

Visual Merchandising and its impact on Impulse Buying Behavior of Consumer – A Literary Review with special reference to Apparel Retail Sector

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ABSTRACT

As competition is very high in the market whether it is unorganized sector or organized sector, under organized sector there are many retailers who are going with Visual Merchandising as customers behave differently because of the influential impact of the store layout. Shopping is always trending in the mind of the customers and Customers think that they buy the products only when they are out for shopping, however they also experience the pre-purchase and post-purchase behavior. And these behaviors have a major impact on the mind of customers as they are highly influenced by the Visual Merchandising Displays used in the outlets. Visual Display plays a major role in the purchase of the goods and services as they highlight the features that are used to influence the consumers. The way Store members display and visualize the product or apparels have a big impact on purchase behavior. Visual merchandising is the performance in the retail trade related to mounting floor strategy and dimensional displays in order to get the most out of sales. This activity is highly performed by Apparel retail sector as it attracts, engage and motivate customer to purchase the product. And as a result of this thing many times customer shows the impulse behavior for purchasing any product without the actual need of that product. There are many factors such as store layout, décor, interior, store ambience, promotional strategy, discount signage is counted in evoking the impulsive behavior of customer.

Keywords- Organized Sector, Store Layout, Visual Merchandising, Impulse buying, Discount Signage, Dimensional Displays

INTRODUCTION

Visual merchandising is a profession which majorly includes presenting stock or merchandise and store ambience in a way that stimulates a encouraging image of the store outlet, gets customers' attention, interest, desire, action and entices them to buy the merchandise intentionally or by impulsive buying behavior. AIDA model plays a significant role in getting

the attention of the buyer till the satisfaction stage in the post-purchase behavior. This is the drastic change that is happening in the organized retail market. Now every organized sector retailer wants to develop an image of elicits retail outlets in the mind of the customers through visual merchandising as it helps in retaining and building the customer loyalty.

There are many factors that are included in Visual Merchandising that add synergy to the store outlet. It includes –

Flooring- it includes the carpet design, tiles or marbles used for flooring as it can affect what the customer buys. Because customer takes all the points in his mind while entering the store. If the floor is shiny and clean it has a positive impact in the mind of the customer.

Lighting- It is used for the illumination effect in the store or it can also be used to highlight any particular area or merchandise in the outlet. It enlightens the whole area of the store with its brightness and different types of lights affect the display appear. The Dazzling lighting effect can create a sense of positivity among the customers and can entice customers for impulsive buying. The flamboyant lighting also create comfortable environment for consumers.

Décor –It include the interior designing and display of a store or an outlet which also impact the impulse behavior of any customer. It includes (colors, wallpapers and shelving), which affect the aura of the store. In outlets visual merchandising can be used to gain the attention of consumers and it act as an essential component in the buying decision-making process.

Mannequins- Mannequins are basically the dummy models that are presented at the entry or at the display section wearing the new attires as they also have a great impact on the customers for purchasing decision .They are used by retailers to display their products or apparels present in the store. The mannequins will commonly be styled to match trends as well display the latest products available. Walkways and entries that should blend into the building's overall design.

Store layout-The layout of the store is also very influential factor for attracting the customers . If the outlet is spacy the customer feels relaxed and easily shops and find out the thing they are searching for. A grid layout is generally organized in a rectangular shape,

which allows customers to shop quickly and maximize shop floor space, ideal for a supermarket or hardware store.

Point of purchase- It is also known as Point of sale which basically means any physical space which includes the merchandising or purchase of any product, it can be a retailer or any mall. It builds a strong bonding with the customer as they have the freedom to check the product and they can try it as well. Which build up emotional connectivity with the customers.

Atmospherics-The aura or the surrounding also influence the impulse behavior of the customers, it basically includes the lights, scents, music etc. The fragrance of the scent also impact the mindset of customers the music adds value to the buying behavior. Scents can also trigger emotional responses for example, Lavender, basil, cinnamon and other fragrance flavors that plays an important role in buying behavior.

