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REVIEW OF IMPACT OF VISUAL MERCHANDISE ELEMENTS ON APPAREL CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT

Reshaping is become a key phenomena in all the spheres of business. Market, marketing strategies and market structure were simple to understand. With growing complexity, variety and emergence of new techniques at very short intervals resulted to increase the vibrancy in the overall business environment. Shopping by an individual at one time was need based and also was mainly product centric. Customer was mainly focusing on the price and other attributes of a product. With increased range of products and developed customer attitude, proper display of the product holds the attention of the sellers. Eventually they started putting more money and effort on the display of the product in order to fetch the attention of the customers. The concept of VM (Visual Merchandise) holds its roots way back to the days of barter system. Gradually with the emergence of organized retail system in India the emergence of Visual Merchandise has also got its mark. The present research paper is an attempt to understand the concept of Retailing, Marketing in general and Visual Merchandising in specific. Further the critical reviews have been narrated so as to have a deep insight of the concept. Secondary data has been gathered for the purpose and descriptive research is being used.

1. INTRODUCTION

Retailing is a process of selling consumer goods or services to end consumer. However there is possibility that a consumer is not purchasing personally and there is an end customer who is purchasing on his behalf. Retailing can involve various channels of distribution to supply products / services from manufacturers / producer to consumers. It is different from wholesale, where large amount of products are sold to few customers, however in retailing small quantity of products are sold to large number of customers.

“ The marketing mix refers to the set of actions, or tactics, that a company uses to

promote its brand or product in the market. The 4Ps make up a typical marketing mix- Price, Product, Promotion and Place. However, nowadays, the marketing mix increasingly includes several other Ps like Packaging, Positioning, People and even Politics as vital mix elements.”- Economictimes. Sometimes just working on the 4Ps of Marketing is not sufficient. On a retail front, a retailer may not be able to make any changes in the product. Since price is also predefined, he might not be able to change that too and sometimes price is market linked and beyond the control of retailer. A retailer cannot just move to another place if everything else is not working and helping the sales. Also customer should have different shopping

choices like online and offline stores and similar merchandises are also available easily. Hence place also remains uncontrolled. Also running promotions on all the products all the time in a store is also not possible for all the retailers. Hence at last the store itself becomes the ground for the tricky game, called Retailing. A retailer only has this trick called **Visual Merchandising** to play and charm his customers, which ultimately leads to sales in his store.

1.2 Visual Merchandising

Visual Merchandising helps customers to have an amazing shopping experience. For a Visual Merchandiser, a store is like a theatre. The walls & floor are like stage of the theatre. The lighting, fixtures & visual communications make the set of the stage & the merchandise plays the characters in the show.

As per Karthik Ramamurthy & Ankur Hazarika (2009), in their article "The new science of retail" states that "the real challenge for retail management is to convert footfalls into sales". Footfalls are term given to the number of people entering a store. They may or may not purchase anything from the store but by just entering or visiting the store, it adds up to the total footfalls of the store. If they do not enter and just pass by the store, they cannot be counted as footfalls as their foot did not fall inside the store. This term 'footfalls' represents accessibility of a store. More number of footfalls means retailer has better exposure of his merchandise and hence a better chance of sales.

As per Kanika Aand (2012), in the article "Inspired by the world of art" states that "Indian retail is moving into 'second gear'

with extensive attempts to constantly meet customer expectations. Given the shift of gear from merely creating awareness, it has its own advantage to harness and challenge to overcome." Visual Merchandising is the art of presentation, which puts the merchandise in focus. It educates the customers, creates desire and finally augments the selling process (Mohan & Ojha, 2014)

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

It is an attempt to understand the term Visual Merchandising and to have an assessment over the work done so far.

