if you want to make pillars and arcs of balloons.
- Experiment for a new style. This is not only applied when decorating your store with balloons; experimenting is necessary to discover brand new ideas which you can implement to your next projects.

6.5.7 Decorating with Flowers

Some of the decorations with flowers include:

- Create artificial flowers using crepe paper. Creating plum blossoms using crepe paper for Chinese New Year display and decoration is so easy. It can be done as follows:
- Collect twigs for free from your backyard and combine them with your arrangement to add height and fill the empty space.
- Mix commercial artificial flowers with your own-made artificial flowers using papers to both save your finances and add attractiveness to your arrangement.
- Topiary and pomander are also unique style to add in your display and decoration.
- Use Styrofoam as floral foam when arranging dried and artificial flowers and ornamental plants because Styrofoam is stronger than floral foam.

6.5.8 Dealing with Styrofoam

Some of the uses of styrofoam are listed below:

- Use electric cutter to speed up your work. You can make an improvised one if you find it expensive to buy an electric Styrofoam cutter.
- Use just enough temperature of glue gun to avoid melting the Styrofoam when the stick glue is applied into it.
- Use hand-held cutter when need some Styrofoam carving.
- Nail is for wood, barbecue stick is for Styrofoam. In our own slang language, we call it “Magic Stick” because of its versatility it terms of constructing large Styrofoam display.
- Spray at about 18 inches away from the Styrofoam when you are using aerosol spray paint to avoid deforming the Styrofoam.

6.5.9 More Techniques for Various Materials

Some other techniques are:

- Sponge requires rugby adhesive as Styrofoam requires glue stick. Making sponge sculptures is also fun. When bonding the edges of foam, apply the two point or areas that you want to stick together with rugby adhesive and set it them aside until the adhesive is almost dry before binding them together. Use spray paint to color your project and insert wires on the portions which you want to have curve or wave.
- Letter cutting nowadays are very easy because of new technology, the cutter printer. However, you will be obliged to do manual cutting if you only have a small store because it is unnecessary for you to buy the cutter printer and use it seldom, not unless if letter cutting is one of the services your business offers. The easiest way to cut letters is to use a pattern printed on the used office papers and by tracing it on you material, a vinyl sticker, construction paper (cartolina), bond paper or foil.
- When sticking large stickers, spray the adhesive side of the sticker with solution of water and liquid detergent or shampoo to avoid damage. The solution will serve as adhesive repellent while it is wet and will allow you to adjust the position of the sticker without damaging your material. Wipe the sticker with glass wiper until the solution is drained.
- Manila paper, a buff or light brownish-yellow paper that is made from Manila hemp (abaca) or wood fibres, is a good material if want to create a rock formation. First, you need to create a foundation by building empty boxes resembling a rock formation. Slightly spray the paper with colour black, red and yellow to establish colour value then slightly crumple the paper while sticking it on and covering your foundation.
- It is good if you have mannequins that are bald than that with built-in hair. The most common colours of mannequins are black and greyish white and by painting the whole body of mannequins with gold or silver will add a difference to your display. It will look like a metallic man. You can also apply a body-paint design to your mannequin if you wanted to.

6.5.10 Cloth Styling Techniques

Some of the cloth styling techniques are:

- **Crumpling:** If you know how to crumple a sheet of paper then this would be easy for you. It is as simple as crumpling a piece of paper while covering the parts in your display areas that you want to hide.
- **Draping:** This is to cover, dress, or hang with or as if with cloth in loose folds – the most popular technique for cloth styling.
- **Dropping:** This is to stick one end of a long cloth at the ceiling and letting the other end to drop. It is nicer to look at if you will combine it with Christmas lights or lit with a spot light. While draping uses loose folds, dropping do not.
- **Table skirting:** There are many styles of skirting a table; you find thousands of examples in the internet and libraries.
- **Twisting and braiding:** The cloth will look like rope when you twist it and braid the two or three different colours.

6.5.11 Painting Techniques

Some of the painting techniques include:

- **Marbling:** It is to paint your project resembling marble by applying right combination of light colours and putting some lines like cracks using darker colours.
- **Dipping:** When you are painting a lot of deeply carved and small objects with the same colour of paint, it is very time consuming to use a paint brush; you better a wide-opened container, pour enough quantity of paint into it then start dipping you the deeply carved or small objects into it.
- **Spray:** The most common you can you can use perhaps is an aerosol spray paint but you can also use a machine. You really need to do spraying if your project is made of sponge.

- **Splatters, sprinkling and stamping:** This is what I like. Before you apply splatter, sprinkling and stamping, you need to apply first a base colour as background and after that, you can start sprinkling different colours or stamping different patterns on it.
- **Sponge, string and cloth and roller brush:** Using these materials is another way to create patterns and design. Allow me to further discuss this topic next time.

6.5.12 Lighting Techniques

Some of the lighting techniques include:

- **Only show light beams:** Rather than showing your fluorescent lamp or incandescent bulb, hide them in a way that only the beams of light will be seen. In some ways, you can put a Christmas light behind the dropped cloths or wrap the cloth cylindrically around the fluorescent lamps or bulbs. Spotlights are also the best for this purpose. Having soft projected light will let your display to glow evenly.
- **Chandeliers:** If you have available chandeliers, it is good to use to show elegance and luxury. Modern chandeliers are also better but they are quite expensive, however, you can find alternatives.
- **Use different colours:** Lights of different colours are indeed more attractive than that white fluorescent lamp alone that is why coloured lights are recommended for window display and in some areas of the store.
- **Modern lighting:** Add a little contemporary look to your store and display by using modern lighting. Some that you can use are modern-designed floor lamps and ceiling lights, coloured spotlights, LED light strips, neon lights and coloured fluorescent lamps. You can surf the internet to find thousands of ideas about modern lighting if want.
- **Alternative lights:** Instead of using incandescent bulbs and old-type Christmas lights, you better use compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) and LED (light-emitting diode) decoration lights. CFLs and LED lights are energy-saver and are less hot thus they cost-effective and safer to use.

6.5.13 Extra Embellishments and Finishing Touches

These include:

- **Binder medium (acrylic emulsion):** We are ordering our art material from Singapore and they call this TG Medium; in Philippines it is simply called emulsion. This is like white glue that is usually used as binder of metallic powder, but you will not use this with the metallic powder. You can use the binder medium as finishing coat to have glossy-look projects.
- **Glitters powder:** It is available in different colours. A tiny lustre makes big difference; it keeps your project twinkling.
- **Ribbons:** A balloon display is even better to look at closer with curls of ribbons but ribbons are not only for balloon display, there more uses like space filler as one example.
- **Space fillers:** Don't leave your window display with awkward spaces. If there are areas that will make you display awkward and you think you have no more materials to add, use curls of paper strips, crumpled cloth, doodles of ribbons or any other stuffs you can find around to solidify and harmonise your display. Those materials you use to cover the empty areas are what we call space fillers.
- **Captions:** You can add some notes to your display. These could be product information, instructions, the theme or a related quotation to trigger more interest to you customers.

6.5.14 Integrating Sensory Input

These include:

- **Seeing:** Use wobbling instead of static shelf-talker or display moving items rather than those that not moving to get your items noticed because "movement" naturally captures more attention of anybody.
- **Touching:** Allow your customers to feel the texture of your products. Let them experience how soft, how hard, how smooth, how rough, how sticky or how dry your products are.
- **Tasting:** This is especially good for those who selling food and drinks. This is quite on another level of merchandising but is still oftentimes difficult to detach from visual merchandising.

- **Smelling:** If you're selling oranges, try to use air humidifier with citrus scent. Or, you can add classic aroma in your store and please avoid using strong-smelled air freshener and naphthalene or moth balls in your store.

Some other important points are as follows:

- **Create theatrical effect and the emotion:** It cannot be argued that people (including me) response to what is dramatic and emotional stimulus. A theme is very important to do this part. When it is Christmas, decorate your store according to the season and let your shoppers feel the season inside your store.
- **Evaluate the effectiveness of silent salesperson (visual merchandising):** It is always the best to know if your visual merchandising strategies are working for you or against you to know, which one is to be enhanced and which is to be maintained. If it helps increase you sales, then your silent sales person is working well.

Summary

- Visual appeal is an important component in the success of any retail store. Successful business owners understand that the impact of visual appeal cannot be overstated in retailing.
- Create a colour plan that visually paints the retail space by accenting focal points that draw customers to specific areas. Coordinate featured items to provide a core structure for a visual merchandising plan.
- Build product displays that showcase sale products with accents. Use vibrant colours that flow naturally with the colour scheme of the store. Use product add-ons for main products featured.
- Customers need to experience new products that serve to update old standards. Regular display changes can also entice customers to return regularly.
- You can have the most unique, creative and different store on the planet, but if doesn't conform to what your customers want and expect, then it is of no value.
- A haphazard approach to store layout generates less than desired results.
- A planogram is a picture of how various fixtures, shelves and walls will present your merchandise. It is a simple concept, but a very powerful one because it takes into consideration what is known about the psychology of consumer buying habits.
- Lighting can be a costly investment and a complete renovation of the current system may not be feasible for many retailers.
- Too often, retailers spend big money on external advertising campaigns involving flyers, handouts, coupons, newspapers and other media then overlook the impact of in-store communication and presentations.
- Do not limit your visual merchandising theme to the winter, spring, summer and fall. Try to use at least six different themes in a year.
- If you have a big store, provide enough directional signs inside your store and don't forget to include the local language in your sign and signage system.
- If you have a big store, provide enough directional signs inside your store and don't forget to include the local language in your sign and signage system.
- Create artificial flowers using crepe paper. Creating plum blossoms using crepe paper for Chinese New Year display and decoration is so easy.
- Draping is to cover, dress, or hang with or as if with cloth in loose folds – the most popular technique for cloth styling.
- Marbling is to paint your project resembling marble by applying right combination of light colours and putting some lines like cracks using darker colours.
- If you're selling oranges, try to use air humidifier with citrus scent. Or, you can add classic aroma in your store and please avoid using strong-smelled air freshener and naphthalene or moth balls in your store.
- Use wobbling instead of static shelve-talker or display moving items rather than those that not moving to get your items noticed because "movement" naturally captures more attention of anybody.
- Allow your customers to feel the texture of your products. Let them experience how soft, how hard, how smooth, how rough, how sticky or how dry your products are.

