Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON VISUAL MERCHANDISING – ROLE OF MERCHANDISER

Marketing brings horse to the water but visual merchandising makes the horse drink. G. Surrender. (2001)³⁹

This chapter presents

Summary of literature published in the field of visual merchandising specially to understand its theoretical aspects. It tries to explain how Visual Merchandising position and distinguishes the firm from the competitors and works towards customer satisfaction by meeting their aesthetic needs

The review of literature includes research papers, professional journal articles, views of different visual merchandisers and views of different authors. It also deals with Role of visual merchandiser. It also covers important elements of visual merchandising which position and distinguishes the firm from the competitors and simplifies the customers buying procedure

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2.1 – INTRODUCTION

Today retailers are facing a keen competitive market and are finding it increasingly difficult to create a differential advantage on the basis of product (merchandise), price, promotion, place, people and location and at this point the store itself becomes a fertile and last opportunity for market differentiation.

Today’s customers have many shopping choices, as the merchandise is available easily. Some make purchases on the internet they don’t have to worry about the long hours of operation, parking or getting large purchases home. So as compared to the past with development in technology retailers job have become more difficult.

Retailers need to create an exciting store design with innovative merchandising techniques to make people come and visit the stores. Here comes the role of visual merchandiser which creates the store design.

A Visual merchandiser likes to think of their store as theater. The walls and floors represent the stage. The lighting, fixtures, and visual communications such as signs represent the sets. And the merchandise represents the show.

According to researcher the real challenge of a retailer and visual merchandiser is to convert the foot-fall into sales. (Footfall is a term representing the number of people who visit a store. The gatekeeper at the sores will click on his or her counter every time a customer sets foot into the store and this goes to the store manager as a measure of potential sales. Retail space is priced on the basis of the footfall it receives. Malls price their shops on the basis of the footfall they receive during weekdays and weekends).

As per Kanika Anand (2012) Deputy Manager- Visual merchandising, Boggi Milano DLF Brands Ltd, India. 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 challenges to overcome” She further states that “Creating strong foundations for consumerism based societies, we are moving towards a first world fantasy where one does not buy a product, but an experience. Shopping malls, Hypermarkets, Branded outlets and even small time retailers understand and acknowledge the need and importance of VM to generate great business”. Her opinion for consumer trends and behavior

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41 Inspired by then world of Art, Visual Merchandising & Retail Design, Volume 8 (Sept 2012), issue 1, pp16-17.
is that Indian consumers are turning increasingly global in their outlook having become much more aware of design trends in the business of fashion, hence demanding the same levels of design and innovations from store spaces. Customer recognition and loyalty is essential to make consistent business but lack of innovation is hindering the creation of distinct retailer’s identities thus challenging their strong up-ward force/push towards Visual merchandising.

Anonymous (2010) had written the dictionary meaning of visual merchandising i.e. Visual merchandising is an activity of promoting the sale of goods, especially by their presentation in retail outlets. She further mentioned that visual merchandising is like an art in the sense that there are implicit rules, but they may be broken for striking effects. For people who fear unmanageable costs and hence avoid Visual merchandisers, for them visual merchandising can help economize by avoiding costly mistakes. She concluded by mentioning that visual merchandising is the art of implementing effective designs, ideas to increase store traffic and sales volume and it is a mechanism to communicate to a customer and influence his decisions to buy. Recently visual merchandising has gained importance as a quick and cost effective way to revamp retail stores.

2.2 – Role of Visual Merchandisers

VISUAL DISPLAY ARTISTS are unsung heroes in the beauty industry. They take a concept or idea and translate that into an exciting and sometimes breathtaking in-store experience - one delights and engages consumers of all ages. (Dave Lackie)

In today’s scenario where there is stiff competition according to researcher a person who desire to attract guests to a place of business in order to sell its merchandise is a visual merchandiser.

There are different names given to Visual Merchandisers some stores call them Display People. Others are called Sign Makers. But, they do one and the same thing: Make the store attractive for customers. The presence of his role is felt when one get to see those beautiful windows, or signs announcing a sale in a store.

A Visual Merchandising Department also has a hierarchy, like any other job. The head is usually called Visual Merchandising Director or Display Director. Sometimes, he or she is called Vice President- Visual Merchandising, depending on the hierarchy system in the company.

43 Dave Lackie, article Dazzling Displays, publication “Cosmetics” volume 39, issue 2.
Then, it is the Visual Merchandising Manager and a Visual Merchandising Supervisor. Then the Visual Merchandiser, sometimes called a Display Person.

In the Visual Merchandising Department, there is also the Sign Shop, a very vital part. They usually have a Sign Shop Manager, and graphic artists. They are the ones who take care of the signing in the store.

Some companies have Store Design as part of the Visual Merchandising Department. This section is usually the one which handles space planning and design.

All of them work for the Visual Merchandising Director or the Vice President-Visual Merchandising. In the very competitive retail environment the Visual Merchandising Director has the challenging of making the store attractive and very customer-friendly.

**Display Designer/Visual Merchandiser**

Display designers and Visual merchandisers use their design skills to promote the image, products and services of businesses and other organizations.

**Display designers** focus on designing displays, stands and panels for exhibitions, conferences and other events. They also produce point-of-sale displays, which are installed in hundreds of retail outlets.

**Visual merchandisers** create window and in-store displays of goods for retail shops and department stores.

**The work involves:**

- Researching to get an understanding of what is needed, and coming up with design ideas.
- For visual merchandisers, sourcing elements such as lighting, props and accessories.
- For some jobs, installing and dismantling displays, making the most of the space available, working within a budget and meeting deadlines.

Display designers and Visual merchandisers usually work a standard number of hours each week. This may include evenings to set up displays when stores are closed. Extra hours may be required as deadlines approach. Part time work is possible. Freelance work is common.

They could be based in design studios, at company head offices or design departments, or in retail stores. This is comparatively small area of work with keen competition for jobs.
are no set entry qualifications. Most employers look for applicants who have a relevant qualification and/or previous experience in design or retail. Some people enter this career through an Advanced Apprenticeship in retail (Visual Merchandising). Display designers and Visual merchandisers usually get train on the job and also attend courses. They may work towards display or merchandising qualifications. Promotion can be to supervisor, head designer or merchandiser, and sometimes to department manager. Working overseas for multinational companies is a possibility. Some experienced display designers and visual merchandisers become self-employed by moving into freelance work or setting up their own business.

**The nature of the work…**

Display designers and visual merchandisers use design skills to help promote the image, products and services of businesses and other organizations.

The role of display designers and visual merchandisers may overlap to some extent. Display designers usually focus on designing displays, stands and panels that are used at exhibitions, conferences and other events. They also produce point-of sale displays. These are stock containers that are usually mass produced and installed in hundreds of retail outlets. Visual merchandisers, on the other hand, create window and in-store displays of goods for retail stores.

**Display designers** aim to promote a client’s products, brand and image by creating an eye-catching display using visual and graphic elements. Depending on the client’s business, the display may be taken to wide range of locations. These can range from trade exhibitions to shopping malls. The work involves:

- making presentations to potential clients to win contracts
- discussing the brief with the client and identifying the key message that need to be conveyed
- gaining an in-depth understanding of client’s organization, products, image and target market
- considering factors such as the space available for the display, any special features that should be incorporated, such as chairs, models and computers, and the client’s budget
- coming up with design ideas, images and graphics incorporating the client’s logo and corporate colors, discussing these with the client
• researching costs and working with the budget
• revising designs according to feedback from clients and other members of the design team
• Overseeing the production of the chosen design, checking the quality and making sure the project is completed to schedule.

Producing a display usually involves working with printers, exhibition contractors, plastic manufacturers and metal fabricators. The job could also involve arranging for the display to be transported to and from exhibitions, installed, dismantled and stored when not in use. Designers may liaise with suppliers of lighting, furniture, flower arrangements and other accessories.