METHODOLOGY

To review the literature, secondary data has been collected from authentic sources and databases. The type of research used is Integrative Review of Literature and is Descriptive in nature.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gibson G. Vedamani in his book Retail Management: Functional Principle and Practices, mentioned about three roles of Visual Merchandising. First is presentation of products in a way that can lead them to be sold quickly with highest possible margin. Second role is the visual seduction charms the customer which leads to the additional sales. Third role is to create merchant's individual retail image. Gibson also mentioned about three challenges to be faced by Visual Merchandisers. First challenge is to balance the store atmosphere as per the store image. Second challenge is to influence customer buying decision with the help of VM tools and design elements. Third challenge is to balance the cost associated with store design elements with sales and profits.

Gibson in his book also mentioned about roles of a Merchandiser. According to him, a Visual Merchandiser helps in enhancing sales and customer experience. He gave a list of duties for a Visual Merchandiser, some of which are – planning and executing VM theme and displays, arrangement of props for displays, arrangement of required fixtures and lighting, working on floor plans, training personnel on the sales floor to create displays, organizing racks and shelves where merchandise is kept, etc. Jiyeon Kim (2003) find out the pivotal relationship between college students apparel impulse buying behavior and visual merchandising. Visual

merchandising elements are store forms, mannequins and promotional signage. Data was collected from 245 students from all major courses under the University of Georgia. SPSS, Regression Analysis, Cronbach Alpha, Correlation Tests are used for analyzing the collected data. Berretto Anton (2007) pointed out in his article “Tricks of the trade” that the basic components of store design are color, texture, light and music which can enhance store appeal and ultimately invites the customer to touch the product. Andrew J. Newman and Peter Cullen (2007) in his book Retail Environment and Operation define the role of merchandiser is to target right customers, with right merchandise at the right time in the right place. The term 'Merchandising' involves stages like Planning, sourcing, buying, arranging, displaying and space management of products.

Dalal M. (2010) in his article on 'Managing Merchandising' defined Merchandising as process to provide right goods, at the right time, through right

medium, at the right place, in the right mix, of the right quantity, from the right source. Dalal M. (2010) in his article 'Mechanics of retail merchandising' states that a retail merchandiser has to keep a watch on sales pattern of all the retail outlets, compare them with expected sales to take corrective actions. Merchandiser has to keep an eye on market trends and is required to respond accordingly.

Deepak Sahni (2014), research on American consumers. His study says relationship between college students and impulse buying behavior and visual merchandising elements like window display, floor merchandising, in-store form, promotional signage, in-store form/mannequins and promotional signage significantly influence students impulse buying behavior.

K. R. Mahalakshmi, Akhila. T. (2017) research study reveals what the importance of visual merchandise elements like interior designs, product display impulse buying of the organized apparel retail stores in richy district in Tamil Nadu state people.

Meysam Moayeri (2014) investigated relationship between apparel impulse buying behavior and visual merchandising among 150 Iranian young adult females. He collected the data from questionnaire, Likert scale, analysed with SPSS tool and proved pivotal relation between females and visual merchandising elements.

Bailey Comyns (2012) Collected the data from students of New Hampshire University, Durham

Found that the visual merchandise elements are useful for purchase of food products.

Neha P. Mehta (2013) researched on what the visual merchandise methods and tools are used in single brands like Ikea, Nike, Apple, Reliance group, future group or organized retail stores in central mall of Ahmadabad city in India. Data was collected from customers who visit and buy the goods at the mall and interviewed with visual merchandise marketing managers to find out the best visual merchandise methods to impulse buying behavior of customers.

Komaldeep Prandhawa (2017) research on relationship between visual merchandise and impulse buying behavior in apparel organized retail stores. Elements are in store/mannequin display. Data was collected from customers who visit the garment stores in three regions in mejhna, malwa and, doabadi districts in Punjab state. Sample t test, chi-square tests are used for analyzing the data.