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Self Assessment

1. Which of the following is not a method of planning in visual merchandising?
 - a. Colour Schemes
 - b. Merchandising Themes
 - c. Fresh Perspective
 - d. Customer satisfaction

2. Which of the following is not one of the suggestions in strategic approach?
 - a. High sales
 - b. Low sales
 - c. Impulse items
 - d. Demand merchandise

3. A _____ is a picture of how various fixtures, shelves and walls will present your merchandise.
 - a. planogram
 - b. merchandising
 - c. visualisation
 - d. department

4. Which of the following is not a part of layout and presentation?
 - a. Lighting
 - b. House keeping standard
 - c. Store windows
 - d. Seasonal stock

5. Match the following:

1. Draping	A. It is to paint your project by applying right combination of light colours and putting some lines like cracks using darker colours
2. Dropping	B. This is to cover, dress, or hang with or as if with cloth in loose folds.
3. Twisting and braiding	C. The cloth will look like rope
4. Marbling	D. This is to stick one end of a long cloth at the ceiling and letting the other end to drop.

- a. 1-A, 2-B, 3-C, 4-D
 - b. 1-B, 2-D, 3-C, 4-A
 - c. 1-C, 2-A, 3-D, 4-B
 - d. 1-B, 2-D, 3-C, 4-A
-
6. Which of the following is not used as an extra embellishment?
 - a. Ribbons
 - b. Glitters powder
 - c. signage
 - d. caption

7. _____ is the “silent salesperson” for the retailer and must reflect your image.
- Lightening
 - Signage
 - Planogram
 - Marbling

8. Match the following.

1. High margin	A. These are the unplanned purchases customers make on a shopping trip.
2. Demand merchandise	B. This merchandise is in hand of the store only for a shorter time.
3. Impulse items	C. To put the demanding product in the less valuable spaces and make them walk by other items.
4. Seasonal stock	D. To put the product in the best selling spaces of the store.

- 1-A, 2-C, 3-B, 4-A
 - 1-C, 2-B, 3-D, 4-A
 - 1-D, 2-C, 3-A, 4-B
 - 1-B, 2-D, 3-C, 4-A
9. Which of the following statements is false?
- How you present your store is a very strategic part of your business.
 - A haphazard approach to store layout generates less than desired results.
 - Planogram is a simple concept, but a very powerful one because it takes into consideration what is known about the psychology of consumer buying habits.
 - Items with low impulse success get great locations in the store.
10. Which of the following statements is false?
- You must give the customer as many reasons as possible to shop in your store.
 - Sameness (that’s when retailers look and act alike) is a blessing for most stores.
 - Customers are definitely not impressed when they notice several burnt out bulbs as they walk into a store. It’s just a sign of neglect and complacency.
 - Lighting can be a costly investment and a complete renovation of the current system may not be feasible for many retailers.

Chapter VII

Style Advising in Fashion Retail

Aim

The aim of this chapter is to:

- define fashion consulting
- elucidate the role of fashion advisor
- explain the need of fashion advisor

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- explain the requirements for becoming fashion advisor
- describe the components of fashion advising
- elucidate on the role of fashion designer and wardrobe stylist

Learning outcome

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand the role of visual merchandiser
- identify the skills needed to be a visual merchandiser
- enlist the steps required to be a visual merchandiser

7.1 Introduction

Fashion is a term that usually applies to a prevailing mode of expression, but quite often applies to a personal mode of expression that may or may not apply to all. Inherent in the term is the idea that the mode will change more quickly than the culture as a whole. The terms “fashionable” and “unfashionable” are employed to describe whether someone or something fits in with the current popular mode of expression. The term “fashion” is frequently used in a positive sense, as a synonym for glamour and style. In this sense, fashions are a sort of communal art, through which a culture examines its notions of beauty and goodness.

7.2 Fashion Advisor

A fashion advisor is a type of personal image consultant who specialises in wardrobe and makeup improvement. These professionals typically help clients make clothing style choices appropriate to a variety of social situations, including personal and business settings. They often also offer related services, such as closet organisation, colour and style advice, and shopping tips.

7.2.1 Role of Fashion Advisor

Fashion advisors typically offer expertise on more than just clothing. They often help clients to choose flattering hair styles, makeup, jewellery, facial hair grooming, and eyewear choices as well. Some may also emphasise a comprehensive fashion design, or overall style, for their clients. These consultants may try to enhance a client’s self-esteem by helping him feel both comfortable and confident in his new wardrobe.

Many consultants suggest colour choices in their clients’ fashion selections. They may help a client to determine a colour palette that is attractive with his or her skin tone and personal tastes. Also, choosing clothing based on colour psychology can help a client make a good impression through clothing. For example, blue symbolises loyalty to some people, so fashion advisors often suggest that clients wear blue for a job interview.

The fashion advisor will be bringing you an up to date assortment of cutting edge fashion and style ideas. The latest and greatest change brought by a advisor about creating your individual style for your life. Tips, ideas and resources are to simplify your life, all relating to how you present yourself to the world.

Many fashion advisors help clients enhance their professional image. These consultants may work one-on-one with clients or lead group seminars. Individuals who are searching for a job may use the services of a fashion advisor to help them dress properly for an interview. If an employer is concerned that employees are dressing too casually for work, it may hire a fashion advisor to educate the employees on proper professional dress.

Often, people hire fashion advisors to help manage or update their personal wardrobe. A fashion advisor may help organise closets by discarding worn or outdated clothing or supplementing an existing wardrobe with new clothes. The client may need timeless, basic apparel to be mixed and matched or trendy accessories to update style.

Many fashion advisors help clients shop for new clothing. The consultant may set ground rules for the client to follow, accompany the client to stores, or shop for the client separately. When shopping separately, a fashion advisor may act as a personal shopper and purchase new clothes, accessories, and makeup for his or her client over the long term.

A professional consultant may also help clients find their own personal style. Many people want their appearance to reflect tastes, preferences, and personality, and a consultant can guide them in this process. Also, fashion advisors may help a client create a personal image that reflects the tastes, preferences, and personality of his or her business.

7.2.2 Need of Fashion Advisor

The consultant considers the style a client hopes to achieve, the settings in which outfits will be worn, and the costs of different items when making significant wardrobe changes. Fashion consulting involves bringing together a stylish outfit with the appropriate accessories, makeup, and hair.

Fashion consulting is a professional service that is offered to individuals who need help buying, coordinating, and accessorising outfits. Trained consultants can make either subtle or drastic changes to their clients' wardrobes, makeup, and hair styles in order to improve their appearances and keep them up-to-date on the latest fashion trends. A professional may work for a single client, such as a celebrity, politician, or business person, or offer services to many people to help them make better fashion choices. Most experts work for fashion consulting companies, clothing manufacturers, movie studios, and television broadcasting companies, though some consultants choose to operate their own businesses.

A person might seek a fashion advisor when he or she simply does not have the time to choose and purchase new outfits. These consultants frequently go shopping for their clients, picking out clothing and accessories that they believe will look the best for certain occasions. A professional may add options to a person's existing wardrobe or completely replace the contents of his or her closet. The consultant considers the style a client hopes to achieve, the settings in which outfits will be worn, and the costs of different items when making significant wardrobe changes.

Fashion consulting involves bringing together a stylish outfit with the appropriate accessories, makeup, and hair. Many fashion advisors are cosmetics experts, able to determine the best colours, shades, and amounts of makeup products to use on their clients. Consultants often explain to hair stylists the basic looks they want for their clients, and many professionals actually cut and style hair themselves.

Successful fashion consulting can result in many benefits for clients. Besides improving their looks, consultants can improve clients' self-esteem by making them feel more comfortable in public settings. An individual who knows he or she looks good is usually less tense and self-conscious in social situations. In addition, professionals often become close friends with their best clients over time.

An individual who wants to get started in the fashion consulting field can pursue a two- or four-year degree program at an accredited institution. Many students pursue business or fashion merchandising degrees, and some schools offer programs specifically geared at fashion consulting. While enrolled in a program, a prospective consultant learns about the history of fashion, the prominence of certain styles, and the best methods of putting together a wardrobe. Upon graduation, most new consultants work as apprentices or assistants to professionals in the field to gain firsthand knowledge of how to obtain, please, and keep clients.

7.2.3 Requirements for Becoming Fashion Advisor/ Fashion Stylist

Some of the factors required for becoming a fashion advisor are:

Experience

It is the first route to start up a stylist business. If you have experience working as a personal stylist, fashion assistant or style advisor for a retailer, this is a really a fantastic starting point for you as you are already used to dealing with clients in a fashion retail environment and will feel quite comfortable in this role.