**Visual merchandisers create imaginative, eye-catching displays of goods in retail stores. They aim to attract the attention of the customers and encourage them to buy.** Their task can include:

• researching lifestyle and design trends and making sure designs will appeal to the target audience
• working with other members of the design, marketing and buying team to develop themes and color schemes for displays- e.g. Christmas, Valentine’s Day, sales and special promotions
• sketching design and developing floor plans, making the most of the space available
• taking direction from head office on corporate schemes
• sourcing material, such as props and lighting
• installing and dismantling displays
• preparing visual merchandising packs, including plans and photographs, for other stores in the chain, to make sure all displays present a consistent image
• Visiting branches to train and brief staff on arranging displays.

**Skills and personal qualities** a Visual Merchandiser should:

• have a flair for design and color
• be creative and imaginative and have practical skills
• understand a company’s target markets and know how to appeal to them
• be aware of current trends and activities in design, fashion and culture
• have good communication skills to present ideas to others
• be able to work to tight deadlines
• be able to use large and small spaces effectively
• be self-motivated
• Have technical drawing skills and, for some jobs, be able to use computer-aided design packages.
• Be interested in art and design and enjoy working creatively in a fast-moving environment.

2.3 – LITERATURE REVIEW
1. Visual Merchandising ---Role of Merchandisers and Merchandising strategy
2. Visual Merchandising --- Retail Communication
4. Visual Merchandising --- Promotional Management
5. Visual Merchandising --- Retail Branding and store Image
7. Visual Merchandising --- Impulse buying
10. Visual Merchandising --- A Silent Salesman—Key to increase sales.
11. Visual Merchandising --- Sensory Retailing
13. Visual Merchandising --- Cosmetic Category
14. Visual Merchandising --- Perfume Category
15. Visual Merchandising --- Relevance in current Indian retail Industry – the changing scenario
16. Visual Merchandising -- Inspirations
17. Visual Merchandising ---- Importance of Atmospherics

2.4 - (Exploring theories) Visual merchandising - An in-depth study of its important elements
2.3.1- VISUAL MERCHANDISING –ROLE OF MERCHANDISERS AND MERCHANDISING STRATEGY.

A) Berretto Anton\(^{44}\) in the article “Tricks of the Trade” points out about visual merchandising that When used effectively, the basic components to the concrete aspect of store design - color, texture, light, music - can enhance store appeal, it also invites a person to touch and is what the body remembers.

B) Gibson G. Vedamani.\(^{45}\) in his book on Retail management states that, Visual merchandising is needed and its relevance is felt in today retail industry as the primary purpose of merchandising is presentation of products in a way that cause them to be sold quickly, and at the highest possible retail margin. Secondly the visual seduction that charms the customer results in add-on-sales. The third role of merchandising is the creation of the merchant’s individual retail image-which relates directly to the lifestyle of the community and the customer. The targeted result of the activity of visual merchandising is ongoing sales and customer loyalty. Gibson also states that, visual merchandisers face three challenges while designing the store.

First challenge is to keep the store atmosphere consistent with the store image.

The second challenge is to influence customer buying decisions with the help of store layout, store atmosphere and space–planning.

The third challenge is to consider the costs associated with each store design element versus the value received in terms of higher sales and profits. For instance, the free-form design found in many boutiques is much more costly than rows of gondolas in a discount store (Gondolas are four sided shelving cum display cum selling unit, often movable, used on the retail floor as part of the merchandise fixtures). Also custom wood fixtures are more expensive than wire racks. Visual merchandiser must be aware of the financial ramifications of any store layout decision.

C) Gibson in his book Retail management functional principles and practices had clearly laid down the important role of visual merchandiser. According to him today in retail scenario in India or anywhere in the world visual merchandisers play a major role in enhancing sales and the customer experience. Visual Merchandisers performs the major functions and duties for the retail format to be successful. The author had also listed down few important duties he practically does today which is beyond his definition of function:

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\(^{44}\) Berreto Anton –(2007) (Author Young, ha; Kwon, Wi-Suk;Lennon, Sharron j) (Journal-Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management), Volume 11 , Issue 4, pages 477-493

\(^{45}\) Gibson G. Vedamani, Retail management functional principles and practices. Third edition, jaico publication.
• Planning the VM theme and creating displays.
• Arranging props for displays.
• Arranging display fixtures and lighting.
• Setting up stores before openings.
• Working with floor plans and store requirements.
• Training personnel on the sales floor to create displays.
• Organizing merchandising units such as racks and shelves.

D) Andrew J. Newmen and Peter Cullen (2007) in his book ‘Retail Environment and Operation’ defines merchandiser as one who targets the right people, with right merchandise at the right time in the right place. The right people are retail customer’s one wish to target. The right place means that the store must have a suitable quantity of floor space and appropriate merchandise for the area it is located in.

According to him, when we think about the task of merchandising a retail store we tend to forget about all the efforts required in choosing and sourcing the products and services displayed. Merchandising is not just about laying out items on shelves. It is concerned with the planning, sourcing, buying and arranging of these products and services. So one can say that the term ‘Merchandising’ is used to describe many aspects of the planning and presenting of stock. It also refers to the intermediate stages, which the products pass through from the original source to the end consumer. These stages are: Planning, sourcing, buying, arranging, displaying and space management of products or services. It is coordination of these and other functions that make for a successful retail business. Merchandising is necessary for most types of products and services. The stages of merchandising are discussed below in detail.

E) Dalal M. (2009), in the article ‘Managing merchandising’, defines the merchandising process as a set of activities designed to provide the right goods at the right time through right medium at the right price in the right mix of the right quantity from the right source as per the requirement of the business.

F) Dalal M. (2010) in this article ‘Planning Wisely’ writes that Large Format Stores (LFS) and Exclusive Brand Outlets (EBO) are shifting to the concept of ‘shop and sell’ and the depth and width of the product mix depends on factors such as method on display of

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merchandise, nature of merchandise, conversion ratio i.e. total periodic walk-ins divided by total number of bills raised.

G) Dalal M. (2010) in his article states the role of merchandising by describing ‘Mechanics of retail merchandising’. He states that retail merchandising involves a continuous watch on the pattern of sales taking place at various retail outlets, comparing them with the expected sales and take corrective actions. It requires the merchandiser to have a keen eye on market trends, capability to act and business foresight.

2.3.2 -VISUAL MERCHANDISING AND RETAIL COMMUNICATIONS

A) Visual communication have long been considered important aspect of retailing by practitioners and academic alike (McGoldrick, 1990,2002). Visual merchandising is an activity, which coordinates effective merchandising selection with effective merchandising display (Wolters and White, 1987). In this context, it will be affecting to a positive psychological or behavioral outcome, ultimately leading to purchase.

B) According to Andrew J Newman and Peter Cullen in their book Retail Environment and operations, Visual merchandising refers to display to increase consumer interest in and desire for the products offered for sale. It includes the use of fixtures, decorations, signs and samples for the merchandise to create window and floor displays. The items used in visual merchandising are not normally for sale, although they may include items similar to those on sale. However the items on sale may also contribute to the visual image of the store. Visual merchandising may help divide the store into recognizably different areas, such as men and women’s clothing and create different moods in each according to the target customer.

C) Kerfoot, shona; Davies, Barry; Ward, Philippa (2003) in their journal of retail and distribution management (Visual merchandising and the creation of discernible retail brands) highlight on the integration between visual merchandising and retail communication. It states that Visual stimulation and communication have been considered important aspects of retailing by practioners and academic like Mc Goldrick, 1990, 2002. According to him visual merchandising is concerned with how the products or brand is visually communicated

51 Keerfoot,Shona; Davies,Barry; Ward Philippa. International Journal of Retail and distribution Management “Visual merchandising and the creation of discernible retail brands), (2003); pp 143-152.
to the customer and also to see whether the message is decoded “appropriately” which further affect a positive psychological or behavioral outcome, ultimately leading to purchase.

D) Waters S.\textsuperscript{52} in his article ‘Attractive displays’, had given the tips to create an effective and attractive window display by the use of tool box and the element of effective visual merchandising. According to her creating an attractive product display can draw the customer in, promote a slow moving item, announce a sale or welcome a season. She further explained how to create an attractive visual display with elements such as balance, color, focal point, size of objects, lighting and simplicity and signage. She concluded by stating that creating an attractive display takes a little skill and lots of trial and error.

