Effects and Experiences of Visual Merchandising towards Lifestyle Retailing- Customer experiences at Shoppers Stop, Bengaluru

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Abstract- The current study contemplates and analyzes the influence of visual merchandising towards enhancing customer experience and behaviour during lifestyle product purchases. Past scenarios of visual merchandising have constantly emulated the fact that visual merchandisings have positively impacted the customer experience and behaviour. The study was conducted at Shoppers Stop retail outlet at Bengaluru where the study predominantly concentrates on several external and internal factors that drive the experience and purchase behaviour of customers walking into hyper markets for lifestyle purchases. The study was carried out for a period of 40 days with a sample size of 200 using systematic sampling techniques. The study has incorporated the various experiences and impact of various visual merchandising elements which included window displays, store design, atmospherics and aesthetics. The study has vividly helped to understand the expectation of the customers towards shopping experiences and behaviour. Interactive responses were analyzed through various parametric and non parametric tests. The study has confirmed the relevance of various factors of visual merchandising in enhancing the experience of the customer walk ins at Hyper markets and has proven when creatively and effectively used, visual merchandising elements catalyses the sales and profitability for hyper markets.

Keywords - Visual merchandising, Lifestyle purchases, customer experiences, consumer behaviour.
I. INTRODUCTION

Shopping has transformed from necessity to an adventure. It is more of an experience, opportunity for celebration. 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. Visual merchandising plays a very important role in attracting customers of different sections to buy the goods. It includes the presentation of merchandise as well as other important, features that create the store’s overall atmosphere. The basic objective for visual merchandising is to create a desire among the prospects to buy the merchandise. Visual merchandising is offered to the customer through exterior and interior presentation. Thus the art and science of visual merchandising significantly deals with creating and delivering of a convenient ambience for prospective customers.

II. VISUAL MERCHANDISING - THE SILENT SALESMAN

Visual merchandising plays a very authentic role in attracting customers of different sections to buy the goods. Visual merchandising is offered to the customer through exterior and interior presentation. It involves lots of thought process where, a prospect would connect the visual merchandise pattern and the store image to synchronise. This perspective enables the store to communicate the unique selling proportion and distinction into the mindset of the customer. A visual merchandising plan shall encompass the following:

- **Sensory elements:** Sight, Smell, Touch, Sound, Taste. Pampering the five senses of the consumers ensures a sensory shopping experience for them.

- **Visual Merchandising elements:** Exterior designs and presentations, Window displays, Props, Fixtures and signage’s, Furniture and fixtures and others. Across these broad classifications, these elements

Thus the evaluation of the customer to narrow cast the exterior and the interior makes a visual merchandising programme successful. Creating and maintaining a store’s visual merchandising plan is significant and it is necessary to continually determine the customer appreciation in a given time frame. Working out the visual merchandising of a store with this end in mind can work wonders for a brand to acquire customer patronage in purchasing the product.

III. EFFECT AND EXPERIENCE OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING – THE 70% RULE

It becomes imperative for a visual merchandising campaign to communicate the uniqueness of the product offering which differentiates it from other stores in hyper markets. Seventy per cent of the purchase decisions happen on the store floor according to the study conducted in the US in 1995 study initiated by the Point-of Purchase Advertising Institute. The study has advocated that “more than seventy percent of the brand decisions are made at the point of purchase. Similarly, the other research study conducted in United States suggests that 64.8 percent of all decisions have been effected through impulse purchases inside the store. The notion to buy substitute brands in lieu of the brands thought of initially has been made possible by effective visual
merchandising. In addition, customers also sort to discern themselves from their previous perceptions obtained from web references or WOM earlier.