However, this can sometimes mean that you become much focused on selling stock to your client, rather than ensuring you are entirely 100% committed to helping them to achieve their style goals. It just comes with having sales targets drummed in to every day which you have to achieve in order to keep your managers happy.

You could also gain experience shadowing someone who does a similar role and then practicing for free to build up your knowledge base and skill level to enable you to style anyone, anywhere, with whatever you have to hand. This route is very effective but obviously can take a long time and very often you will have to work for free.

Learn how to style other people

This is definitely a great way to start out on your journey in starting a business as a personal stylist though because you do get used to how clothes sit on different body shapes so you learn on the job. The downside is that sometimes fashion retail wages are not the best and if you are currently working in a different career where you are earning a very good salary, this might not be the route you wish to take, as it is highly likely that you will have to start at the bottom of the ladder working as a sales assistant before even being considered as a candidate for a style advisor or personal shopper role in fashion retail.

Training to be a Personal Stylist

The second route to starting up a stylist business is by using a training provider who provides courses in personal styling and shopping. This is usually a very thorough and quick way to start up your business, compared to years of working your way up in fashion retail or learning the ropes by experience alone.

Since starting My Style Companion Training Academy for women who want to start their own businesses as Personal Stylists, Image Consultants, Personal Shoppers and Style Advisors we have been surprised by the number of people who are willing to start their business in this area with no training OR experience (i.e. no expertise). Some women think that all you need to start a business as a Personal Stylist is an eye for style but if it was that easy surely every stylish woman would be doing it successfully.

The reality of this is that it is unrealistic and unreasonable to ask anyone to pay for your 'expertise' when you know as much as every other woman who shops on the high-street and reads Grazia. Most women understand and know which trends to look out for. Many women are good at helping friends to pick out new outfits; and a lot of women know how to dress with serious style and edge; but this does not mean that they can all run successful businesses as a Personal Stylist otherwise they would probably all be doing it! Just because you can cook a meal, it doesn't mean that anyone would pay good money to come and eat in your restaurant – it's the same deal with personal styling.

Train to be an image consultant

The key is to look for training courses to become a personal stylist that offer not only the skills and knowledge you will require in order to service clients through personal styling services but also, how and where to get clients in the first place; how to set up your business; how to manage it; how to define, develop and promote your brand; and the best methods to make a profit. Without all this information you could spend an awful lot of time (years in some cases that we have come across) without any true confidence in what you are doing and therefore, no clients. Very disheartening and also, ploughing a lot of money in to promoting a business that isn't working or making any money.

7.2.4 Components of Fashion Advising

The components of fashion advising include:

- Tips to choose proper clothes, fitting the character, body, age and program
- Basic wear and accessories fitting the job and lifestyle
- Tips for special occasions, such as weddings, balls, cocktail parties and job interviews
- Assisting on buying clothes
- Tips for make-up and hair matching the clothes, face and age.

7.2.5 Fashion Designer

Fashion designers work on the design of items of clothing and fashion ranges. Some may focus completely on one specialist area, such as sportswear, children wear, footwear or accessories.

They produce designs for the haute couture, designer ready-to-wear and high street fashion markets. Developments in technology mean that a design can be on sale as a finished product in the high street within six weeks.

Depending on their level of responsibility and the company they work for, designers may work to their own brief or be given a brief to work towards, with specifications relating to colour, fabric and budget.

The main areas of work for fashion designers are:

- **High street fashion:** this is where the majority of designers work and where garments are mass manufactured (often in Europe or East Asia). Buying patterns, seasonal trends and celebrity catwalk influences play a key role in this design process. It is a commercial area and heavily media led.
- **Ready-to-wear** (also known as prêt-à-porter): Established designers create ready-to-wear collections, produced in relatively small numbers;

- **Haute couture:** This requires large amounts of time spent on the production of one-off garments for the catwalk - which are often not practical to wear usually to endorse other brands and create a 'look'.

7.2.6 Typical Work Activities

Tasks depend on the market the designer is working for, but core responsibilities include:

- Creating/visualising an idea and producing a design by hand or using computer-aided design (CAD)
- Keeping up to date with emerging fashion trends as well as general trends relating to fabrics, colours and shapes
- Planning and developing ranges
- Working with others in the design team, such as buyers and forecasters, to develop products to meet a brief
- Liaising closely with sales, buying and production teams on an ongoing basis to ensure the item suits the customer, market and price points
- Understanding design from a technical perspective, i.e. producing patterns, toiles and technical specifications for designs
- Sourcing, selecting and buying fabrics, trims, fastenings and embellishments
- Adapting existing designs for mass production
- Developing a pattern that is cut and sewn into sample garments and supervising the making up of these, including fitting, detailing and adaptations
- Overseeing production
- Negotiating with customers and suppliers
- Managing marketing, finances and other business activities, if working on a self-employed basis

Experienced designers with larger companies may focus more on the design aspect, with pattern cutters and machinists preparing sample garments. In smaller companies these, and other tasks, may be part of the designer's role.

7.3 Wardrobe Stylist

Fashion stylist is the job title of someone who selects the clothing for published editorial features, print or television advertising campaigns, music videos, concert performances, and any public appearances made by celebrities, models or other public figures. Stylists are often part of a larger creative team assembled by the client, collaborating with the fashion designer, photographer/director, hair stylist and makeup artist to put together a particular look or theme for the specific project. A wardrobe stylist can also be referred to as a fashion stylist, fashion editor, or celebrity stylist. According to one view, "Stylists are the people who push each celebrity to make the best dressed list," and assist with editorial photo shoots.

The job description varies greatly depending on the assignment. Stylists in the editorial and celebrity fields work primarily with designer samples, which are shown during fashion presentations and are lent to members of the fashion press during the 4-6 months before retail sales begin. High-level stylists may collaborate directly with designers to produce custom clothing for celebrity clients or editorials; this is common for celebrity stylists whose clients attend awards shows, and for fashion editors at top magazines. Stylists may also provide services such as personal shopping, restructuring a client's entire wardrobe, reorganising a client's closet, or other duties relating to the client's personal lifestyle.

A wardrobe stylist is distinct from a costume designer, the person who clothes fictional characters in film, television or theatre. A wardrobe stylist is distinct from an image consultant or a colour consultant. A person can be a colour consultant without knowing basic principles of line or style. An image consultant is an expert in both colour and line and may work with business professionals or individuals, as opposed to celebrities in particular.

Wardrobe stylists can be paid in several different ways. Some are paid an hourly wage. Some are paid by the day, which is called a day rate. Editorial assignments tend to pay less money, while advertising campaigns, commercials, or spokesperson campaigns tend to pay the most. Some freelance fashion editors (stylists who work exclusively in producing editorial content) may receive a rate per page in a given publication; fashion editors typically negotiate this rate on a yearly basis, during which time the publication will assign a certain number of project pages to be completed. Stylists may also be paid a flat fee for the length of a project. This procedure is often called a buy out. Some stylists can be put on a monthly retainer, in which they are paid a set fee for a period of time and are on call for the entire time period.

Wardrobe stylists are sometimes represented by agencies that specialise in representing wardrobe stylists, hair stylists and makeup artists. When a wardrobe stylist is represented by an agency, the agency usually books all of their work or assignments for a fee, usually ranging between 10 and 20% of the stylist's fee. The agency ensures that the stylist's needs are met, typically guaranteeing that transportation, travel, and accommodations, all handled before the wardrobe stylist takes an assignment.

Agencies usually expedite the client's payment and make sure that the wardrobe stylist is paid in full within 30 to 60 days of completion of the assignment.

Training

Some schools now offer courses in becoming a wardrobe stylist, but there are no specific educational requirements for the position. Most stylists acquire professional skills and knowledge by assisting other, established stylists, in a system similar to apprenticeship.

Stylist assistants are typically hired by the day at a rate between \$150 to \$350 a day. Assistants' responsibilities can vary greatly depending on the stylist and the assignment. Some are hired only to perform physical labour, such as setting up for a client fitting or returning samples to a press showroom; others may help the stylist with selecting wardrobe options, preparing clients for public events, or any other task needed to complete an assignment. According to one report in Seventeen Magazine, there were no specific education majors helpful for becoming a fashion stylist. But the degrees in fashion design, merchandising, communications, marketing, art history and photography could be helpful, but overall it was helpful to read fashion magazines regularly to develop a "great eye for fashion".

7.4 Visual Merchandising

A visual merchandiser is professional who does the activity of promoting the sale of goods, especially by their presentation in retail outlets. He or she implements the merchandising technique, called visual merchandising, which effectively uses the design of an environment via visual communications, lighting, colours, music and scent to stimulate customers' perceptual and emotional response and ultimately to affect their purchase behaviour.