E) Santosh Nair (2011)\textsuperscript{53} in the article “Inspired by passion” says that “Today as mass media takes central stage when budget are allotted, Visual Merchandising is always given an afterthought. Nonetheless, the scenario has drastically improved. However, it’s about time retailers understood that merchandise is sold as a result of in-store presentation rather than all other forms of marketing and advertising communications. Once this awareness and realization seeps in, Visual merchandising will explode like never before”.

\section*{2.3.3 - VISUAL MERCHANDISING ---AESTHETIC APPEAL TO CUSTOMERS.}

\subsection*{Introduction}

In an age of globalizations, average consumers today are very demanding when it comes to the layout and aesthetics of any establishment they visit. They want to be attracted and motivated to enter a shop or stall and in that moment of decision-making rests the difference between a prospect and a sale for retailers. Successful retailing businesses always wish to create a distinct and consistent image in the customers mind. Visual merchandiser can help create that positive customer image that leads to successful sales.

Visual merchandising therefore has become a critical aspect of retailing and retailers are increasingly looking toward creating a unique environment that is aesthetically pleasing as well as being cost effective. Here, technology comes into play with its capabilities to attract as well as provide information on consumer behavioral patterns.

\textsuperscript{52} Waters, S. Attractive displays retrieved 25\textsuperscript{th} August 2012 from http://www.google.com/visualmerchandising/about.comguide/

\textsuperscript{53} Santosh Nair(2011), inspired by passion, Visual Merchandising and Retail design, Volume 6 (May 2011), issue 5, pp25.
Also in modern retailing, attaining leadership and building a store image in the customer’s mind requires a great deal of skill and planning. A Store brand has to break through the clutter and make an impression on the customer’s mind to eventually convert the coordinated entity of the store that’s in the customer’s mind into a particular image. Image can be described as the overall look of a store and the series of mental picture and feelings it evokes in the beholder. Image is the foundation of all retailing efforts.

Studies indicate that a retailer has roughly seven seconds to capture the attention of a passing customer. Visual merchandising makes it possible by grabbing the customers’ attention and making a positive impression in those precious few seconds as he is aware of the rules of perception. The researcher would like to clear the Rules of perception

- Every potential purchase starts with a first impression.
- The initial contact with the customer will determine
  - How long he will stay
  - His inclination to buy
  - Created a positive or negative feeling towards the shop/brand.

Hence untidy presentations send the message that we are not serious about selling and our business. In a matter of seconds….The customer enters the store he subconsciously registers all of this

- Are the store font and windows attractive and inviting?
- Is the store interior welcoming, clean and tidy?
- Is the merchandise presented in an appealing manner?
- Will I get good service here?

Some retailers typically resort to discounting and freebies to prop up shopper interest. But question often comes is that can this crowd pulling objective be fulfilled. Most experts believe that shopper interest can be raised significantly by employing smarter visual merchandising tools as a standard retail practice through the year elaborating the aesthetics of visual merchandising; it is very true that a store design has to just act like a beautiful podium. It just has to highlight the merchandise and then get out of it. So it needs to be fairly a trap to
get the people inside, and once they are inside, efficiency should take over; the store and its fixtures should become silent salesmen.54

Visual Merchandising, generally known as ‘Silent selling’ is the presentation of the store and merchandise at its Best.

**Visual Merchandising** is termed as 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.55 But it is little different from the real art, the main **principle of visual merchandising** is that it is intended to increase sales, which is not the case with a "real" art.

**Visual Merchandising a science and art:**

**VM is Functional:** The logical aspect of VM attends to the customer’s convenience and understands customer psychology. **VM is Aesthetic:** The visual appeal of a display through the choice of colors, the use of props, the light focus etc. gives an aesthetic value to the display.

However, it’s important to realize that the aesthetic aspect gets a shopper’s attention; it is the functionality of a display will convert a potential buyer into a customer. Functionality of VM supports sales as it is easier for the shopper to locate the desired merchandise. It saves the shoppers time and take the stress out of shopping. It also helps in easier self-selection. Aesthetic aspect increase sales as it guide customers on fashion, new arrivals, and trends. It helps in coordinating and accessorizing and also builds the add-on sales.

A) **Chaudhary (2008)**56 in the article ‘Trends in Visual Merchandising in India’ had described the macro trends of visual merchandising that are prevalent in larger formats.


According to them visual techniques in these markets are subtle, aesthetically appealing and yet economical. They further mentioned that display is a technique of showcasing merchandise by putting them in a fashion which is aesthetically appealing and at the same time is able to convey a story line. They also mentioned that Displays are done using mannequins and other props which make the displays attractive and effective. They further mentioned about the music played in most of the stores keep the atmosphere lively and relaxed. They concluded by stated that visual merchandising is a technique called ‘Silent Salesman’; and is widely used in market to increase footfalls and attract shoppers and make shopping a pleasant experience to one and all.

2.3.4 - VISUAL MERCHANDISING– PROMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT

A) Lea- Greenwood, Gaynor 57“(1998) in his international journal of ‘Retail and Distribution management’ integrates visual merchandising with promotional management. According to him visual merchandising was reinforced with stills from the television, cinema and magazine advertising campaign within window and internal displays, thereby supporting the featured merchandise. Store personnel were fully briefed on the merchandise featured in the campaign and, for the company, the success was "measurable" by sales of the featured merchandise and a more "positive" view of the brand, according to the marketing manager. The buyer's role was to ensure that there was enough merchandise to support the demand that would be created. Layouts reflected the merchandise that was to be featured. All personnel at store level were informed not only of what was to be featured but also where, e.g. television and region, and when, e.g. in the break of a popular soap. This ensured a cohesive campaign with integrated effort and clear objectives.

B) Martin M. Pegler while introducing his book ‘Visual Merchandising and Display’ sixth edition (Fairchild books new York) specifies that during a recession, depression or in a financial crunch, Store owner may take money out of the display budget and put more money into media, advertising. However, television, radio and print ads are worthless unless there is a follow-through the store. Here, at the point of purchase, is where display or merchandise presentation becomes absolutely necessary.

2.3.5 - VISUAL MERCHANDISING --- RETAIL BRANDING AND STORE IMAGE.

A) According to Vikas Bagga,(2009)58 VP, marketing and corporate affairs, M&B Footwear, Visual merchandising is the reflection of the brand identity and imagery which is created at the store level to attract the customers and communicate the propositions of the offering.

B) Young ha kwon wi-suk; lenon sharron j59. (2007), volume 11, issue 4, while dealing with online visual merchandising in his journal “journal of fashion marketing and management” states that Visual merchandising is a strategic tool in fashion marketing and can attract consumers and communicate brand image. (Lea –greenwood 1998) In-store visual merchandising includes floor layout, interior design, signage, in-store promotion and product mix that attracts customers(Harris 1998) Visual merchandising is a very important because aspects of visual merchandising that are incompatible with consumers’ expectations harm store image, therefore the above states how important is it to study about visual merchandising

C) K.Santoshkumar (2009)60 in the article ‘Fashion retailing-the link between manufacturing and consuming’, describes the concept of Fashion retailing. He mentioned that Indian brands are quite complicated to compete with international brands. He further states that retailers need to gear themselves up and widen the range of products and improve the quality and make everything available on demand. He concluded by stating that the buying trends of the consumers has changed drastically as besides quality, pricing and time management, less stressful shopping with good space and other amenities are needed by the consumers.

2.3.6 - VISUAL MERCHANDISING – CUSTOMER LOYALTY TOWARDS STORE

A) Wood, Van R; Darling, John R; Siders, Mark (1999) 61 in the article “Consumer desire to buy and use products in international markets; How to capture it, how to sustain it”

58 Visual merchandising and retail design, Magazine, Volume 4, issue 1, pp17
61 Wood, van R, Darling, John R; Siders, Mark (1999) International Marketing review, volume 16, issue 3
the writers had mentioned about the important element of customers loyalty. According to them in today's competitive markets, where consumers have significant options, marketing resource expenditure strategies must be guided by the answer to three fundamental questions, namely - who are the customers?, what are their needs and wants?, and most importantly, what do they think of the organization's products, and marketing efforts? Often labeled "relationship or customer sensitivity analyses" they have become important for organizations' long-term success because it costs five times more to get a new customer than to keep a current one (Buzzell and Gale, 1987). Relationship analyses focus on sources of competitive advantage that are based on a firm's offering that differentiate it from competitors in the eyes of consumers. The key, again, is that differentiation advantages come only from products and marketing practices that are meaningful to target customers. The objective is to understand the drivers of customer satisfaction and loyalty that are related to customer propensity to buy and use specific products.