TK. Arun Prasad (2016), researched on 120 customers who visited reliance trends in Tamilnadu state. The visual merchandise elements like fixtures, signage, colors, lighting, layout of store, window display impact impulse buying behavior. The data was collected from likert scale model

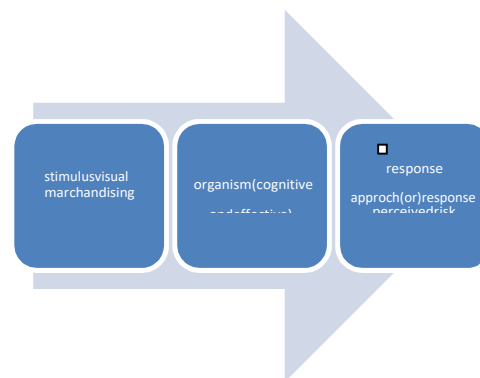
and analyzed with reliability test, factor analysis test, and multiple regression test.

Jammy R. Kinley (2009) determined the degree of involvement with shopping for clothing effects the frequency with young female generation opinions when making clothing apparel purchase. Data is collected from graduate students of university in southwestern region USA.

This research found that the high involvement in purchasing apparel is from friends and co workers rather than personal interests.

Evgene Julius Caliva (2019), research vital role in catching customers attention to maximize the aspects of the product which conclusively increases sales for selected retail brands in Philippines organized apparel retail stores. The stores preferred different hues of lighting like halogen lights, warm lights (illuminations), blue, black, yellow, white, red, font size of window display quotes, signages. This research find out how these elements are positive impression to impulse buying behavior of young Filipino customers

Sarah E. Fisher (2009), evaluate customers aesthetic (the model's clothing, nice looking) response of visual merchandise elements like full size mannequins and flat hanging displays, s-o-r model



Manish Jain (2011), researched on problems of neighborhood kirana stores with hypermarket customers. His research analyzed customers preferences of the specific attributes of 5 retail stores in Indore. Factors identified are availability of variety of goods, service, ambience and show of the store, discounts and fair prices, quality and promotion, consumers

of Indore are influenced by the different attraction factors and consumers visit such stores for the entertainment (or) to get rid of their stressful life.

Derrylaw (2010), investigated the relationship between visual merchandise elements and consumer affective response by focusing on a function-oriented product

—
intimate apparel. His research was on Hong Kong Chinese female consumers aged between 25-35 years. Group interviews were conducted with 64 subjects. Findings are two points of view: utilitarian and hedonic

1. Utilitarian means actual needs of consumers such as garment deterioration, seasonal changes and occasions.

2. Hedonic aspects are visual stimulus in stores, display elements, colours and props. These elements are final impulse to purchase intentions.

Syed.M D.Faisal
Ali Khan (2016), researched

on what competitive strategies are used in organized and unorganized retail store for improving sales. Visual merchandising elements like product display, store ambience, floor merchandising, promotional, discount signage impact buying decisions. He finds these elements have deep impact on influencing buying decision of customers and customers who spend more time in stores more are likely to make a purchase.

Dr. P. Agila (2018), researched on Coimbatore 250 customers who are shopping recently in organized retail stores like cloths, provisions, furniture's, toys and gifts, footwear, health and

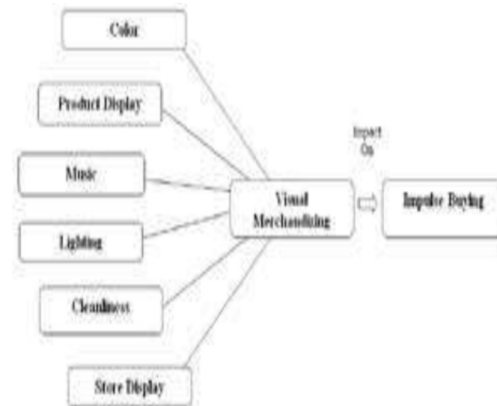
fitness equipment stores. Descriptive data was

analyzed with percentage, chi-square, oneway Anova and mann-whitney test tools. He found music and videos and recorded announcements used in retail store are not creating impulse to purchase. Only factor is quality of visual displays have more impact to purchase.

Chand Saini (2015), descriptive research study found the relation with visual merchandising to impulse buying behavior. The visual merchandise elements are color, product display, music, lighting, cleanliness, and store display.