Window display-Window displays are used as an initial attraction to bring customers into a store and are also used as a marketing tool to communicate the brand's image to the consumers as well as to distinguish itself from its competitors. The importance of the window display is that it is a touch point consumers have with the brand. By generating interest or curiosity with the window display, a brand can leave an impression on the consumer and furthermore the consumer can figure out the quality and character of the products the brand has to offer.

Colour-Color is also a very powerful factor for enticing the customers or attracting them. For example, blue, green and brown can promote restfulness. These colors also give relaxing atmosphere to the customers as they are very eye-sobering colors.

Graphics, photography and signage, Seasonal displays-The retailer use the graphics, photography, signage for communicating the message to the customers i.e. in which thing they deal, their logo, name, fashion trends etc. Adjusting window displays based on seasonal events, calendar dates, and consumerism-based holidays such as Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Father's Day can be a useful approach to encourage consumer purchasing.

Consumer Behavior

Basically it is the intended behavior of the customers that they show as an individual ,group or as an organization which involves selecting and disposing ideas, goods and services to satisfy their needs, desires and wants. It includes the customer's emotional, mental or behavioral response to these activities.

Impulse Buying Behavior

It is an unplanned decision to buy any product or service, made just before a purchase. And the one who shows this type of behavior is known as an Impulse Buyer.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Visual merchandising is a tool used by companies or shopkeepers to attract the customers for unplanned buying. In this the marketers and the shopkeepers arrange their shops or carryout promotional activities which attract the attention of shoppers by just having a look at the shop, their promotions, sign boards, atmosphere inside, shelf arrangements, section divisions, cleanliness and other factors which influence impulse or unplanned buying.

Impulse buying is a rapid convincing, hedonically compound purchase behavior in which the quickness of the impulse purchase decision precludes any thoughtful, intentional contemplation of alternatives (**Kacen, 2002**). Findings of early researchers (Ballenger *et al.* 1978) have shown that impulse buying accounts for substantial sales across a broad range of product categories.

M Moayery (2014) conducted a study on apparel impulse buying behavior and visual merchandising. The aim of the study was to investigate relationship between apparel impulse buying behavior and visual merchandising among Iranian young females. They used sample of 150 young adult females to complete a questionnaire. For data analysis principal component analysis test, BETA analysis, reliability test. The results of the study show that visual merchandising and pleasant environment have positive impact on impulse purchase.

Shahminal, Guha sanjay (2013) investigated a paper titled "Effect of emerging trends in retail sector on impulse buying behavior. The main aim of this paper was to know the effect of recent trends in retail on impulse purchase. i.e the impact of window display promotional

signage and floor merchandise . For this study they collected data from 200 respondents, Durg, Chattisgarh. The data analysis tools like ANNOVA has been used. They predicted that there is a positive relationship between impulse buying and window display, promotional signage and floor merchandise.

Mehta and Chug (2012) conducted their research on visual merchandising or impulse buying by their perspective and has studied the impact of visual merchandising on shopper impulse buying behavior. They took sample size of 84 customers visiting the retail stores of India and find that window display has direct relation with impulse buying. However no significant relation is found between window display and impulse buying but floor merchandising shows direct relation.

Sonali and Sunetra (2012) have studied the unplanned purchasing triggering the senses in retail stores. Their dependent variable was frequency of shopping and independent was gender of customers. They took sample of 100 customers visiting Indian shopping malls and used chi-square as a statistical tool. Their findings are that no significant association was found between gender of customers and frequency of shopping.

Mauger (1964) in his study explained lighting creates an effective atmosphere that makes products more appealing and influence customers to shop more.

Colborne (1996) in his study further illustrated retail lighting is an important factor for apparel businesses. He said that lighting creates an atmosphere which attracts customers towards stores in order to make them purchase. With proper and effective lighting, customers are able to match up their items & visualize how merchandise will look after the purchase.

Bell & Ternus (2012) in their study supported the theories given by earlier scholars and added lighting can enhance the retail space and increase the value of product in customer's mind. The marginal benefits of the products were enhanced.

Yalch and Spangenberg (2000) in their study said that music has significant effect on retail setting on shopping time. Music plays deep impact on time, exploration, communication and satisfaction in retail setting.