2.3.7 – VISUAL MERCHANDISING – IMPLUSE BUYING

In-store browsing may be a link between internal and external factors act as an important component in the impulse buying process .(Internal factors such as mood, need, desire, pleasure of customer and external factors window display, in-store form of display, floor merchandising, promotional signs and many other technique of visual merchandising.) “In store browsing is the in-store examination of a retailer’s merchandise for recreational and informational purposes without an immediate intent to buy”. A customer who browsed in a store makes more unplanned purchases than non-browsers in a regional mall setting. As a customer browses longer, he/she will tend to encounter more stimuli. The store stimuli serve as a type of information aid for those who go to the store without any predetermined of what they need or buy, and once they get into the store, they are reminded or get an idea of what they may need after looking around the store. In other words, consumer’s impulse buying behavior is responses made by being confronted with stimuli that provoke a desire that ultimately motivate a consumer to make an unplanned purchase decision upon entering the store. The more the store stimuli, such as visual merchandising, serves as a shopping aid, the more likely the possibility of a desire or need arising and finally creating an impulse purchase.
A) Raaker\textsuperscript{62} a visual merchandiser very beautifully put down the steps of visual merchandising. According to her the job starts right from the street outside the store where the first objective of \textbf{attracting customers} has to be achieved. Creative and interesting window displays catch the eye of people walking by and draw them into the store. Many store owners in India make the mistake of cramming in lots of merchandise (to indicate the variety of items they carry,) but the most successful window designs create a theme, mood, or "lifestyle" that arouse curiosity.

As per Raaker the Second objective is to an \textbf{impact} on the customer who enters the store. The experience of visiting a store should be as rich. A prospective customer who walks in should feel respected and comfortable. Whether its music, product displays, lighting, or even the climate control, everything in the store impacts the shopping experience.

The next step is to \textbf{inspire} the customer by creating product displays that will show the customer how an item might fit into their everyday life. For e.g. In a home store, a display of sofa-chair grouping or a complete table setting. In a clothing store it might mean dressing mannequins -- whatever the store type, customers are more likely to purchase if they can imagine themselves using/wearing the product.

The next aspect is \textbf{identification and convenience} of customers. These days, many shoppers are busy people. Perhaps they're popping in on the way home from work, or on the way to the party -- whatever the case may be, shoppers are more likely to purchase if they can find what they are looking for, easily identify the price, and then find the register and check out. Product should be organized in logical groupings -- whether by item type, color, or some other characteristic, and signage and product descriptions

Finally what plays magic is the point of purchase that encourages \textbf{Impulse buying}.

B) As per the journal on \textbf{Business and Economics – Marketing and Purchasing.}\textsuperscript{63} Volume 71, issue 5, mentions about the Store Design: Product Presentation for Increased Sales workshop at SPECS/95, \textbf{Joseph Weishar} of New Vision Studios said that shoppers make their purchases based in response to specific stimuli, and retailers who want to increase their


\textsuperscript{63} Joseph Weishar, Journal on Business and Economics –Marketing and Purchasing (Effective visual merchandising), volume 71, issue 5.
sales need to understand those responses and merchandise those store accordingly. Visual merchandising is what directs shoppers to buy products.

He further states that while sales promotion and advertising may bring customers to the store, visual merchandising is what directs them to the products. Between 60% and 90% of all buying decisions are made on impulse at the point of purchase. "In-store impulse sales are driven by the visualization of the product in the right atmosphere," said Weishar. "Visual merchandising is the key." The whole point of visual merchandising, the speaker noted, is to get the customer to stop and browse. To achieve this, in-store presentations must make the product stand out, to catch the consumer's eye from a reasonable distance. And what the eye sees, he added, the body follows.

2.3.8 - VISUAL MERCHANDISING - PRINCIPLES OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING.

There are 5 principles of VM

1. Clarity
   - The company’s image
   - The structure of store
   - The offering
   - Merchandise

2. Authority: To display with authority is to show and tell the customer that the company believes in the merchandise that is being sold, this is attained by ensuring that the shop floor looks neat, clean, adequately stocked, well-coordinated.

3. Discipline: Ensuring presentation norms are being followed for. e.g. Merchandise should not touch the floor; there is a minimum of 4ft of circulation space for each fixture.

4. Diversity: The ability of merchandising various products in the same area, for e.g. coordinating top wear/ bottom wear/ accessories in focal point/ high point or on a wall and yet the display is harmonious

5. Flexibility: Mixing merchandise and having different display configurations.

It is worth mentioning here about how some authors have specified about the problem of Visual clutter author such as Linda cahan in her article ‘Five dedly display sins’ and Sharon Loeff in her article ‘Clear the clutter’ talks about how the visual merchandisers needs to be careful while creating a display to avoid visual clutter.
2.3.9 -VISUAL MERCHANDISING ---PHYSICAL INSTORE ENVIRONMENT AND STORE DESIGN.

A) Kerfoot, Shona; Davies, Barry; Ward, Philippa in their journal of retail and distribution management (Visual merchandising and the creation of discernible retail brands) mentions that there are three types of interior display - Merchandise display, point of sale display and architectural displays. He further writes about merchandise display in context to physical instore environment. He states that it has frequently been suggested that "good" interior design within a store can maintain customer interest, encourage customers to lower their psychological defenses and make a purchase (e.g. Kotler, 1974; Walters and White, 1987; Bitner, 1992; Omar, 1999; Davies and Ward, 2002). In examining this potential, the physical in-store environment has been examined in relation to various elements, for example: orienting factors (Davies and Ward, 2002); signage (Bitner, 1992); spatial factors (Davies and Ward, 2002; Bitner, 1992); and ambient conditions (Bitner, 1992), which Kotler (1974) termed "atmospherics". These elements are in many ways redolent of the facets of merchandise display identified above. The work regarding the physicality of the in-store environment focuses on the "communication" of elements through cues and stimuli that the customer digests through a number of sensory modalities (visual, aural, olfactory, haptic and taste). Within the research on in-store environments it has been suggested that some people are better at "digesting" environmental stimuli than others (Bitner, 1992) and therefore the onus is on the retailer to make the physical environment as digestible or "legible" as possible (Davies and Ward, 2002). Given that up to 90 per cent of the cues provided by an environment are digested through sight (Edwards and Shackley, 1992) it follows that many environmental cues in the retail context are visually communicated. The twin threads of visual communication and legibility highlighted in the environmental literature echo the sentiments raised in the definition of visual merchandising above. This then further strengthens the links between the visual merchandising and considerations of the physicality of the in-store environment. Therefore, from either perspective, understanding how to communicate product and brand

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images to customers through individual visual stimuli is vital. The term "visual merchandising" also suggests a degree of holistic communication and this totality of consideration is also reflected in the literature on the built environment.

The author had concentrated on the visual aspects of totality of merchandising within the store. In doing so he focuses on the retail built environment and focuses on issues concerning: colour, lighting, shape and space. However, consideration is also given to issues of layout and fixturing as well as merchandise and presentation. The approach focuses on consumers' responses to the various retail environments and "reasons" for these responses. It centers on the development of "approach or avoidance" behavior as the result of "pleasure, arousal and dominance" was being generated by the environmental stimuli (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Donovan et al., 1994).

Some attention is also paid to haptic sensing. The use of a single departmental store would enable sound to be kept constant.

B) Anonymous (2010) 65 described in his article ‘How retail store shelving provides extra organization’ about the retail store display which maximize sales. He mentioned that retail displays should be visually appealing and easily accessible and should be inspected for potential cross selling opportunities. Retail store shelving uses less floor space, more retail store supplies can be exhibited. He concluded by mentioning that ideal retail store displays properly layout the retail store supplies to maximize purchasing potential and it is an effective means to present and organize merchandise and can increase purchases without consuming valuable floor space.