Prof. Rammohan (2014), researched on apparel retail sector. He identified important factors of visual merchandising like external cues, mannequins displays, promotional signage in retail stores for buying apparels. He collected data with questionnaire from 225 customers who were recently shopping in Karamangala, Forum Mall apparel stores located at Jayanagar, and Indiranagar in Bangalore. Data was analyzed using factor analysis and regression analysis.

Nurhazwanizolkifly (2016) researched on auto industry visual merchandise elements to encourage sales like showroom design, emotional design approach, storefront, store layout, store interior and interior display. Storefront; sign of logo,



lighting, land scaping. Lay out; floor space to facilitate and promote sales. Store interior; lighting, colors, store fixtures. Interior display: comprised closed, open architectural, point of purchased display. These visual merchandising elements are used to gear up the sales and drive customers' perception about the product and store.

Hyunheepark(2015), researched on in-store merchandise explorations such as interacting with products differentiate a retail brand among competitors. Study 1: develop the measure of visual merchandising cognition. Study 2: examine the impact of visual merchandising cognition brand through aesthetic attribution focus on fashion brand factor analysis, on in fashion, attractiveness and function. The findings of the study are 1) the link between visual merchandising cognition to brand salience 2) Visual merchandising cognition is brand salience with aesthetic attributes. 3) Attractiveness of visual merchandising linked brand salience through aesthetic attributes. This empirical study was conducted on sample of 160 female students.

Li Z and Cassidy Thomas (2010) conducted a study on the "Optimum visual angle for fashion retail window display." The study summarized on the angle from which consumers view displays in fashion stores, while they walk besides the store window. For this purpose the research carried out two experiments which recommended a change in the angle at which window displays are arranged, and as to where the focus point of a display should be placed which will enable the consumers in perceiving the contents of the window display which in turn will

enable them to enter the store and make purchase.

Pillai Rajasekharan, et.al. (2011) in their study named "Design, effectiveness and role of visual merchandising in creating customer appeal" presented a survey using a convenient non probability and judgment sampling with two sets of questionnaires from both the visual merchandisers consisting of 20 responses and from 100 customers with maximum number of Indian respondents followed by the Arabs, Pakistanis, Filipinos, and rest from other countries and the majority of the respondents were found to be in the age group of 18- 30 years. The results of the study revealed that the stores need to have attractive window displays, proper store layout, appealing visual merchandising theme to attract present and potential customers into the store. Apparently the merchandisers mainly preferred to display newest trends and best moving items in their window displays. The study highlighted that proper lighting and attractive display theme played an important role in converting potential customers into real customers.

Kulkarni Vijay. R (2012) conducted an exploratory research titled "A comparative study of customer perception of store atmosphere of Spencer's vs Reliance Fresh" in the city of Pune through a convenient sampling in which 172 responses were collected through a structured questionnaire at Spencer's and Reliance Fresh stores. The results of the study showed that out of the thirteen variables chosen for the study like appeal of the store from outside, wide aisle's to walk freely in the store, finding of the products, in-store aesthetics and beauty

aspects of the store, air condition quality in the store, fresh air in the store, store illumination, neatness of the store, hygiene and cleanliness of the washrooms, attractive displays in the stores, facility of clean drinking water, friendly and kind behavior of the store staff and the stores atmosphere. The perception of the customers was found to be unfavorable for both the stores in case of four variables such as appeal of the stores from outside, isles, illumination in the stores and hygiene of washrooms. The author has suggested that the retailers need to take steps on the unfavourable variables to improve the perception of the customers and have a close watch and incorporate changes to meet the anticipated expectations of the customers.

Thakor Mand Prajapati S.G.(2012) embarked a research work entitled “The factors that encourage impulse purchase & impact of visual merchandising on the purchase decision of women for beauty products in Gujarat.” The data for the present study has been collected from the women customers who were above 18 years through a non probability sampling with 40 responses from Ahmedabad, 34 from Baroda, 22 from Rajkot and 20 from Surat, comprising a total sample size of 116 women customers. The Research findings revealed that impulse purchase is an excitement creating factor for women while shopping of beauty products. The stores with attractive lighting, eye-catching display and clean- soothing environment brought attention of customers and were found to have more people visiting it compared to the other stores.