7.4.1 Visual Merchandiser Job Description

Job description varies depending upon the company who offers the job vacancy but to give the view of what does visual merchandisers do, these the list of the most common activities of a visual merchandiser is listed as follows:

- Do all graphical artworks related to the advertising and promotion (this is usually for graphic designer cum visual merchandiser) liaise with various suppliers for all output and implementation of advertising and promotion materials and display materials;
- Conducting research based on lifestyle concepts and trends, as well as store and/or regional attributes; creates timely merchandise displays throughout store or defined area and creates an enjoyable, easy shopping experience for the customer to maximise revenue and customer satisfaction;
- Developing floor plans and sketching designs and maximising the space and layout of the store
- Sourcing materials and display elements, such as lighting, props and accessories
- Installing and dismantling displays, using available space to the best advantage
- Prepare and display merchandise for showroom, unpacking of pictures, accessories, and lamps

- Maintain a clean and orderly display of merchandise in the showroom
- Dressing mannequins and making use of creative lighting for window displays;
- Preparing for promotional events and dismantling displays at the end of promotional periods;
- Giving feedback to head office and liaising closely with merchandisers and buyers;
- Visiting other stores in the area, working with in-store sales staff and helping to develop their understanding of presentation;
- Preparing and display merchandise for showroom, setting up a 'model' or 'mock' store according to the company's latest design directives, and then photographing the store's windows, walls and displays in order to create a visual merchandising pack to send out to other stores (to ensure consistency with the company brand and image);
- Use and understanding of colour coordination, visual balance, and interior design in order to maintain the showroom to the highest standard;
- Implementing the designs and plans created by the visual merchandising manager and the creative director, and which may involve work such as lifting, carrying and climbing ladders.

The job requirements of visual merchandiser include:

- Diploma in visual merchandising or related fields like Graphic Design, Fashion Design, Fashion Sales, Fashion Management, Fashion Merchandising, Retail Management, Interior Design and Fine Arts.
- Proficient in Microsoft Office, Adobe Illustrator or CorelDraw and Adobe Photoshop, 3D Max and AutoCAD are also sometimes required.
- At least 1 year experience in related fields most preferably experience in retail industry.
- Good communication skills and planning and management skills and better attitude are also necessary.

7.4.2 The Work

Display designers and visual merchandisers use their design skills to help promote the image, products and services of businesses and other organisations. Visual merchandisers are responsible for presenting products in a way that attracts customers and maximises sales, through the creation of eye-catching product displays and store layout and design. In a large retail company, you would work as part of a display team and follow design plans that were created at head office by a visual merchandising manager or senior display designer.

To some extent the roles of display designers and visual merchandisers may overlap, but display designers usually focus on designing and producing point-of-sale displays, the stock container itself, visual, graphic and structural elements and how it is displayed in store.

Senior visual merchandisers are responsible for planning the store display themes for the year, creating visual plans and buying in the appropriate models, props, equipment and signage.

Your day-to-day tasks might include:

- Designing ideas for displays, or following a company design plan
- Developing floor plans
- Sourcing materials
- Maximising the space and layout of the store
- Dressing mannequins and making use of creative lighting for window displays
- Preparing for promotional events and dismantling displays at the end of promotional periods
- Creating special displays to promote a specific product or promotion
- Drawing designs and plans by hand or computer
- Deciding how to use space and lighting creatively
- Creating branded visual merchandising packs to send to each branch of a store

- Giving feedback to head office and buying teams
- Setting up displays, dressing dummies, and arranging screens, fabric and posters
- Hiring, borrowing or making props
- Making sure that prices and other necessary details are visible
- Coaching sales staff on how goods should be displayed
- Taking down old displays

Head office visual merchandiser coordinators often communicate the brand image and vision by set up a ‘model’ store according to the company’s latest design directives; photographing the store’s windows, each wall and every display, in order to create a visual merchandising pack to send out to other stores (to ensure that all stores are consistent with the company brand and image).

Hours

In a full-time job you would work 37 to 40 hours a week, often including late evenings to set up displays when stores are closed. Part-time work may be available. Putting up displays would mean spending a lot of time on your feet, lifting, carrying and climbing ladders. Working in shop windows can be hot and cramped. You could be based at head office or in store. In jobs with chain stores, you might travel to different branches to set up displays and brief sales staff.

Entry requirements

You would normally take one of two main routes to becoming a visual merchandiser or display designer. You could come from a background in design, or you could work your way up through the retail industry from an in-store sales assistant/supervisor role or as a trainee visual merchandiser or a visual merchandising assistant at head office.

There are no specific requirements to begin this career, but most employers look for candidates with relevant qualifications if you want to go in directly as a visual merchandiser or display designer job role, otherwise trainee visual merchandisers or visual merchandising admin assistants normally enter the role with limited visual merchandising experience and learn on the job – shadowing junior and senior visual merchandisers and often undertaking apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships

You may not need qualifications in display design if you have a strong retail background, or experience in related areas like interior design or photography. Trainee visual merchandisers with no retail experience can often join with no experience or qualifications and undertake the formal learning whilst in their role

The Level 2 and Level 3 Diploma in Fashion Retail qualifications have been designed specifically for individuals wanting to get a job in fashion retailing and cover visual merchandising at both levels.

Once in work, the Level 2 Award, Certificate and Diploma/SVQ in Retail Skills or the Level 3 Certificate and Diploma/SVQ in Retail (Visual Merchandising) and Apprenticeships may be offered by the employer.

Other qualifications that employers look for include the following:

- Foundation degrees in display or design
- Foundation degrees and degrees in marketing or retailing
- Skills and knowledge
- Creative, imaginative and energetic
- Understand a company’s customers and target markets and know how to appeal to them through eye catching displays and design
- Enjoy working in a fast-paced environment
- Work well as a team

- Aware of current trends and activities in design, fashion and culture
- Good communication skills to present ideas to others
- Able to use large and small spaces effectively
- A good sense of design, colour and style
- Good IT skills, for computer-aided design work
- A high level of attention to detail
- Senior visual merchandisers and head office coordinators should have technical drawing skills and, for some jobs, be able to use computer-aided design packages

Opportunities

Most visual merchandising jobs are in fashion and home ware departments and stores. You can also find some opportunities for display work at museums and tourist attractions, airports and hotels. Jobs may be advertised in the local and national press, design or retail trade magazines, and on retail jobs websites. With experience, you could progress to display team leader then visual merchandising manager. Alternatively, you could move into retail merchandising, or into exhibition or interior design. You could also work as a freelance display designer, creating one-off displays for clients.

7.4.3 Steps to become a Visual Merchandiser

These include:

Understand the role of a visual merchandiser

Understanding the role of a visual merchandiser will let you decide whether you really want to become a visual merchandiser or you are only day dreaming who needs someone to knock your forehead to wake you up.

Acquire the fundamental knowledge on visual merchandising

Like every other profession on their respective fields, there are technical terms and basic principles every visual merchandiser needed to know to become effective in visual merchandising – the ultimate goal of The Visual Merchandising Blog.

Acquire or enhance the related skills

In able to carry through you work as visual merchandiser, you need to acquire the related visual merchandising skills. However, if your experience in your previous jobs has relevance with visual merchandising, you don't need to acquire the skills but to enhance them. Never stop discovering learning new things or else, you will find yourself in the middle of boredom.

Develop your visual merchandising career plan

Now that you have decided to take visual merchandising as your career, develop your visual merchandising career plan. This will be your guide, your road map to be a real visual merchandiser. You can find guides and formats online.

Get a visual merchandising job

Your quest would be meaningless unless you can get a visual merchandising job. Although the terms “visual merchandiser” and “visual merchandising” are known to many retailing companies, there still companies who not familiar of the words. You can find them hiring “display artist” or “graphic designer and display artist” to do the visual merchandising tasks. A modern resume format will surely help you to have a good start.

7.4.4 Skills Needed to Become a Visual Merchandiser

The skills needed to become a visual merchandiser include:

Designing

This is the first skill that you need as visual merchandiser. I am referring to designing in general. Your main concern as visual merchandiser is to set-up the point of purchase (POP) materials and the products to become highly visible, attractive and ergonomic to the consumer. Thus, you must not just know the principles and elements design but also know how to use them effectively to achieve the purpose.

In addition, as visual merchandiser, you are sometimes a part on making floor plans and in-charge of selecting appropriate POP materials - you must have know-how about interior design, and as visual merchandiser, you are also responsible on selecting and matching appropriate costumes for and dressing up the mannequins - you must have know-how about fashion and fashion design.

Visual merchandising will not be completed without signage. The exterior banner, the shelf talker, the tabletop poster, the price signage and the rest of the printed visual materials in the store require desktop publishing and graphic design skills before it produced. The popular software that you can use are Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator and CorelDraw but if this software are not available, use Microsoft Office Publishes rather than Microsoft Office Word.

Decorating

This is the art of adding stuffs and embellishments into a certain place or object to make it appealing to the eyes. Decorating gives fresh look to an unwanted area of a store, object or any place and intrigues and ignites the emotion of consumers which will unconsciously draw them back to your store over and over again.

Take note how frustrating to see a rumbling flowers in a flower vase when you enter in a business establishment or stores; this may be a small matter but can damage a corporate brand.

Table skirting and draping are the skills related to decorating that are only for those people who work at hotels and restaurants. Give an extra value to the product by putting it on the top of a well skirted table. This will throw an impression to your customers that your product is special. On the other hand, table skirting skill is not only limited to tables; you can used the same principle on covering your offer bin so that it will not look bare. On the other hand, draping is also as important as table skirting especially during store's special occasion to add some touches on the ceiling, walls and posts.

Recycling

This skill will help a lot on saving your budget for visual merchandising. Think of painted twigs, origami out of used office paper, display table out of empty boxes, artificial flowers out of bottles of mineral water and soft drinks straw and other things that you have used before as materials for your floor and window display instead of buying new decorations. What you only need is your creativity and sense of art.

Painting

This is fun for me because I love mixing different colors of paint to produce new one. Painting is not just as easy as holding a paint brush or roller brush and rubbing it on your project. You must have a good sense of color harmony and color scheming to produce a composition that is quite unique which will catch people's attention. There are times that mural paintings are necessary to create better ambiance inside a store.