Sen, Block, and Chandran (2002) in their research advocated that window displays has an influence on store entry & purchase decisions. Window display creates an awareness of merchandise type for the entry on the other hand it shows how the merchandise is to be presented in window displays which would influence buying decision.

K. R Pillai et al. (2011) visually appealing stores and outlets did help respondents to create an image of the brand in the minds of the customers. Contradictory to the customers' preferences, visual merchandisers rated illumination at their store locations/outlets as their most preferred in-store visual appeal creating factor but the respondents who are customers did not give it a high rating. Among the various features of a store that help to convert window shoppers into real customers although visual appeal achieved the highest ranking.

Yolandé Hefer, Michael. C. Cant (2013) found that consumer behaviour is influenced by a limited extent as visual merchandising displays guide consumers in the direction of the products as well as in product choice. Consumer behaviour will also be influenced by their personal preferences and the quality of the displays.

Vandana Gupta (2013) supported that colors and lighting forms an integral part of the Visual Merchandising, majority of the customers had a positive response towards the colors and lighting used in the store, frequent purchasers show a higher positive response towards the lighting and colors used also indicating that colors and lighting have a positive impact on the customer loyalty. Signage, form an integral part of Visual Merchandising, the signs displayed were able to provide basic information to the customers, and this area can be improved upon by Evok.

Young Ha et al. (2007) revealed that many VMD features of offline stores have been implemented online. In addition, some VMD features of online apparel stores do not have a direct offline parallel. Gaynor Lea-Greenwood (1998) found that visual merchandising practices certainly influence customers' buying behavior. The research revealed that is a direct proportional relationship between customers' buying behavior and in-store form/mannequin display, promotional signage and window display.

Jiyeon Kim (2012) found a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and in-store form/mannequin display and promotional signage. Even though the window display and floor merchandising did not appear to significantly lead to college students' impulse buying behavior, the results of the study still suggested that these variables and consumers' impulse buying behavior are significantly correlated. Study also argued that all four types of visual merchandising (i.e., window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor merchandising, and promotional signage) are significantly interrelated and that relationship generates the influences on consumers' impulse buying behavior.

Retail store atmospherics may impact shopper behavior. According to **Chain Store Age** (2004), the majority of consumers (63%) remember occasions when the store atmosphere caused them to buy more or spend more time at a store. Moreover, among those influenced by store atmosphere, almost half (45%) report that they spent not only more money in the store but, more time. As noted in Turley and Milliman's (2000) review on the effect of atmospherics on consumer behaviour, the influence of store atmosphere on time spent in the store has received attention from researchers and, therefore, merits further discussion. Time spent in the store is related to the desire to stay in or to get out of the store environment and is also related to the decision to shop or not to shop at the store (Kellaris and Altsech, 1992).

In their landmark article introducing the **Mehrabian-Russell** (M-R) environmental psychology model to the study of store environment, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) suggested that store-induced pleasure plays a significant role as a determinant of approach-avoidance behaviour within the store, including spending behaviour, and that store-induced feelings of alertness and excitement could result in increased time spent in the store.

More than a decade later, **Donovan et al. (1994)** replicated and extended the Donovan and Rossiter's study, confirming that pleasure engendered by store atmosphere contributes to extra time spent in the store and unplanned spending. In 2003, Babin et al. found that the combination of colours and lighting plays a critical role in influencing the purchase intention of consumers' store patronage. Kouchekian and Gharibpoor (2012) found that store layout, color, lighting, store design, cleanliness and height of shelves are the significant determinants of consumer buying decision at a grocery store.

A study by **Carpenter and Moore (2006)** indicated that both frequent and occasional shoppers across all retail formats indicated cleanliness as the single most important store attribute. Yun and Good (2007) declared that shopping in an immaculately clean store might generate image perceptions of cleanliness, contentment, or luxury. Store design or store Display: It was also understand in Bellizzi and Hite (1992) study that displays are one of the most influential elements on unplanned purchases. Abratt and Goodey (1990) stated that point of purchase displays can be very useful in stimulating sales. In addition it was stated that the shoppers attach more influence to the floor of a store than to its ceiling.