C) Maier R. 66 (2010) in his article ‘Know the ins and outs of your store’ had described that store image and sales are generally affected by the method of merchandise displays, as window displays, create traffic while in-store displays really sell the products. If a manager or owner of a store has to feel the pulse of the market he should examine demographics, conduct price comparisons, record customer reactions to promotions, research about the clientele. He should also ask questions such as, what does the store stand for? And what kind of image is

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65 How retail shelving provides extra organization(2010), retrieved 20th Jan 2012 from http://www.google.com./windowdisplay/
the store exemplifying through the type of products, pricing and quality. Once this is understood tackling display design will take business to a new level. The writer further states that to increase the sales, every inch of the store should be considered a potential display space. He further explained that, external and window displays are most valuable assets for a retailer and play a huge role in creating traffic for the store and they should be changed a dozen of times during the year. It should have props, background, signs, product positions, lighting, humor and drama. He finally concluded by stating that the decisions on interior and exterior displays, should reflect the knowledge of customers, products and the store’s desired image.

D) Kleinman, Rebecca (2002) in both the articles ‘Interiors as stylish as the clothes women wear daily’ and ‘Sleek Surroundings: Design gurus are being enlisted to create retail environments that are just as cool as the clothes women’s wear daily’ had stated the importance of store design to entice shoppers and reinforcing brand identity. The writer explains that as stores continue to fill sales floors with merchandise similar to that of their competitors -- and while a sluggish economy forces many consumers to tighten their purse strings -- designers who have retail units, as well as specialty retailers, are seeking out ways to differentiate themselves from each other in order to increase foot traffic. One sure way to entice shoppers, while reinforcing brand identity and providing a unique sensory experience, is through sleek and savvy store design.

The writer throughout the articles had put down the views of different renowned designers. For .e.g. Paco Underhill, managing director of New York-based Envirosell, a retail and consumer research and consulting firm, states that "Decor is at least one-third of the shopping experience [in addition to goods and service], to seal the purchase, retailers must go beyond by making the experience fun and accountable."

Underhill further state that “the ideal store is one that appeals to a cross section of the public and that "pulls the customer all the way through," not only to make a purchase, but to understand what the store sells. Most importantly, he added, store design should make a sales transaction as painless as possible and plant the seed for the next visit. Although a distinct store design is important, Underhill said function should triumph over form.

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67 Kleinman, Rebecca(2002), journal article titled “Sleek Surroundings: Designers are hiring the pros to create store interiors as stylish as the Clothes, Publication WWD, Mar 12 and 27.2002, retrieved 15 July 2012 from proquest.
Designer like Underhill is not impressed with someone who spends millions on a store as the major drawbacks Underhill sees in expensive "wow" stores are that their novelty wears off with time, sometimes even in a few trips, and that too many of these aesthetic wonders evolve into personal art projects for big-name architects, rather than stick with their primary purpose of selling a designer's line.

The writer explains the importance of simplicity with the views of Glenn Pushelberg, a partner at Yabu Pushelberg, a design firm with offices in Toronto and New York. As per him instead of gimmicks, shoppers prefer simplicity, familiarity and an enjoyable experience. It's important to combine modernity and the quality and detail associated with heritage.

To stress further on the point of simplicity in design the writer also had included views of Pushelberg as per him "Design doesn't have to be something tricky, trite or gimmicky to create a better experience, People are usually happier with the simple things."

The writer rejects decor that is too contrived, comparing it to an outfit that looks too put together and it also overwhelms or intimidates the consumer so the writer concludes with the views of Phil Otto, principal of Otto Design Group, a Philadelphia-based company with offices in New York and Los Angeles, who agrees that gimmicks, including theme and entertainment-driven decor, are no longer in style. As per him younger generations want freshness and honesty.

2.3.10 - VISUAL MERCHANDISING – A SILENT SALESMAN – KEY TO INCREASE SALES.

A) Anonymous (2000)\(^{68}\) in the article ‘Death of a salesman or a Rebirth, talked about the importance of salesman, as his presence provide warmth and the friendly welcome and can provide great reassurance and boost the ego of the customer. He also stated that with today’s new format of retail the role of a salesman is slowly changing as he is becoming or should become a smart assistance who knows when to come forward to help customer in need and when to stand by and watch.

Therefore it is right that Visual merchandising is one of the final stages in trying to set out a store in a way that customers will find attractive and appealing and it should follow and reflect the principles that underpin the store’s image. **Visual merchandising is the way one displays 'goods for sale' in the most attractive manner with the end purpose of making a sale.**

\(^{68}\) Anon.(2000) “Death of the salesman or Rebirth’, Panorama Images, Vol.1, No.8, pp.94.
Taking the very core commercial sense, **Visual merchandising is the art of implementing effective design ideas to increase store traffic and sales volume.** VM is an art and science of displaying merchandise to enable maximum sale. VM is a tool to achieve sales and targets, a tool to enhance merchandise on the floor, and a mechanism to communicate to a customer and influence his decision to buy. Still in today’s challenging economy, some retailers avoid designers/ visual merchandisers because they fear unmanageable costs. But in reality, visual merchandisers can help economies by avoiding costly mistakes. With guidance of a professional, retailer can eliminate errors, saving time and money. It is important to understand that the visual merchandiser is there, not to impose ideas, but to help clients articulate their own personal style. Many elements can be used by visual merchandisers in creating displays, including color, lighting, space, product information, sensory inputs such as smell, touch, and sound as well as technologies such as digital displays and interactive installations.

**B) Gibson Vedamani** in his book *Retail management*, principles and practices explains **Visual merchandising**, as the ‘Silent Salesman’. According to him it is the science and art of suggestive selling by display and presentation. Visual merchandising focal points are located strategically to circulate the customer in the store, and communicate the features and benefits of the merchandise besides the in-store promotion in vogue. This is done by converting a passerby to browser with an effective window display, a browser to a spender through the process of ‘conversion’, a spender to a big spender through the process of cross-merchandising.

**C) According to Apurv Satdeve**, “Visual Merchandising is a perfect understanding of one’s business strategy filtered into highly creative solutions”

Everything that meets the eye of the customer is a part of visual merchandising. One cannot over - simplify the VM imperative, since it is not just about physical contents of a store.

The store derives as much of its identity, character and gravity from physical contours, as from the products it houses and the individuals who manage the transactions there in. In tangible terms, it includes not only the products on sale but also the décor, the shop floor and

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70 Reference: Gibson Vedamani, Retail management: Principles and practices.3rd edition, Jaico publication.pp238
ceiling, restrooms and trail rooms, staff uniforms, lipstick color of female personnel and tie knots of male personnel. It is also inclusive of the attitude of the personnel who interact with customers. Hence everything that makes an impact on the perspective customer is part of visual merchandising.

D) G. Surrendar. (2001)\textsuperscript{71} in the article, ‘Visual merchandising –the synergy to show, tell and sell’ states that Marketing brings horse to the water but visual merchandising makes the horse drink. He believed that visual merchandising is the most impactful communication tool which drives the customer in and also plays a role of silent salesman. He further stated that visual merchandising had two aspects, one is commercial part and other is aesthetic done within the store to immediately arrest customer’s attention.

E) Nath P. (2010)\textsuperscript{72} in his article ‘Mannequins: The art of Silent Sales’ had described about mannequins who play a vital role in promoting sales, attracting customers and showcasing a brand to its advantage. Today retailers are emphasizing more on window dressing and product display because of mannequins as they are known as ‘Silent Sales People.’ According to the writer the mannequin business in India is growing at a rate of 25 to 30\% per year. He further added that mannequins play a crucial role in pushing any merchandise off the shelf and help to convert slow moving merchandise to fast moving merchandise by using effective display techniques. All mannequins are designed to express an emotion and individual attitude and it lends a feel good factor to the consumer. Further he added that the increasing g popularity of mannequins amongst the visual merchandisers is due to the benefits of the retailers are deriving with its effective usage as it is observed that the effective use of mannequins with the right props and accessories leads to impulse buying amongst the customers. He concluded by stating that internet studies have concluded that retailers have observed a substantial growth of 15-20\% in sales, since they have started using mannequins effectively. Thus mannequins are now evolving as the tool of marketing and sales promotion.