Sculpting and props making

The most popular material on sculpting stuffs for visual merchandising is the Styrofoam because it is easy to cut and easy to form. Paper Mache is also good and cost-effective material. Sculpting is usually used when making props but of course there are many other ways depending on what materials you are going to use. Props making also requires good crafting skills

Letter cutting

You may use manual or advance technologies to perform this task but for an in-house visual merchandiser, manual letter cutting is the closest to reality. This is usually applied to the environmental graphic or the signs and signage system like brand or corporate logos, directional signs and store signage where vinyl stickers are used.

Freehand drawing and writing

You may belong to a business that uses new technologies but for some small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and retail businesses, this is necessary. Using marker pens for POS price tags and shelves talkers is quite cost-effective than digital printing for your small business especially in a retail store where prices of goods are regularly changed. On the other hand, a large drawing can also be used as background of window display.

Photography

Good photographers always see things around them as if these things are inside a frame to create a state of art compositions. They look at every element and visualise how every object will be seen in the final output, the photo, and adjust the setting of the next shoot depending on the result of the first one. After you have set up your window or floor display, take a photograph of it and see how it looks in 2D. Take advantage of the mushrooming image-capturing devices (digital camera, mobile phone, iPhones and etc.) and online social media platforms of the new generation for your business via visual merchandising.

If you have good photography skills, you know how to do visual merchandising that encourage passersby to pose in front of your floor or window display and other projects to have photographed. They may share the photos to their friends or post it on Facebook; then you will have this as free advertisement.

Here are more skills a visual merchandiser should have the soft skills for visual merchandisers.

Planning

There is a popular line which goes, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. A plan serves as a blueprint of your activities and priorities and a person who knows how to plan Understands clearly his job responsibilities and authority, formulates realistic objective and schedules to carry out his job, classifies the work to be done, divides it into sections, and creates orderly and productive arrangements. Planning minimises the necessity for overtime, helps you manage your time, helps you manage your resources.

Initiating

The I Phone Proposition, that the two traits that employers highly value are initiative and self-reliance. A person who has good initiative recognises and corrects situations which need improvement, originates new approaches to problems, makes the most of the promising new plans or idea and faces up situations.

Delegating

It lightens your tasks, it generates a sense of belongingness and it encourages cooperation with others. A person who has good delegating skill provides the necessary know-how for others as required, defines jobs for others that provide the greatest challenge and opportunity, makes full use of the skills and abilities of his or her co-workers and avoids trespassing on authority once it is delegated periodically.

Organising

According to John C. Maxwell, if you do not choose to organised, you choose to agonise. Organising helps to make your work easier especially when you are looking for your visual merchandising tools and supplies or searching a file in your computer. The props the materials and designs are increasing in your room every day, so when you do not know how to organise, your “arts room” will look like a junk shop.

Communicating

This one of the most important skills that is required in any field. It involves listening, speaking and writing. A person who is good in communicating Expresses himself clearly and effectively – in writing, listening and speaking and manner, keeps inform on how others are thinking and feeling, encourages his colleagues to express their ideas and opinions, listens with intelligence to criticism of his own actions handles question satisfactorily, explains the why of his decisions and recognises good work and expresses appreciation.

Doing mathematics

If you find it difficult to convert centimeters to inches or feet to meters, you better review or study Mathematics before pursuing to become visual merchandiser because you will also be engage this kind of situation and other Mathematical problems in the field. Financial manage which indeed involves Mathematics is also important.

Evaluating

This is the key to determine your personal effectiveness and the effectiveness of your project. Doing thing without evaluation at the end will make stagnant, no improvement and you couldn't notice that your style, your design and methods are just the same with that of three or five years ago. I'm sure your boss or audience won't like that. Searched for what is ideal and compare output and methods with it then change those need to be changed. Be optimistic and use criticism to improve things.

Summary

- A fashion advisor is a type of personal image consultant who specialises in wardrobe and makeup improvement
- These professionals typically help clients make clothing style choices appropriate to a variety of social situations, including personal and business settings.
- Fashion advisors typically offer expertise on more than just clothing. They often help clients to choose flattering hair styles, makeup, jewelry, facial hair grooming, and eyewear choices as well.
- Many fashion advisors help clients enhance their professional image. These consultants may work one-on-one with clients or lead group seminars.
- A professional consultant may also help clients find their own personal style.
- Fashion consulting involves bringing together a stylish outfit with the appropriate accessories, makeup, and hair.
- Fashion consulting is a professional service that is offered to individuals who need help buying, coordinating, and accessorising outfits.
- A person might seek a fashion advisor when he or she simply does not have the time to choose and purchase new outfits.
- Fashion designers work on the design of items of clothing and fashion ranges. Some may focus completely on one specialist area, such as sportswear, children wear, footwear or accessories.
- Depending on their level of responsibility and the company they work for, designers may work to their own brief or be given a brief to work towards, with specifications relating to colour, fabric and budget.
- Experienced designers with larger companies may focus more on the design aspect, with pattern cutters and machinists preparing sample garments. In smaller companies these, and other tasks, may be part of the designer's role.
- Fashion stylist is the job title of someone who selects the clothing for published editorial features, print or television advertising campaigns, music videos, concert performances, and any public appearances made by celebrities, models or other public figures.
- High-level stylists may collaborate directly with designers to produce custom clothing for celebrity clients or editorials; this is common for celebrity stylists whose clients attend awards shows, and for fashion editors at top magazines.
- Wardrobe stylists can be paid in several different ways. Some are paid an hourly wage. Some are paid by the day, which is called a day rate.
- A visual merchandiser is professional who does the activity of promoting the sale of goods, especially by their presentation in retail outlets.
- Visual merchandisers are responsible for presenting products in a way that attracts customers and maximises sales, through the creation of eye-catching product displays and store layout and design.
- Table skirting and draping are the skills related to decorating that are only for those people who work at hotels and restaurants.
- The most popular material on sculpting stuffs for visual merchandising is the Styrofoam because it is easy to cut and easy to form

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Self Assessment

1. A _____ is a type of personal image consultant who specialises in wardrobe and makeup improvement.
 - a. visual merchandiser
 - b. fashion advisor
 - c. wardrobe stylist
 - d. fashion designers

2. Which of the following statements is false?
 - a. Fashion advisors often help clients to choose flattering hair styles, makeup, jewellery, facial hair grooming, and eyewear choices as well.
 - b. Fashion advisor may help a client to determine a colour palette that is attractive with his or her skin tone and personal tastes.
 - c. A fashion advisor may help organise closets by discarding worn or outdated clothing or supplementing an existing wardrobe with new clothes.
 - d. The latest and greatest change brought by visual merchandiser about creating your individual style for your life.

3. _____ involves bringing together a stylish outfit with the appropriate accessories, makeup, and hair.
 - a. Fashion consulting
 - b. Designing
 - c. Decorating
 - d. Painting

4. Which of the following is the first route to start up a stylist?
 - a. Experience
 - b. Style other people
 - c. Training to be a personal stylist
 - d. Train to be a image consultant

5. Which of the following is not one of the components of fashion advising?
 - a. Basic wear and accessories fitting the job and lifestyle
 - b. Tips for decorating the window displays of fashion store
 - c. Tips for special occasions, such as weddings
 - d. Assisting on buying clothes

6. Which of the following is not one of the main areas of work of fashion designers?
 - a. Low street fashion
 - b. High street fashion
 - c. Ready to wear
 - d. Haute couture

7. _____ requires large amounts of time spent on the production of one-off garments for the catwalk - which are often not practical to wear.
 - a. Low street fashion
 - b. High street fashion
 - c. Ready to wear
 - d. Haute couture

8. A _____ is professional who does the activity of promoting the sale of goods, especially by their presentation in retail outlets.
 - a. visual merchandiser
 - b. fashion advisor
 - c. wardrobe stylist
 - d. fashion designers

9. _____ and visual merchandisers use their design skills to help promote the image, products and services of businesses and other organisations.
 - a. Fashion consultant
 - b. Wardrobe stylist
 - c. Display designers
 - d. Painters

10. Which of the following statements is false?
 - a. Understanding the role of a visual merchandiser will let you decide whether you really want to become a visual merchandiser.
 - b. Like every other profession on their respective fields, there are technical terms and basic principles every visual merchandiser needed to know to become effective in visual merchandising
 - c. In able to carry through you work as visual merchandiser, you need to acquire the related visual merchandising skills.
 - d. Designing is the art of adding stuffs and embellishments into a certain place or object to make it appealing to the eyes.

Chapter VIII

Visual Merchandising Strategies and e- tailing

Aim

The aim of this chapter is to:

- introduce various display angles in visual merchandising
- elucidate the visual merchandising strategies
- explain the importance of a clean image of the business

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- explain visual merchandising in the world of e-tailing
- describe how visual merchandising is done in general website
- elucidate visual merchandising in apparel website

Learning outcome

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand the importance of visual merchandising in e-tailing
- identify the methods of customer satisfaction on internet
- understand the strategies adopted in visual merchandising

8.1 Introduction

Visual merchandising encompasses the way that you present product to grab the customer's attention. It can be specific promotional displays that introduce a new product or point attention to a specific brand, or it involve the way you place product on your shelves. Strategies to creating effective visual marketing displays can help you to maximize the impact of your retail floor space.