Law Derry, et.al.(2012) examined the study named “How does visual

merchandising affect consumer affective response? An intimate apparel experience”. The authors made a study with a qualitative approach on Hong Kong Chinese female consumers, between the age group of 25 and 35 and explored the consumer affective response on visual stimuli in stores by considering the aesthetic, symbolic and cultural perceptions on intimate apparels, along with the interaction between individual visual merchandising elements like colour, lighting etc with consumers. The findings of the study indicated that, display elements, such as mannequins, colour, lighting and props which emphasized the feelings of feminine sexuality, triggered negative affective responses in consumers which finally affected purchase intentions.

Mehta Neha and Chugan Pawan K(2013) observed the research work titled “A study on Consumer’s Perception for apparel retail outlets in terms of Visual Merchandising in Ahmedabad.” The respondents chosen for the study were the first 50 customers who visited the retail stores for a period of 8 days which constituted a total of 385 customers. The study focused on the various dimensions of visual merchandising which included window display, atmospheric, product display, mannequin display, fixtures, signage and props. It was found in the present research that the consumers showed differences in their perception of different retail stores. It was revealed that consumers had found the mannequin display and arrangement of props as good for Shoppers Stop, whereas in case of Pantaloon window display was preferred, signage and atmospheric was found pleasing of Central and Westside was considered good on fixtures and product

display. Therefore the study revealed that visual merchandising is essential while planning strategies for marketing activities in order to improve the sales of the stores. The study gives insights to the retail managers to work on the areas in which the stores are weak and helps in improving the perceptions of the consumers of the stores.

Chithralega J (2013) conducted a study entitled “Influence of shopping motivation, mall atmosphere and value relationship with reference to mega malls in Chennai,” consisting a sample of 210 respondents. The demographic factors, shopping motivation, mall atmosphere and value evaluation were analysed. The study concluded that various motivational factors like aesthetic appreciation, diversion, social relationship, browsing, and convenience had made the consumers to visit the malls and also revealed that there was a direct link between shopping motivations and the overall mall experience values such as hedonic benefits, utilitarian benefits, epistemic benefits and revision tension. The research concluded that the mall atmosphere positively affected shopping motivation and value.

Kim Jong Sung (2013) made a study on the “Effect that V.M.D (Visual Merchandising Design) of a store has on purchasing products”. The research aimed at finding the correlation between factors namely perception, effect, satisfaction, store interior design and store exterior design, in the mobile telecommunication stores and how the customers felt about these factors which helped in formulating strategies on implementing V.M.D. The

study concluded that as far as the telecommunication stores are concerned the customers, find the information of the product in advance before purchasing the product but they take their purchase decision only after experiencing the product at the time of making selection in the store and were found the store as an important place for product information. The study indicated that the preference of the customer on V.M.D varied with respect to age and area and it was found that young customers had strong assertion towards V.M.D. The research also showed that V.M.D gives value to store environment. The study suggested that consumers were found to seek for recreational factors related to product attributes and prefer for an enjoyable purchase.

Babu G. China (2013) concentrated in the article “Visual Merchandising in Retail Stores” the various techniques, store elements and importance of the same. The study explained the store design and outlook required to create an impact on customer’s behavior and also in helping the retailers to incorporate the necessary factors and adhere to it as per the preferences of the customer’s.