F) Mcewan H. (2010) in his article, ‘An insight into visual merchandising’ had stated that visual merchandising and window dressing is the key to improve sales. He also stated that it is an influential factor that not only allows potential customers to view the stock, but also used to encourage them to make that important purchase.

G) Applegate, Jane. (1998) the writer highlights the importance of visual merchandising in his article ‘Visual merchandising’ subtle but important Make your customer feel comfortable. The article includes saying of some renowned people. "If it weren't for visual merchandising, you would walk into a store and everything would just be lying on the floor," says Keith Walton, chief executive officer of Propaganda, which has 12 employees and counts Polo Ralph Lauren, Talbots, Banana Republic and Nordstrom among its 40 or so major retail clients.

Walton and Propaganda President David Tyreman say that how you display your wares is critical to boosting sales. The right kind of mannequin or table display creates a subtle and positive impression on shoppers. And if people feel happy and relaxed, they spend more money.

2.3.11 - VISUAL MERCHANDISING –SENSORY RETAILING

A) McGoldrick,1990; Marsh, 1999 Retail store elements such as color, lighting and visual merchandising have always been considered as having an immediate effects on the buying decision making process. The emphasis has moved away from in-store product displays, towards elements that excite the senses of shoppers such as flat screen videos or graphics, music, smells, lighting and flooring that tend to capture the brand image or personality and help to create an unique environment and shopping experience.

B) Tull man Mathew (2004) article ‘Revitalizing visual merchandising’, in this article a very important aspect of visual merchandising. It is very important for retailer to understand that he cannot win over the customers by only visuals and window displays as very rightly analysed by mr. Tullman in his article ‘Revitalizing visual merchandising’ as per him

Restoring balance to the retail environment entails engaging all five senses. The vast majority of information collected about the environment, about 65% to 70%, is obtained through the eyes. The runner-up, the sense of hearing, is a distant second. In their daily lives, people read newspapers and magazines each morning, drive cars, watch the road with its billboard advertising and are bombarded with more marketing as they walk city streets. Add to that the average 5.5 hours of visually intensive media viewed daily, and a clear picture emerges: The ability to process all this visual information is being brought to the brink of capacity, and often beyond it.

**He highlights the very important Lessons from cognitive science:** Convergent research has found that the ability to effectively process visual communication is reduced after the proportion of information presented visually rises above 50% to 55%. This means that roughly one-quarter of the visual information exposed to consumers is processed insufficiently, resulting in dwindling attention spans and reductions in memory accuracy. Translating visual overload into retail performance, studies repeatedly have encountered reduced brand awareness, the disregard of products and promotions and, worst of all, falling conversion rates for the very products retailers market through such highly visual media.

He further points out that to make matters worse, the store as a whole suffers because the current visual overload often results in lower customer satisfaction and increases in walk-out propensity.

The problem is visual chaos: This highlights an interesting challenge for retail designers and visual merchandisers: Retail environments typically rely far more heavily on Visual communication than what is experienced in other areas of already visually burdened lives. In-store research has found the proportion of visual communication presented to customers within retail environments commonly exceeds other sensory channels by more than 80%.

**He also further gives strategic solutions and sensory retailing along with visual merchandising reflects in his conclusions.** His Strategic solutions stated are as follows: Methods for effectively influencing the customer should not be based on visual impact alone.

In-store experiences need not address each of the five senses equally. However, initiatives aimed at reducing the obvious burden on the eyes through proactive efforts capitalizing on more balanced communication to all the senses is a thoughtful and balanced alternative.
Providing well-rounded in-store communications often results in retail environments that capture more shoppers, convey more positive and durable brand images, and convert more browsers to purchasers. Extending the sensory impact of the retail environment can even define the retail brand experience, and all but ensure increases in sales.

Not every retailer is faced with the over-visualization problems. Only those who do not understand the importance of visual merchandising and sensory retailing faces problems of visual clutter.

He had further mentioned about the **CRR ratio** the CCR is the ratio of all five sensory modes of communication used among the sources of marketing and merchandising information a retailer provides to its customers. This approach provides a clear and relative breakdown of how much visual and other sensory information is being presented at any given point within a store. The audit also illustrates how the retailer's customers specifically react to the information channels provided. Therefore, a CCR is not only a means to determine the existence of visual liability, but also a means to optimize the store and increase sales. This approach reallocates targeted marketing across the senses with respect to the brain's untapped perceptual capabilities. The end result is optimized customer response.

Therefore he concludes that In-store marketing and merchandising can be enhanced with more balanced arrays of sensory communication, resulting in significant reductions in visual liability and major improvements to store and brand performance.

C) **Singh D. (2008)** in this article “Art and Science of Visual Merchandising’, had discussed about a mini survey done by NIFT Delhi, whose objective was to find out how visual merchandising impacts attitude, perception, motivation, learning and memory psychology of a consumer. He interviewed 38 customers in New Delhi. He discussed about the findings of this survey where 67% of women go to shop with a pre decided product in mind and out of that 70% do come out with that specific product plus some additional products or something totally different. And in the case of males 33% do that as they are motivated from the window display. According to the survey 84% people like displays on mannequins due to aesthetics reasons, out of which 55% people engage in impulse buying. He further adds that 53% consumers are always attracted by the window displays. 91% people like music inside the store and 63% people buy because of the impact of lights, 84%

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say signages are helpful inside the store. Finally 78% remember the store name where window displays attracted them the most. He concluded by stating that store vibes such as store exterior, window displays, store layouts, mannequins, lighting, music etc can be used to stimulate the bodily senses resulting in sensation of the sensory enjoyment and visual merchandising is directly related to sensation, sensation is directly related to enjoyment, enjoyment is directly related to values of customer, which are directly related to satisfaction, satisfaction is directly related to retention of customers and which is directly related to the profit of the store, and hence visual merchandising is directly related to the profit of the store.

D) Anonymous (2010) in his article ‘Visual merchandising: Key to better retail sales’ had studied that Visual Merchandising is a store’s primary point of contact between product and customer as it displays the product in such a manner that convinces the customer of its value proposition and buying ability. As majority of retail is still unorganized, the average shopkeeper pays a minimum attention to visual display and tries to display maximum variety in his windows forgetting that too many products leaves the consumer confused and directionless. The writer also mentioned that Visual Merchandising complements that actual process of selling products and it can bring in profits by simply working on sensory perceptions when the customer enter the store. A balance has to be created between the hot and the cold areas in the display, as cold areas are extremely aloof areas and hot ones attract maximum attention. With the increasing presence of malls, Visual Merchandising and store displays are getting prominence as it makes a store unique, communicating to the customer its USP. He concluded that for any effective Visual Merchandising, the brand has to define parameters-the type of clientele it seeks, the image it wants to promote and the location and size of the store.

E) Anurag S, Swati Bhalla (2011) in this article “why is music played in malls and shops’ had elaborated about the science of shopping, which is music. According to him shopping is not just acquisition of goods and services, but also gives the shopper a sensual pleasure, a sense of involvement, a romance with the items and the surroundings and a feel good factor. This explains the reason why non cognitive processes like the ambience, the color, the aisle, the shelving, the music, lighting, texture are equally important than cognitive

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dimensions. According to the writer sound enhances a stores environment and it can be used as a mood setter, an attention grabber and an informer and it can be used in retail stores to promote buying, to set stage for particular shopping theme or to remind consumers of a special holiday or season. The background music played in the malls and shops help in psychological profiling or involuntary behavioral modification of the customers.

F) Vosburgh, Robert (2011)\textsuperscript{79} in his article ‘5 tips on Visual merchandising’ states the importance of sensory retailing. [Mark Rudy], who is also vice president of marketing for The Hubert Co., described visual merchandising as "shopping with the senses," an activity that turns "passive lookers into active, engaged buyers."

G) Smitha Samuel (2011)\textsuperscript{80} in her article “Colourful influence” had put down the views of many visual merchandisers regarding the importance of color in the display and design. As per Nagaraja R, Director- Design Four Dimensions (4D), he states that “Color plays A Vital role in creating the ambience required in relation to both the product and the brand. It emotionally makes the customer indulge in the theme set, and absorb him/her into it. Moreover, colors attract as well as have the power to make a customer spend that extra little time in the store”. He also adds that color creates the signature of the brand and store identity. It also reflects the attitude and character of the store. As per Sanjay Agarwal, Director FRDC also shares the same opinion related to color, he says that “Color is a powerful sensory tool influencing and impressing consumers and viewers senses. It creates an everlasting impression in one’s mind. Color in branding creates attractiveness, a pause effect, emotional connect, excitement, loyalty, guides eye movement and is a mood enhancer”.