8.2 Visual Merchandising Strategies

The various visual merchandising strategies, which can help you to achieve the goal of profit is as follows:

A clean image

Visual merchandising is enhanced by colorful cardboard displays and sound or lighting effects, but the foundation of a good visual marketing campaign is the overall appearance of your business. All aspects of your visual marketing displays become enhanced when you keep your retail store clean. Develop a comprehensive cleaning schedule that is dedicated to following local health department laws and keep all of the areas that customers will see clean. Customers will be more inclined to notice, and be negatively affected by, a collection of noticeable debris in your store than a colorful merchandising display.

Eye level

To maximize visual impact, keep visual displays at the eye level of your target audience. For example, electronic displays that rotate information regarding pricing specials on car accessories should be at an adult eye level. Animated cardboard displays that promote the newest video game or toy should be at the eye level of the target age group. For example, marketing displays for toys targeted for young children will sit at a lower eye level than video game displays intended for teenagers.

Shelving

Customers in a retail store commonly search the shelves from left to right instead of top to bottom, according to Joanna Lefebvre, writing for the "Food Management" website. This is because the average person in the United States is taught to read left to right. This means that a flat visual merchandising display will not be as effective as a vertical one. A vertical display can more easily catch the eye of a client, whereas a flat display does not allow for easy left-to-right analysis from across the aisle.

Change

Maintaining the same visual merchandising displays for weeks on end will not help improve store revenue. Customers want to feel like they are getting introduced to something new when they come to your store, so you should change your visual displays at least once a week, according to the "Discovery Based Retail" website. Find new products to feature each week and encourage your manufacturers to send you new displays to help make your visual merchandising more appealing.

8.3 Visual Merchandising Rules

Visual merchandising is how you display products for sale. In particular, retail stores try to maximize the use of their floor space by drawing attention to items with the use of marketing materials and proper product placement. When displaying your merchandise, there are some basic visual merchandising rules you should follow that will help you create effective and profitable product displays.

Keep displays focused

A good visual merchandising display is one that focuses on one product or a small family of products. Putting too many diverse kinds of products in the same visual display area can result in the display being confusing to customers. For example, if you want to put the newest inkjet printer on display to boost sales, consider also displaying accessories such as ink and printer cables. However, trying to include computers and related accessories in the display can result in a cluttered look that distracts attention away from the printer.

Display angles

The most effective visual marketing displays are arranged at 90-degree angle to the customer as opposed to lying flat on a counter, according to marketing expert Harry J. Friedman, writing on the Friedman Group website. Customers can see a display that is standing vertically much easier than a horizontal display. It is also easier for customers to reach for product on a vertical display as opposed to trying to reach to the bottom of a horizontal one.

Horizon

Using displays of a uniform height creates a flat display horizon. When you do this, all of your displays can blend together and customers can lose interest. To maintain your customers' attention, use varying heights and colors to help each display stand out.

Product positioning

Products that are in high demand should be given priority in your visual displays over products that are not. Popular products will draw consumer attention and help to sell other items in and near the display. However, for the display to be effective, the high-revenue product should be the display's main focus. One way to determine product positioning is to allocate display space based on revenue ratios. For example, if a particular coffee maker generates 20 percent of your store's coffee maker revenue, then that model should receive 20 percent of the visual merchandising space.

Visual Merchandising in the world of E-tailing (on the Internet)

Visual Merchandising is now a key factor in online commerce overall. Some of the most significant early advancements in online merchandising have occurred in retail. That's not surprising. The retail industry pioneered merchandising long before the arrival of the Internet. Retailers recognized that presentation is a key driver of sales and success. It's the element that clarifies a product's distinctive benefits, stimulates interest and provokes a buying decision.

Now, retailers ranging from J Crew to J C Penney to QVC are displaying products with high definition photos, multiple camera angles, zoom and full-screen features, and video. In many cases, compelling and evocative copywriting tells the story of the product and what makes it stand out. Automotive companies – such as Ford, GM and Toyota – also have made impressive strides in this arena, enabling online shoppers to see styling and features in vivid detail and even configure their future cars – long before entering a dealership.

Real estate firms offer another compelling example. They provide three-dimensional walkthroughs that help home buyers see an array of properties and narrow down their interests before entering the final stages of a decision. Just as store merchandising has been essential over the years to the success of retail, evidence suggests that visual merchandising is driving conversions and generating sales in the online world. But the shopper's growing expectations must be met to produce these results. In one study of shopper behavior, Adobe found that shoppers "need to feel like they are getting an 'in-store' experience when they're 'browsing' online. High quality, large images, with zoom, spin, and color options emulate the 'touch and feel' experience of shopping in-store, while the use of video can show products in real use, simulating a 'knowledgeable' in-store clerk's live demonstrations."

8.3.1 Visual Merchandising in General Websites

In the retail store, visual merchandising means floor layout, interior design, signage, in-store promotion, and product mix that facilitate purchasing. Applying this proven notion to the Internet environment can offer a completely newsstand point for designing websites to be more profitable. Harris (1998) suggested some ideas that give direction for applying those proven concepts in the retail store to website designs. Instead of a floor plan and signage, online graphics, photos, and other design elements can be used to attract customers to websites and to get them to the products.

Merchandise categories available on the homepage (e.g., the order of the list) may lead customers in the right direction on the retail websites. In terms of display and music, a large colorful photo image of the product and price presented right next to the image of the product will attract customers' attention and also music on the opening page can create an exciting mood for the customers (Harris, 1998).

Rice (1997) researched website design factors that make customers keep returning to a website. Based on a pretest, the survey finally had 12 questions that fell into two areas: the evaluation of design and technology of the websites and the emotional experience of the user during the visit. The survey also included a question about site patronage intention and an open-ended question tapping the most important factors that affect decisions to return or not return to the site. The results showed that making websites with design a top priority was the most important factor to make people return to the websites. The second was making people enjoy the websites: making it easy to find what they were looking for and offering them a novel and entertaining experience.

The next factors in order were the quality of the organization/layout of the site, the degree of uniqueness, ease of finding information, excitement, visual attractiveness, ease of navigation, and the speed of the websites (Rice, 1997). The study offers some important guidelines to make websites attract more attention from customers.

Szymanski and Hise (2000) studied determinants of customer satisfaction in Internet shopping. The results showed that satisfaction with Internet shopping was influenced by perceptions of site design and merchandising (including product assortment and product information). More extensive and higher quality product information affected consumers' satisfaction in Internet shopping. Sites designed to be fast, uncluttered, and easy to navigate played an important role in consumers' satisfaction.

8.3.2 Visual Merchandising in Apparel Websites

For apparel related websites, the significance of the layout and design of the websites has been emphasized. According to Then and DeLong, (1999), visual design on Internet apparel sites can be considered analogous to retail store layout. Thus, the main goal for website design is similar to that for store design in that both websites and stores want consumers to come in, to enjoy the environment, and to purchase products.

Perceived risk is related to the inability to try on apparel products before purchase is a major concern for consumers when purchasing apparel in-home

It was found that there was a negative relationship between perceived risk and apparel purchase intention in Internet apparel shopping. This means that if perceived risks are reduced in Internet apparel shopping, then consumers' purchase intentions will be increased. It was found that the amount of product and service information was negatively related to perceived risk and positively related to purchase intentions in a television shopping context.

Therefore, to reduce perceived risk and enhance purchase intentions in Internet shopping, apparel websites should offer richer and more intensive product information using a variety of sources of product presentation.

It was indicated that if Internet retailers offer more information through the visual display of apparel products using a variety of images, then consumers will purchase more apparel products in the Internet. Visual aspects of product presentation such as images of the online product in its closest representation of end use, displayed in conjunction with similar items, and from various angles such as front, back, and side view can generate higher purchase intentions for consumers and in turn, increase higher selling for e-business.

Images including both static and kinetic graphics can make a website page look more interesting. It was also suggested that a three dimensional apparel display can be helpful in minimizing the uncertainties of apparel shopping on the Internet. Apparel product presentation can be enhanced with 3D views. Viewing apparel products in a variety of combinations can help consumers examine how they might look wearing those items tested the effects of product movement (kinetic image) in apparel websites on mood, perceived risk, and purchase intention. The study found that people exposed to a product in motion (kinetic image) tended to have more positive mood and greater purchase intention than those exposed to the product not in motion (static image). The results also showed that kinetic image reduced consumers' perceived risk.

Apparel sites often have some mix and match suggestions to create a complete look by combining pants, shirts, and accessories. J. Crew is the best example of excellent merchandising in that they combine individual items to suggest a complete look. Customers are not likely to purchase all those combined outfits but seeing the suggested coordination may increase sales. Mix and match suggestions for each item may increase consumers' purchase intention in Internet shopping.

For apparel products, fabric and color information and product details are considered important determinants of consumers' response behaviors such as satisfaction, site patronage, and purchase intentions. It was suggested that to reduce perceived risk for apparel products in catalog shopping, retailers should offer accurate and complete pictures of products and describe products in detail especially for color, texture, and fabric description.

It was also found that catalog pages with fabric samples enhanced attitude toward the apparel product in comparison to those without fabric samples. Inaccurate color information causes the loss of sales and increases product returns and complaints in online apparel stores. Consumers dissatisfied with apparel products delivered in a color that was different from what was expected would not purchase products from online apparel stores.