Objective of the Study-

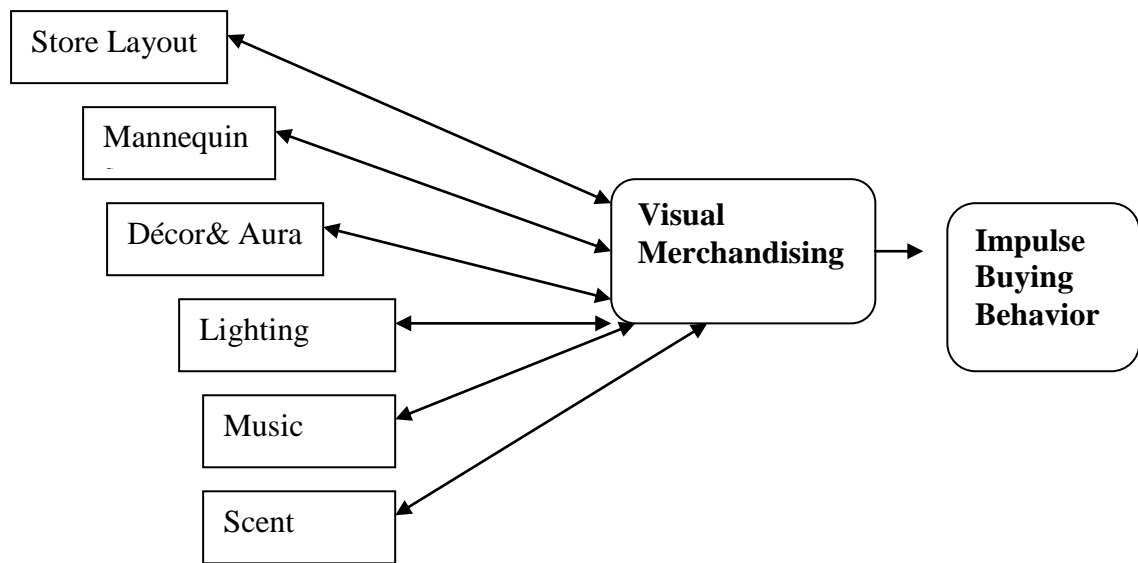
1. To discover the impact of visual merchandising as a driver of Impulsive Buying Behavior.
2. To explore the linkage of various determinants of visual merchandising and buying behavior.

Research Methodology-

The present study is Descriptive in Nature. The data is collected in secondary mode through various journals, magazines, periodicals and annual reports. The methodology is adopted and designed to explore and discover visual merchandising and its influence on Impulsive Buying Behavior of Consumer. The main highlights are on the various drivers or determinants that influence the buying behavior of consumer.

Conceptual Framework for the study

As per literature review studied dimensions of visual merchandising are given below to be appropriate as they act as drivers of visual merchandising and its role in impulse buying behavior.



DISCUSSION

The study investigated some external factors that influence impulse buying behavior. In attempt to examine this relationship, the study primarily tried to explain the relationship between customers' impulse buying behavior and various types of visual merchandising. An important finding was that visual merchandising practices certainly influence customers impulse buying behavior. The results proved that there were significant relationships between consumers impulse buying behavior and in-store form/mannequin display and promotional signage. Even though the window display and floor merchandising did not appear to significantly lead to customers impulse buying behavior, the results still suggested that these variables and consumers impulse buying behavior are significantly correlated. It can be agreed that all four types of visual merchandising (i.e., window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor merchandising, and promotional signage) are significantly interrelated and that relationship generates the influences on consumers impulse buying behavior. Despite the utilization of visual merchandising to improve desirability of products and to encourage consumers buying behavior, a dearth of research exists that investigates its influence on consumer buying behavior.

When consumers are exposed to these visual stimuli, they more likely make purchase decisions on impulse. This suggests that these visual merchandising practices, serving as

stimuli that provoke a desire that ultimately motivates a consumer to make an unplanned purchase decision upon entering the store, significantly influence consumers' impulse buying behaviors. Research was conducted to examine the effect of visual merchandise on the consumer unplanned purchase behavior. To investigate the relation further, the study attempted to elucidate the relation between the customer's unplanned purchase behavior and different types of visual merchandising. The key finding of this study was that the visual merchandising has positive impact on consumer impulse buying behavior.

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