IV. RELATED WORK

Krishnakumar. M\textsuperscript{[1]} in his paper to study the attitude of customers while buying apparel has analyzed and concluded that retail business is moving towards new phases, the emphasis is slowly changing from the product to the space—the store—where all the things happen. Dash, Mihir, L., Akshaya\textsuperscript{[2]} has emphasized that apparel retailers need to ensure their visual merchandising has stronger impact, as competition in the present scenario is high and as retailers are ready to spend more on visual merchandising to differentiate themselves from competitors. In addition, Neha P. Mehta, Pawan K. Chugan\textsuperscript{[3]} had observed that the certain dimensions which included window display, in-store form/mannequin in display, floor merchandising and promotional signage do affect impulse purchase.

N.H. Wanniachchi, W.V.L. Kumara\textsuperscript{[4]} conducted a study to identify the impact of visual merchandising elements on consumer buying behaviour and concluded that the purpose of visual merchandising is to attract, engage and motivate the customer towards making a purchase, where it creates an impact on the consumer buying behaviour. Janiszewski, Chris\textsuperscript{[5]} reports on an investigation into exploratory search behaviour and attempts to establish a connection between the layout of objects in a display and the amount of attention devoted to each of these objects. The research has implications for catalog page layout and visual merchandising. The findings of Benjamapornkul R, Ratkin S, &Punnakitikashem P\textsuperscript{[6]} indicate that proper usage of visual merchandising techniques can maximize product attractiveness and influences the customer evaluation of the brands displayed. On analyzing the visual stimulus in stores on considering the aesthetic, symbolic and cultural perceptions on inner garments of women, Law D., Wong C., &Yip, J\textsuperscript{[7]} has looked into the relationship between visual merchandising elements and consumer affective responses. Park, H.H., Jeon, J.O., &Sullivan, P\textsuperscript{[8]} has found that the Consumers’ perceptions of visual merchandising can arouse consumers’ in-store Irfan Ahmed Mohammed Saleem, Dr. S. Jaisankar\textsuperscript{[9]} merchandise exploration, such as interacting with products, differentiate a retail brand among competitors; contribute to brand preference; and encourage purchase intentions.

Gigola, M\textsuperscript{[9]} states that there is a strong dependence between visual merchandising and consumers’ behaviour while buying apparel. Moreover, the presentation of apparel, which takes into account the principles of visual merchandising, keeps the client for longer in the point of sale as well as raises their greater interest in the presented products. Finally, Weinberger, D\textsuperscript{[11]} has discussed as to how the physical space in stores is used by merchandisers to tempt customers into buying more as retail stores practice to display popular products at the back of the store so customers have to walk through the “sticky” areas of tempting goods and appealing offers before they can find the product they intended to purchase.
V. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

With reference to Fig 1 as shown above, the study is intended to explore the various influencing elements of visual merchandising on the consumer behaviour of branded lifestyle products at Shopper Shop Bengaluru. To obtain the requisite results following objectives was framed:

**Primary Objectives:**

- Analyze the influence of visual merchandising upon the purchase decision of customers

**Secondary Objectives:**

- Explore the opinions of walk-in customers towards peripheral evidences in a shopping environment
- Identify the elements of store design and visual merchandising elements that impacts the customer attention and mindset

- Study the consumer perception towards different themes of visual merchandising and
- Illustrate the association between visual merchandising themes and consumer purchase behaviour.

For attaining the above said objectives descriptive research design was planned. The study is based on the primary data, collected from the customers who are visiting the Shoppers stop at Meenakshi Mall in Bengaluru. The sample size considered for the study was 100. Since the sample population was longitudinal in nature and since the sample size was estimated close to 100, the sampling technique executed for data collection was systematic sampling where every 6th customer arriving to store floor was considered as a sample. The data was collected through a structure questionnaire. The questionnaire has accommodated about 60 items which to study and analyze the effects and experience of visual merchandising. Interval scale was administered to measure the components of the questionnaire, except for the demographic profile of the respondents. The following table comprises of the various attributes which was considered to rationalize the objective framed for the study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Objective Studied/ Items</th>
<th>Scale Deployed</th>
<th>No: Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Shopping habits</td>
<td>Intervalscale</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Opinion on peripheral evidences</td>
<td>Interval Scale</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Elements of store design</td>
<td>Interval Scale</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Study of customer perception over visual merchandising elements</td>
<td>Interval Scale</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Customer Profile</td>
<td>Ordinal /Nominal</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The questions/items of the questionnaire were put into reliability tests for confirming its construct validity. The internal consistency of the questionnaire [Cronbach alpha] was observed to be .978 on testing and fulfilling in order to obtain the desired results. Thereafter the data was collected among 200 respondents during the stipulated period of 40 days and subsequently tested with the following statistical tools for results.