More than two-thirds or more of the apparel websites they analysed provided some type of color information (21 out of 31 merchants provided both visual and verbal color descriptions). However, sensory types of product information were not really available in apparel websites. For example, fabric construction (such as, woven and knit), texture/fabric hand (comfortable, soft, and heavy), and mix and match suggestions were offered by only about half or fewer of apparel websites analyzed. In addition, only 55 % (17 out of 31) of the sites provided larger views to see more detail and only one apparel site offered a 3D product rotation presentation. Finally, this study suggested that sensory and experiential product information should be added to apparel websites to increase sales.

Then and DeLong (1999) indicated the importance of using human models for apparel product presentation to show the natural drape of the garment on the human body. Given choices, respondents chose mannequin display as the best, flat display as the second, and sketches as the last for apparel product presentation on websites. This result shows that if a human body is not available, then consumers will prefer mannequins, as the best form for apparel product presentation. Thus, on apparel websites, a human model, at least a mannequin, should be used for apparel product presentation to offer better information to consumers and as a result, to improve their sales.

8.4 Importance of Visual Merchandising in e-tailing

Visual merchandising works – it's not easy to argue your – but until recently its influence only has been employed on the context of an shop or trade show. Usually, however, big-name retailers began to apply visual merchandising begin enlarging their websites in an attempt to win customers inside increasingly competitive online market.

From pyramids of baked beans to award-winning fashion displays, visual merchandising has saturated the field retail. It's wise then, how the influential method of selling would learn to work its magic on trusted online stores at the same time. But surely an internet site – irrespective of how flashy and attention-grabbing – is actually a world outside of an authentic, real-world store? Could it really depend upon the actual between seeing the Mona Lisa on television, and seeing it head to head inside the *Muse de Louvre*?

It could be argued a website's layout matters much more in contrast to standard store. At a supermarket or high-street shop, patrons will generally spend a decent stretch of time browsing the displays and getting your hands on items as they definitely go. They view the shop not knowing exactly they require, and relish the connection with shopping for an exciting and therapeutic activity.

Each customer visits a website; alternatively, they typically have a very good prospect of the goals they're attempting to find. It's approximately the online retailer in order to recreate the 'browsing' experience if you can, – offering recommendations, making products easily accessible and creating a respectable equal of the 'point of sale' display – for anyone intents and purposes, this is exactly visual merchandising, after which you can scan downwards also to the suitable. That is contrasting in to the manner in which people might read a novel, including, where focus is on long paragraphs of text. The tendency of customers for it to cost short amount of time online should be avoided whether it doesn't catch their attention. Being aware customers be prepared see on a website when they're seeking an item is answer to applying visual merchandising to online stores.

Visual merchandising online also opens up many possibilities that have to be difficult or impossible to obtain in a traditional retail environment. Online shopping will be tailored to the individual customer, and therefore an online site can track what products a customer has an interest in, and make a tailor-made ecommerce experience for your kids. With a shop, great and bad visual merchandising is usually tracked, but changes end up being generalised – everything has being tailored towards 'average' shopper.

The real-time data that is gathered with internet shopping clarifies that it's an appropriate environment to implement a visible merchandising strategy. As internet shopping increasingly gets to be a familiar component of our way of life, services really have to adapt and react from a rapid pace to help keep track of the tough competition. Visual merchandising, hardly being limited to shops, is an important aspect of unique marketplace.

Summary

- Visual merchandising encompasses the way that you present product to grab the customer's attention.
- It can be specific promotional displays that introduce a new product or point attention to a specific brand, or it involve the way you place product on your shelves.
- Strategies to creating effective visual marketing displays can help you to maximize the impact of your retail floor space.
- Visual merchandising is enhanced by colourful cardboard displays and sound or lighting effects, but the foundation of a good visual marketing campaign is the overall appearance of your business.
- To maximise visual impact, keep visual displays at the eye level of your target audience.
- Maintaining the same visual merchandising displays for weeks on end will not help improve store revenue.
- When displaying your merchandise, there are some basic visual merchandising rules you should follow that will help you create effective and profitable product displays.
- A good visual merchandising display is one that focuses on one product or a small family of products.
- The most effective visual marketing displays are arranged at 90-degree angle to the customer as opposed to lying flat on a counter.
- Using displays of a uniform height creates a flat display horizon.
- Products that are in high demand should be given priority in your visual displays over products that are not.
- Visual Merchandising is a now a key factor in online commerce overall. Some of the most significant early advancements in online merchandising have occurred in retail.
- Real estate firms offer another compelling example. They provide three-dimensional walkthroughs that help home buyers see an array of properties and narrow down their interests before entering the final stages of a decision.
- In the retail store, visual merchandising means floor layout, interior design, signage, in-store promotion, and product mix that facilitate purchasing
- Merchandise categories available on the homepage (e.g., the order of the list) may lead customers in the right direction on the retail websites.
- For apparel related websites, the significance of the layout and design of the websites has been emphasized.
- Images including both static and kinetic graphics can make a website page look more interesting.
- Apparel sites often have some mix and match suggestions to create a complete look by combining pants, shirts, and accessories.
- Visual merchandising works – it's not easy to argue your – but until recently its influence only has been employed on the context of an shop or trade show.
- As internet shopping increasingly gets to be a familiar component of our way of life, services really have to adapt and react from a rapid pace to help keep track of the tough competition.
- Visual merchandising, hardly being limited to shops, is an important aspect of unique marketplace.

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Self Assessment

- Which of the following statements is false?
 - Fashion retailing encompasses the way that you present product to grab the customer's attention.
 - It can be specific promotional displays that introduce a new product or point attention to a specific brand.
 - Strategies to creating effective visual marketing displays can help you to maximize the impact of your retail floor space.
 - Visual merchandising involves the way you place product on your shelves.
- Which of the following is not a strategy in visual merchandising?
 - A clean image
 - Eye level
 - Goal profit
 - Shelving
- Which of the following is the most important factor that is used to maximise the visual impact?
 - To keep visual displays below eye level.
 - To keep visual displays at the eye level of your target audience.
 - To keep visual displays above the level of the eyes.
 - To keep visual displays in the level of hands.
- The most effective visual marketing displays are arranged at _____ angle to the customer as opposed to lying flat on a counter.
 - 60 degree
 - 30 degree
 - 90 degree
 - 45 degree
- Products that are in _____ should be given priority in your visual displays over products that are not.
 - high demand
 - low demand
 - stock
 - eye level
- In the retail store, visual merchandising means floor layout, interior design, signage, in-store promotion, and _____ that facilitate purchasing.
 - advertisement
 - display
 - product mix
 - productivity
- _____ is related to the inability to try on apparel products before purchase is a major concern for consumers when purchasing apparel in-home.
 - Perceived risk
 - Visual merchandising
 - Consumer satisfaction
 - Product mix

8. Which of the following statements is false?
- Images including both static and kinetic graphics can make a website page look more interesting.
 - A two dimensional apparel display can be helpful in minimizing the uncertainties of apparel shopping on the Internet.
 - Apparel product presentation can be enhanced with 3D views.
 - Apparel sites often have some mix and match suggestions to create a complete look by combining pants, shirts, and accessories.
9. Inaccurate _____ information causes the loss of sales and increases product returns and complaints in online apparel stores.
- colour
 - website
 - visual
 - online
10. The eye movement of the web surfer was observed and it was found out that people start by viewing websites from the _____ corner.
- top right
 - down right
 - top left
 - down left

Case Study I

Apparel UPC Code/Inventory Update Project “Lawrence Merchandising Support Counts”

Incorrect UPC code undermines sales performance

An international apparel manufacturer identified an error with the assortment code for licensed undergarments that caused inaccurate store counts and incorrect sales data. This issue required immediate in-store service at a mass retailer to locate all stock, count on-hand quantities, update the store’s inventory count and display the product on the sales floor. Lawrence Merchandising was referred for the project through a retailer contact due to a long-standing relationship with the retailer and the frequency of current projects within the retailer. Lawrence was able to quickly and efficiently deploy the service and resolve the issue to ensure data integrity and replenishment.

Our role

To quickly implement service to locate merchandise with incorrect UPC codes, count on-hand stock and update the retailer system for inventory accuracy and more precise sales data tracking, ultimately ensuring product replenishment.

The challenge

Select styles of the assortment for a particular brand of undergarments were sent to the retailer with incorrect UPC information. This prevented the items from showing in the retailer inventory and in some locations product had been removed from the sales floor as a result of the error. The client was unable to accurately track inventory and sales which had a negative impact expediting replenishment. This was an urgent matter that required immediate correction in all stores chain wide so as not to jeopardize the licensing contract with the apparel manufacturer and the licensor.

The solution

Lawrence Merchandising was selected to deploy in-store service for issue resolution and was able to leverage national coverage to expedite service with rapid turnaround. Service representatives have familiarity with the stores, enabling them to quickly locate merchandise both on and off the sales floor. Due to multiple and frequent services, Lawrence reps know the retailer procedures and were able to enter data themselves or work with the appropriate store personnel to ensure the inventory counts were quickly updated.

The result

Lawrence Merchandising completed service in 93% of all stores in the chain the first week, which exceeded the initial commitment of 80% the first week as established due to short notice project deployment. 100% service completion was reached by the agreed upon end date 2 weeks after the project start date. The manufacturer began seeing orders as a result of the count updates and the prompt issue resolution. The quick action and ability to cover multiple locations simultaneously prevented escalation of further problems between licensor and manufacturer. Based on the success of the service and resulting client satisfaction, Lawrence Merchandising was awarded subsequent services with the manufacturer.

