Essential Elements of Visual Merchandising

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Visual merchandising is an activity and profession of developing floor plans and three dimensional designs to maximise the sales. It is an art of displaying the merchandise in an appealing way in order to attract the customers. Both goods and services can be displayed to highlight their features and benefits.

Significance:

It attracts the customers thus increasing the sales. It creates awareness in customer about the merchandise. It attracts, engages and motivates the customer towards purchase. It helps the customer to locate and self select the merchandise.
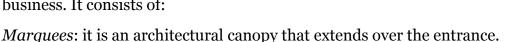
Key elements:

There are 4 key elements of visual merchandising. They are:

1. Store exterior
2. Store layout
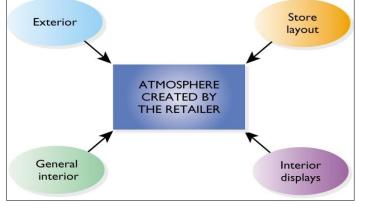3. Store interior
4. Interior display

Store exterior:

It includes the exterior of the business. It consists of:

Marquees: it is an architectural canopy that extends over the entrance.

Entrance: it should be such that it should provide customer convenience as well as store security. Small stores may have one entrance. Big stores consists one for entrance and other for exit. There are different types of entrances being used now days like revolving, push-pull, electronic entrances.
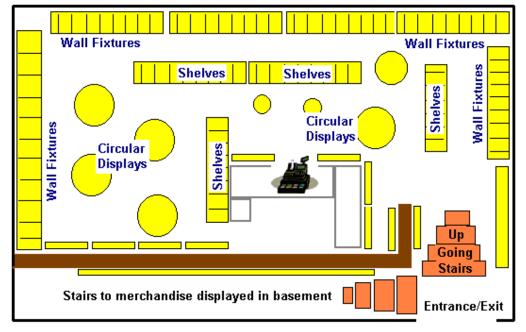
Window display: it is an important element. It creates the store's first impression with customer. It begins the selling process even before the customer enters into the store. According to the convenience of store, different types of window displays like closed, open-back, angled, arcade, cornered window display etc are used.

Store layout:

It deals with the aspect of way of allocating the floor space. It includes

1. Selling space
2. Merchandising space
3. Customer space
4. Personnel space.

Store interior:

It deals with the way of designing the store's interior. It affects the store's image. It includes the Floor and wall coverings, lighting, colours and fixtures. It is important to create a comfortable environment inside such that customers feel relax and free to spend more time and shop. It should be designed such that they should not be confused, pressed with crowds or long lines.

Interior display:

It is the way of displaying the store's merchandise in interior of the store. They are the general part of the store. They generate 1 out of 4 sales. They enable the customer to self select without personnel. It may be of closed display, open display, point-of-purchase, store decoration or architectural display. Interior display use

fixture and props to hold the merchandise.

In addition to the above elements there are other elements that help in a successful visual merchandising. They are:

Mannequins:

Of all the presentation tools mannequins are the important as they trigger customer's imagination. They are built in different human forms. They are dressed and accessorised such that they help in customer visualise and imagine the way of style and suits them. They can provide a total look. They are the asset of a store. They convey the fashion message. They are the store's *silent sales person*. Different types of mannequins are:

1. Realistic mannequin
2. Semi realistic mannequin
3. Semi abstract mannequin
4. Abstract mannequin
5. Headless mannequin

Realistic mannequin: in past they resembled to a famous model or a movie star. At present they are more natural, animated and identifiable.

Semi realistic mannequin: it is proportioned and sculpted like a realistic mannequin with makeup that is neither natural nor artificial. It is more decorative than realistic and stylized.

Semi abstract mannequin: it is even more stylized and decorative than semi realistic. It is painted on or merely suggested accordingly like a bump on nose.

Abstract mannequin: it is more decorative and stylized. It consists of prolonged legs and hands and gives a total look.

Headless mannequins: these are the mannequins that do not contain head. These are mostly used in small stores.

Lighting:

Visual merchandising will be successful with proper lighting. If there is no correct lighting it doesn't fetches any attention from the customers. Rather than if there is poor

lighting, which make customer strained, will damage the store's image. So lighting is an important element.

Lighting draws the attention of customer. A shopper's eye is automatically drawn to the brightest part of the store. It should illuminate or reflect properly. It should not cause any strain to customer. There are 3 types of lighting:

Primary lighting: it illuminates the overall level of the store.
Accent lighting: it is illuminated on special areas to drag customer's attention
Atmosphere lighting: it gives a distinctive and specific illumination without shadow.

Colour:

It is one of the most important elements of visual merchandising. Proper selection of colours is essential to drag the customer's attention. There should not be zigzag or crowdie colours which confuses and strains him. Colour effects psychological emotion of the customer. They can change the emotions of human being. They can crate positive or negative effect on mind. Hence proper selection of colours which creates a positive effect on customers is used.

Conclusion:

Visual merchandising helps in boosting up the sales. They can increase the turn over. Hence it is very much important for a store to have a good visual merchandising. All elements in visual merchandising should be properly controlled and arranged. Any defect or damage creates a negative impulse. In addition to visual merchandising, sound and aroma, pleasant receiving and treatment of customer results in success of a store.

Make a shopper as a stopper and make to pass-in rather than pass-by.

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