Meesala A and Nair G (2014) examined in the study termed “Impact of Visual Merchandising Elements on Business Outcomes of White Goods and Electronics Stores” the elements of visual merchandising which have been chosen for the study were store image, store atmosphere, store environment, shopping comfort, merchandise assortment, and store layout. The outcomes of the business which were taken in assessing the impact of the elements of visual merchandising

were customer satisfaction; repurchase intention, cross purchase intention, store layout and recommendation to others. The study was made with 76 respondents who visited four different outlets of a famous retail chain of white goods and electronics in Hyderabad when it was a lean season and no special schemes like discount

or promotion were launched so that the influence of such promotions is not felt at the time of purchase as a result of which the number of respondents were found to be less. The findings of the study indicated that customer satisfaction was found to be influenced by store environment, shopping comfort and merchandise assortment while repurchase intention was found to be determined by store environment, shopping comfort, and merchandise assortment. It was further found that cross purchase was influenced by store atmosphere and shopping comfort while store loyalty was determined by shopping comfort and store layout. The study finally concluded that shopping comfort was found to be the most important element of visual merchandising which influenced all other dependent variables chosen for the study. It was also deduced that store layout had considerable influence on store loyalty which indicated that store layout has considerable impact in bringing store loyal customers. The research recommended that the study would help the store management in identifying and concentrating on specific elements of visual merchandising depending upon the business outcomes of store.

Mehta Neha and Chugan Pawan K (2014) conducted the study called "Impact of Visual Merchandising on Consumer Behavior: A Study of Furniture Outlets". The study analyzed the impact of various

dimensions of merchandising displays such as window display, storefront, merchandise presentation, store layout and organization, creative style and trend co-ordination, signage/graphics and store environment. The author concluded that window display, store front, store layout and organization of shelf displays, creative style and trend co-ordination have impact on purchase behavior of consumer's.

Bonera Michelle and Corvi Elisabetta (2014) conducted a research named "The Relevance of Visual Merchandising for Online Retailers". The research aimed to test the relationship between the visual merchandising techniques which were used in the websites followed with the success of fashion industry e-commerce sites. The study used the content analysis to assess the visual merchandising techniques of 30 distribution companies in the clothing industry. The research concluded that the online channels should understand the limitations and strengthen their website, and improve the effectiveness of their virtual environment for e-shopping.

Chaudhary Prashant Vilas and Jadhav Rahul Arjun (2014) in their article named "Visual Merchandising in retailing: Influencing consumer buying behavior towards apparels with special reference to Pune city in India" examined the visual merchandising factors like graphics and signage, fixtures, props, lighting and space management through a qualitative and analytical research, with a sample size of 100 respondents who visited such stores. The study further aimed at understanding the relationship between impulse buying and visual merchandising. Among the various findings, one of the findings

proved that there was a direct proportional relationship between customers' buying behavior and in-store form/mannequin display, promotional signage and window display. The study also identified that attractiveness of window display, innovative assortments and cleanliness and neatness of store/environment were found to be important factors that could influence the buying behavior of consumers. In view of the various findings and recommendations the study concluded that in line with the changing expectations of the customers, the retailers should understand the importance of the expectations of the customers and provide the right environment to build the overall image of the store leading to a positive impact on sales. The study also gives insight to the retailers on the different types of visual merchandising that can influence buying behavior.

Berpič Jakub and Horská Elena (2015) analysed the research paper named "Sound system and noise as essential elements of visual merchandising in selected retail chains in the Slovak Republic". The research was carried through a questionnaire survey with the managers of these stores and also measured the noise intensity in the particular sales departments of the food market. The survey sample included 182 store managers located mainly in western Slovakia. The research concluded that the

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store sound distribution depends on the size of the sales format and a pleasant atmosphere is based on the musical elements which need to be consistent with the nature of the goods sold and the sales strategy of the company. The study further recommended an investment in the basic sound system will bring to the company satisfied customers, through the commercial playback of advertising messages at the sales area.

Conclusion:

It was found that in various researches, a relation was developed between Visual Merchandising and its impact on sales of the store. Elements of Visual Merchandising effect on sales were also established through few researches. However, in no research, a researcher could quantify the amount of impact of various elements on sales of store and impulse buying behavior. Also there could be various possible arrangements of Visual Merchandising in a store. And no research could ever establish the level of significance of a TIER-1 Cities consumers in South India. It is a known fact that consumers' response to Visual Merchandising could be different in different demographic conditions. No research elaborates the relationship of demographic conditions with Visual Merchandising arrangements and its elements in TIER-1 Cities of South India (Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad)

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