(Source: Lawrence merchandising. *Case Studies: Apparel UPC Code/Inventory Update Project* [Online] Available at: <<http://www.lmsvc.com/case-studies/3.html>> [Accessed 3 February 2012]).

Questions

1. What were the challenges faced by the apparel manufacturer?

Answer

An apparel manufacturer identified an error with the assortment code for licensed undergarments that caused inaccurate store counts and incorrect sales data.

2. What was the result of the error in assortment code?

Answer

Select styles of the assortment for a particular brand of undergarments were sent to the retailer with incorrect UPC information. This prevented the items from showing in the retailer inventory and in some locations product had been removed from the sales floor as a result of the error. The client was unable to accurately track inventory and sales which had a negative impact expediting replenishment.

3. What was the solution given by Lawrence Merchandising?

Answer

Lawrence Merchandising was selected to deploy in-store service for issue resolution and was able to leverage national coverage to expedite service with rapid turnaround. Service representatives have familiarity with the stores, enabling them to quickly locate merchandise both on and off the sales floor. Due to multiple and frequent services, Lawrence reps know the retailer procedures and were able to enter data themselves or work with the appropriate store personnel to ensure the inventory counts were quickly updated.

Case Study II

asos.com: Improving Business Strategy

asos.com's strategy of organic growth has shown substantial results. It has managed to satisfy increased demand. The company has also increased its market share. asos.com has recognised that the conditions were right for an online retail business in the fashion retail sector.

The company has used the Internet as the primary growth tool. It has tapped into the rapidly expanding online retailing market. As research in 2007 by the online retail consultancy Interactive Media in Retail Group (IMRG) showed:

- Total online spending in the UK reached £30.2 billion in 2006
- The number of UK online shoppers grew from 16 million in 2003 to 25 million in 2006, an increase of 56 per cent over four years
- Internet access grew by 45 per cent in the same period, with 42 million people having access in 2006 compared to just 29 million in 2003
- The number of broadband connections more than tripled in four years, by 2006 there were more than 12.7 million UK broadband connections

asos.com targets its offer at a specific market segment of young (16-34) fashion-conscious consumers. This market segment now accounts for 20% of the Internet shopping population in the UK. According to the market research organisation Mintel, women aged 20-24 are more likely than any other segment to spend their money on clothing and footwear. The average spend per head on clothing increased by 76% in 2006 to £1,208. asos.com offers an extensive and diverse range of products for men and women. Its departments cover:

- Own brand clothing
- Brands high-street and designer
- Footwear
- Accessories, for example, sunglasses
- Jewellery
- Swimwear

The clothing ranges also cater for narrow market segments, for example, for petite women (under 5'3"). As well as its own brand, asos.com also enters into collaborations with designer labels. This enables it to provide well-known brands that appeal to its young, fashion-conscious target market. asos.com stocks over 400 brands including:

- Diesel
- All Saints
- Fred Perry
- Levis
- Adidas

French connection

However, asos.com would not have grown so rapidly if it did not offer a pleasurable shopping experience. The first step in any online business is to ensure that the website offers something of real value to consumers, something that cannot be obtained by visiting a store or a shop. One central question dominates asos.com's planning - why would consumers choose to buy clothes online when they could visit a shop and see, feel and try on different items?

asos.com had to create an online shopping experience that offered convenience, choice, interesting styles, competitive prices, all complemented with high levels of customer service such as prompt and reliable delivery. Heavy investment in the website and its underpinning technology has been vital. Behind the technology and the website, asos.com has invested heavily in ensuring that customers get what they want from the online store. Internet shoppers have very high expectations. asos.com knows that customers must be pleased with their shopping experience.

(Source: The Times 100. *Strategic Growth in the Fashion Retail Industry* [Online] Available at: <<http://businesscasestudies.co.uk/asos-com/strategic-growth-in-the-fashion-retail-industry/improving-the-business.html>> [Accessed 3 February 2012]).

Questions

1. What are the ranges of product offered by asos.com?
2. What is the primary growth tool used by asos.com?
3. What was the strategy adopted by asos.com to increase its sale?

Case Study III

NORDSTROM

John Nordstrom was born in Alvik Neder Lulea, Sweden, in 1871. He left for America at age 16 with two pals and a little more than \$100 - an inheritance from his father - in his pocket. By his third day in America, after buying a new suit for the journey, food, and boat and train passage, he was down to \$5. Nordstrom found odd jobs with railroad crews, in coal mines, lumber camps and at shipyards. The work took him across the United States, from New York to Wisconsin, to the redwoods of California and eventually to Washington, where he learned of the Alaskan Gold Rush. Nordstrom managed to make about \$13,000 in Alaska. So when Carl Wallin, a shoemaker Nordstrom had befriended in Alaska, asked him if he would be interested in opening a shoe store, he thought, "Why not?"

By 1928 Wallin and Nordstrom were regularly disagreeing about how to run the business. Nordstrom was ready to leave, but his son Everett was keenly interested in the shoe business. Wallin sold his part of the business to Nordstrom, who then sold it to two of his sons, Everett and Elmer.

The company's philosophy has remained unchanged for more than 100 years since its establishment by John W. Nordstrom in 1901: offer the customer the best possible service, selection, quality and value. Nordstrom has basically given importance to three things in order to make sure their customer service is excellent:

What senior managers can do?: Managers create, maintain, and support the corporate service culture. They consciously spread the culture of service throughout the organization and among new hires.

Tool to value your employees: Employees who witness a colleague giving excellent customer service are encouraged to write up a description of what they saw and submit it to their manager. To give Nordstrom people a standard to aspire to and to surpass. Outstanding acts of customer service are rewarded.

Keys to success: Make customers feel comfortable by paying attention to every detail of the experience – bricks and mortar or virtual. You must create an inviting place to do business. Make your public voice or face a pleasant one. Create an atmosphere of helpfulness. Create an atmosphere of professionalism. Educate your customer to make sound choices.

What supervisors can do to create Nordstrom style service: Nordstrom believes it is frontline supervisors that must create the atmosphere and the customer culture service to support senior managers.

- How is it done? By hiring the right people, empowering staff, mentoring employees, praising and rewarding employee successes or services. Hire the smile; hire the personality and the confidence.
- The Nordstrom Way includes hiring good people and keep working with them, nurturing them, and giving them the tools to succeed.

The Nordstrom Inverted Pyramid: At Nordstrom, our goal is to provide outstanding service every day, one customer at a time. The Inverted Pyramid represents the company's philosophy and structure, placing customers at the top. Next are those who directly serve customers —our salespeople and those who support them. Department managers, buyers, merchandise managers, store managers, regional managers, our executive team and our board of directors then support this group. The Inverted Pyramid helps remind us that we need to value those closest to our customers. We work hard to make decisions in the best interest of our customers and those serving them. All tiers of the pyramid are working to support customers and the frontline employees who have the most contact with customers.

What employees can do to create Nordstrom style customer service: Staff must understand that they are on the frontlines in making an organization a customer-service culture. Frontline people must have a thorough knowledge of the products and services an organization offers because it is through those products and services that relationships are created, nurtured, and maintained. Building and maintaining relationships with customers are essential elements to a good customer service philosophy. Relationships are the essence of customer service.

Service = Sell Relationships

- Relationship building principles:
 - Give clients more than they expect.
 - Leave clients something to remember you by.
 - Think the project (problem through).
 - Ask yourself: “If I were the client would I pay for this”. Don’t give reasons why it can’t be done – Tell how it can be done and the consequences.
 - Don’t wait to do it if it can be done now.
 - Service the client not the project.
 - You don’t know if you don’t ask.
 - Start a conversation with one new person every day.
 - Write ideas being discussed in front of clients.
- Seven keys to delivering great service:
 - Right attitude
 - Understand the customer’s needs
 - Communicate clearly
 - Reach agreement
 - Check understanding
 - Take action
 - Build on satisfaction
- Reasons for success of Nordstrom:
 - Provide your customer with choices
 - Create an inviting place
 - Hire Nice, Motivated People
 - Sell the Relationship: Service your customers through the goods and services you sell
 - Empower employees to take ownership
 - Disregard the rules and be innovative
 - Promote competition
 - Commit 100% to customer service

(Source: The Nordstrom Way, *The Nordstrom Way.ppt* [Online] Available at: <<http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/swall/meeting2007/Handouts/The%20Nordstrom%20Way.ppt>> [Accessed 3 February 2012]).

Questions

1. Why was Nordstrom facing trouble in the business?
2. What are the three important things which have kept customer service excellent?
3. What are the reasons of success?

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Self Assessment Answers

Chapter I

1. b
2. a
3. b
4. c
5. b
6. a
7. d
8. d
9. c
10. d

Chapter II

1. c
2. a
3. a
4. b
5. a
6. d
7. c
8. b
9. a
10. a

Chapter III

1. a
2. a
3. a
4. b
5. d
6. a
7. c
8. c
9. d
10. c

Chapter IV

1. d
2. a
3. b
4. c
5. d
6. a
7. d
8. a
9. a
10. b

Chapter V

1. a
2. a
3. c
4. b
5. b
6. a
7. c
8. c
9. d
10. b

Chapter VI

1. d
2. b
3. a
4. d
5. b
6. c
7. c
8. c
9. d
10. b

Chapter VII

1. b
2. d
3. a
4. a
5. b
6. a
7. d
8. a
9. c
10. d

Chapter VIII

1. a
2. c
3. b
4. c
5. a
6. b
7. a
8. b
9. a
10. c