**TABLE II: STATISTICAL TESTS USED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Tests</th>
<th>Test statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage analysis</td>
<td>• Demographic profile and descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>• To test variance between the cluster groups (based on age, gender and income group) and the pattern to purchase, opinion towards elements of visual merchandising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>• Between layout of the store and cluster groups preference to shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Between Point of Sales Display and to buy out missed out products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Between Store display and the tendency to enter into the store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor Analysis</td>
<td>• To identify those factors which influence the effect and experience of visual merchandising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VI. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

- **Demographic Profile**

The experiment was conducted through a survey instrument among the walk-in’s of customers at Shoppers Shop at Meenakshi Mall Bengaluru. The survey included 100 respondents. The survey was conducted with 54 male respondents and 46 female respondents. It was also found that majority (57%) of respondents belong to the age group of 21 to 30.

The average income level of the walk-in’s was found between Rs.41,000 – Rs.50,000

- **Perceptive Variances**

The study has also attempted to study the perceptive variance of the demographic attributes and the shopping attributes profile with the shopping styles and habits of the respondents. There is an agreeable variance with the groups to shop only the needy products while shopping [p=0.048]

- **Related influence and experience**

Correlation exercises was also conducted to test whether visual merchandising tend influence the shopping experience and the customer behaviours especially on special occasions and seasons. The study has identified that, the layout of the store has been basically influencing the customer [0.25]. While the display patterns at the point of purchase have also significantly influenced in obtaining the attention of the customer [0.63]. Window displays and creative visual merchandising pattern tend to impact the customer to try out a store proactively [0.73]

- **Impacting components**

The conduct of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) experiment has shown the significance of several elements of visual merchandising in prompting the customers to visit the store and effect the purchases. Colours and concepts play a major role in defining the volume of walk-in’s. It was also identified that walk-in’s also spend more time and effect purchases on regular and well arranged merchandise. They also found to be highly responsive towards various sensory
elements viz., illumination, channel music and creative signages.

VII. FINDINGS

- The study wishes to generalize the fact the hyper malls attract youngsters preferably in the age group of 30 and below with a high affluent income range of Rs 40,000 per month.
- The study has also evidently drawn upon the inference that respondent group show significant variance in the choosing the products. It has now becomes imperative for the hyper markets to offer a wide array of merchandise to enhance profitability. Therefore, the role of visual merchandising has evidently becomes impactful for attracting customers amass.
- It has been identified that the layout of the store, POP displays and creative and thematic visual merchandising displays have undoubtedly enhanced the customers walk-ins with related experience shopping.
- Proven components and elements of visual merchandising have found a laudable response from the customer prospects. Provisions of a thematic and conceptual physical evidence and aesthetics have enhanced the prospect-customer churn out ratio.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the prominent visual merchandising factors that impacts customer attention, attraction and purchase. The results proved that there is a pivotal relationship between customers preference to shop in a store where prompt visual merchandizing is on action. Purchase decisions are more positively expected when they are exposed to sensory stimuli. The study has also proven that creative visual merchandising practices, serve as a stimuli that provoke a desire that ultimately motivates a consumer to make purchase decision comfortably. In-store browsing appears to be positively affected by consumers” buying tendency, and in turn, has a positive impact on consumers” positive feelings and impulse buying moods. This study has revealed usefulness and effectiveness of visual merchandising in understanding consumers” buying decision based on the impact of visual merchandising.

IV. REFERENCES