\textsuperscript{79} Vosburgh, Robert, article ‘5 tips on visual merchandising, publication title-Supermarket news, volume 59, issue 24, page 20.

\textsuperscript{80} Smita Samuel, Colourful Influence, Visual Merchandising and Retail Design, Volume 6 (Jan 2011), issue 3, pp26-28
2.3.12 - **VISUAL MERCHANDISING - IMPORTANT ELEMENTS – SIGNAGE, DISPLAY THEME, LOCATION OF THE STORE AND WINDOW DISPLAY.**

A) **Swoboda, Debby**\(^81\) (2007) in the journal while writing about visual merchandising in her article of’ *Wow customers and your bottom line with visual merchandising* states that Effective signage can serve as a "silent salesman." She writes that if the products are slow moving or not selling than one should use creative signs such as "manager's special," "employee favorite," "10% off" or "buy one, get one free" to help it sell. Signage is key to visual merchandising and can help bring sales to a "non-mover" item. The simplest way to attract customers to a product is through visual merchandising.

B) **Tyreman, David; Walton, Keith** \(^82\) (1998) writes about theme-oriented displays and a conducive shopping environment. He states that Visual merchandising the art of dressing merchandise display areas with theme-oriented props--creates a mood for buying. Even though shoppers live in a self-service world, surveys show service is still of prime importance. People want their senses to be indulged-to feel good about what they are buying, where they are buying it and how they are going to feel about consuming it. It is a retailer's responsibility to deliver to the customer these "feelings" when they are shopping. And a conducive shopping environment sets the tone for the customer's psychological frame of mind for the process of sale to effectively take place. If a gentlemen's suit store changed its decor to high-tech video monitors, blasting techno music and employed sales people with bleached blond hair, tattoos and nose piercings, it would have misunderstood its customer, and the store's normal customer would feel alienated. However, if the same theme is applied to a hip jeans store whose main customers are stylish teenagers one would be stimulating business as it conveys the customer "I understand you."

C) **Sorensen L. (2010)**\(^83\) in her article ‘Pretty enough to buy: The art of visual merchandising’ affirmed that a creative and skilled retailer can use the art of visual

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merchandising to breathe new life into a sore and the products there in. According to her visual merchandising consist not only the presentation of items on the store shelves but also on window displays, counter display, main aisle tables, end caps and special showcase displays. She further mentions that various visual merchandising tricks help in presenting products in an aesthetically pleasing fashion, which attracts the customer to make a purchase. Colour is one such trick and the most powerful tools in visual merchandising. Similarly signage is equally important both in wordings and visuals. Finally the writer concluded by explaining that displays are a heart and soul of a business and team work is important in changing displays as new displays can spark new interest in the products for regular customers.

D) P. Pirakatheeswari (2009)\textsuperscript{84} in this article “Window display—The new retail mantra’ had emphasized about the importance of window display which is emerging as a new mantra in retail and it is fast changing from a dull uninteresting exhibition of wares in the store window to a dynamic form of advertising. According to the writer window display is the fine art of displaying store merchandise in the store window and the retailers who are able to attract and sustain customer’s attention are successful. A window display is the first impression on the customer and it can convey what age group or income group of customer the store caters to. The writer also states that properly done window display can attract more customer than a hoarding or television advertisement and makes the buying decision making process simple. It also leads to impulse buying. Window designers are now experimenting with concepts of smell, fragrance in designing windows to attract and hold the attention of the customers.

E) Bapna M. (2010)\textsuperscript{85} in her article ‘Window shopping’ had mentioned that window display is the face of a shop and no retailer can afford to ignore the power of effective window display, because the front façade of any store is the first point of contact of the customers with the store. She also stated that merchandise display with a theme running across the glass, mannequins dressed in various adornments, colorful signage etc. add vibrancy to the store entrance, and the store entrance speaks about what the store sells. The front window is the calling card. The whole look and feel of the window actually shapes up the customer’s impression about the store and its merchandise. The writer further states that the intention of

\textsuperscript{84} P. Pirakatheeswari (2009) ‘Window displays- The new retail mantra retrieved 5\textsuperscript{th} Jan 2012 from http://www.google.com/windowdisplay/articlebase/marketing

creating the whole façade is not to attract customer and encourage them to walk into the store, it is also about inducing them buy from the store. Window display is one of the important components of visual merchandising and it acts as a catalyst to generate sales. A retailer has a time span of 15-20 sec to attract the customer as he passes the store window; hence the focus has to remain largely on theme, perfect lighting and visual effect and props and also the merchandise to make customer stop and take notice. Therefore Retailers are using new technological methods to improve displays with innovations like 3D effect, laser shows, props, live human displays etc.

F) Keige (2010) in his article ‘How retail signage effectively markets products and special promotional sales, stated that retail signage or store signage, is designed to grab customer’s attention immediately after they enter the store. Hence they should be placed strategically throughout the store. For e.g. it should be placed first somewhere near the entrance of the store to alert customer’s immediately about the marketed items or sale. Retail signage often used color and bold font to draw customer attention. Retail signage that shows the effective and easy utilization of a product or the attractiveness and appeal of a sale item engage the sense of sight instantly drawing the consumer in for further inspection of merchandise.

G) Gupta Swati (2010) in the article “Deviant displays- new trend in fashion” had explained that window display is one of the most exciting aspects of Visual merchandising as they communicate style, content and price and they can be seductive, exciting or based on emotional stimulus through stimulation or evocation of all five senses. According to her the best store windows can generate great excitement and are a talking point and they entertain pedestrian’s simultaneously communicating the products and serviced on offer. She further assed that window displays are always centered on themes based on seasons, colors, holidays or they are just informing about new products features. She further states window display have conventionally being very pleasant, traditional (not offending to public sensibilities) and exact in their message delivery) deviant window displays are created to look creepy so as to grab instant attention.

H) Trudy Ralston and Eric Foster 88 in this article, ‘Merchandise displays’ discussed about the merchandise displays and keys to successful merchandise display. According to them merchandise displays are special presentations of a store’s products used to attract and entice buying public. Merchandise displays are integral element of the overall merchandising concept, which seeks to promote sales by coordinating different sales strategies. Further they mentioned that the merchandise displays can be in several forms such as store front window displays, showcase displays. The key to successful merchandise display are that the display should be economical, utilizing only space, material and products that are already available, and should fit almost anywhere and convey almost any message and finally should be effective and readily visible. The writer concluded by giving several tips like maintaining cleanliness in the display, not overcrowding the display, allocating display space and expenditures appropriately in recognition of customer demographics and finally by paying attention to details while constructing and arranging display backgrounds. They further stated the view of Martin Pegler (Visual merchandising and display) which says “In addition to selling actual merchandise, display can be used to introduce, a fashion trend, a new look or idea, display can be used to educate the consumer concerning what the new item is, how it can be worn or used and how it can be accessorized.

I) Anonymous (2011)89, in his article “what is a window display”, had clearly explained about the importance of creating a window display in a stores or outlets in a creative way without being gaudy. According to him a window display is a grouping of merchandise in a retail establishments store front area to show potential customers items that are for sale inside the shop, as that hopefully that will enter the store to purchase these or other goods. An essential quality of a good window display is to get attention which entice passers-by into entering the store and can increase store traffic and this is what every storeowner hopes their display should accomplishes. He further explained about the use of mannequins in a display which command attention in a window display. The theme of a window display should reflect what is available for sale inside the store, so that customers know what to expect. He also states that the theme of a window display should reflect what is available for sale inside the store so that customers know what to expect. Window displays are usually changed at least every season. It takes practice to create displays that are creative without being gaudy.

The overall look of a window display should suit the store's personality while highlighting the products the store sells.

J) Rose (2011) in this article “Effective in-store display programs begin with a sign ware placement strategy” had described the effective sign ware or signage in the store leads to sales as more than 70% of purchasing decisions are made by customers once they are in store. Therefore in-store marketing is more critical in retail successes. As consumers rely heavily upon in-store product and promotion in making their purchase decisions, an effective in-store marketing program can contribute very directly to retail success. According to writer a well thought out plan for in-store signage will attract customers, direct them to where they want to go, alert them to special promotions and help them evaluate the merchandise. The writer mentions that window merchandise displays complements by signage clearly conveys the store image, product image and draws the customers in, informs and excite shoppers. She concludes by stating that signage at the check-out will inspire customers to make last minute impulse purchase and will leave positive impression that will bring them back.

K) Jane Porter (2012), in the article “Tips for creating winning store window” had given 10 tips to create winning store window display. As per the writer windows display is the easiest way to draw attention of the customer. As per the tips mentioned by the writer display should not be overdone as a cluttered window losses appeal and featured items can get lost, Lot of creativity can be used in window displays with new technology coming in. He concludes by telling that a retailer can tell a lot about the store by its window displays and hence spends some money on visual merchandisers who can come and do the window display.

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2.3.13 - VISUAL MERCHANDISING – COSMETIC CATEGORY

A) As per an article in publication title cosmetics, Retailers part 1: how cosmeticians and beauty advisors fit into the daily operations of various retailers. The article states that cosmetics purchases are made on impulse, the cosmetics department is located at the main entrance of the store (usually facing the mall entrance and/or surrounding the escalator) to capitalize on traffic flow; women's accessories and fashions usually border the area. A modern, attractive counter environment is vital to create the right "image" for the store and each line. Individuality among the lines is stressed although the showcases, merchandising techniques, brand identification and signing are consistent. And since illumination in department stores comes from soft, indirect, overhead lighting, many stores have added brighter, natural contact lights at the counter or in the self-serve areas to increase visibility and allow for more specific color matching.

There's often more than one cosmetics sales area in a department store. If low-end merchandise is carried (which is infrequent), it may be located in the health and beauty area of the store (if it exists). Mid-range products may also be segregated or offered in an open, self-serve area located in the cosmetics department. Prestige products are located on the main floor, but in the larger department stores there may also be outposts set up on the fashion floors.

The article states that, it is interesting to note that in most department stores, both the cosmetics and women's accessories departments generate the highest volume per square foot. This is because most of the products sold in these departments are purchased often, giving them a high replacement value.

92 ‘How cosmeticians and beauty advisors fit into the daily operations of various retailers Journal subject Beauty Culture--Perfumes And Cosmetics’ publication title cosmetic, volume 24, issue 1, pages 16-17. Retrieved 14 August 2012 from Proquest.
B) As per an article 93 “Visual merchandising: creating attractive displays in your cosmetics area can be easy and fun”. As per the article Visual merchandising involves all areas of the store, including the interior and exterior of the building, counters, fixtures, wall and floor coverings, lighting, mirrors, layout t, signage and displays, as well as cleanliness and the overall organization of the merchandise assortment.

The buyers and/or visual merchandising managers in drugstores, department stores and mass merchandisers establish basic policies and merchandising guidelines for the entire cosmetics area, as well as for each line/brand. Some suppliers also provide counter layouts and/ or pegboard plan o - grams to suggest the best way to present their products.

The above article very well specifies the purpose of displays: The purpose of a display is to present and sell merchandise by conveying a message about the product. It only takes seconds for the display to leave an impression on the customer's mind. All forms of merchandise presentation are considered to be displays. An effective display should get the customer to stop, look and act. This is done by combining merchandise and promotional activity with creativity, lighting, color, signs and movement (line and design).

The purpose of displays related to cosmetics category

- To create awareness: A good display draws attention to itself, focusing the consumer on the products being featured.
- To inform: A display can be creative and/or artistic or a source of information and education.
- To maintain brand identification: A display conveys a brand's identity. It's a means of securing a competitive edge against similar products.
- To tie in with advertising or a promotion: If a new product and/or brand is being launched or an advertising campaign is under way, a display that complements this theme will maximize exposure and recognition, as it stimulates sales.
- To tell a story: A display can promote additional sales of related products when they are featured together; for example, seasonal merchandise, themes, and fashion colors.

• To reinforce a store image: The display principles that a store follows are consistent with the retailer's corporate identity and business category; for example, high end versus low end, or full service versus self-service.

The above article clearly discusses the DESIGN ELEMENTS concepts for cosmetics category

Each display features a combination of “ingredients” that make it successful. Line in a display gives it direction and draws the viewers’ eyes along through a story from beginning to end.

VERTICAL LINES heighten an area by drawing the eye up and down. Considered to be severe and serious, vertical lines are especially effective when displaying men’s products. HORIZONTAL LINES widen a display and are more relaxing and calming, although the effect can be somewhat boring because the eye is not forced to look anywhere else. DIAGONAL LINES direct the eye so the display is seen as being active and creative. There are two types from upper left to lower right and from lower left to upper right. The first version flows easily, while the second version is more abrupt and could result in an unbalanced effect. CURVED LINES can be created with draped fabric, to create a flowing, feminine effect.

The article mentions that Textures and patterns add emotional interest to give the display feeling, through touch (texture) or visual (pattern) impression.

The most popular textures to display beauty products are soft, hard, shiny, matte, smooth and rough. Color influences the viewer's visual and emotional reaction to the products. A customer's perception of the colors observed will cause her/him to form impressions about the merchandise displayed.

The article also discusses about the space and the principles of design

TYPES OF DISPLAYS for the cosmetics category is stated in this article for eg.

SELLING: Designed to generate immediate sales for limited specials, introductory offers, seasonal merchandise, etc.

THEME: Designed to present a complete story featuring related products, such as eye shadow, lipstick, nail polish, blush, mascara, brushes, earrings, bracelets, scarves, mirrors, etc.
PROMOTIONAL: Designed to stimulate excitement by displaying new or featured merchandise.

PRESTIGE: Designed to create an image of quality and exclusivity; for example, French perfume displayed with a single jewel or pair of leather gloves.

C) Young, Scott (2002) in his article ‘Winning at retail’ the writer states that more than two-thirds of health and beauty purchase decisions are made at the point of sale, as the shopper stands at the shelf or display. Therefore, it follows that each brand’s point-of-sale presence - including packaging and merchandising - has a direct and significant impact on its sales revenue. The writer creatively puts down merchandising system in three steps-

- Pre-empting competition
- Differentiating from competition
- Closing sale.

PRE-EMPTING THE COMPETITION: Across hundreds of studies, perhaps the single most consistent-and intuitive-finding has been that shoppers do not consider product categories fully and systematically. In fact, most shoppers only actively view about 50 percent of the brands within a category. The other half of the brands never get a chance to sell, because they are never seen; and a very high correlation has been found between how quickly a brand is seen and considered and its likelihood of purchase, whereas "unseen is unsold."

Here the writer explains about the Eye-Tracking strategy which help ensure that the retailers brand "breaks through the clutter" quickly and gives itself a chance to sell? And the two most important determinants of shelf visibility are color and shelf placement.

DIFFERENTIATING FROM THE COMPETITION

The Author beautifully points out the importance of Differentiation at retail. Differentiation at retail is different from that in advertising, because the competitive brands are immediately next to one another on the shelf and because the shopper is often spending less than ten seconds comparing products and making a decision. Given these realities, it does not pay to be subtle. Differentiation must be immediate and intuitive.

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94 Young, Scott, article winning at retail, Journal subject, Beauty Culture- Perfumes and Cosmetics, Pharmacy and Pharmacology, volume 170,issue 8, pages 60-64.
CLOSING THE SALE: The writer than finally mentions about closing the sale aspect. Once shoppers have selected a new product, they often need an extra bit of reassurance before placing it into their shopping carts. In health, beauty and cosmetic categories, it often is as simple as addressing a question or two that may be lingering in the shopper's mind:

Is it the right product for me? Is it safe to use? Is it age-appropriate? Am I getting a good deal? Shoppers nearly always start with the dominant visual which may be a picture or a large brand name/logo, and form their opinions on this basis. If the visual undermines perceptions of beauty or quality, then the final job is done.

(D) Clare Dowdy (2006) in an article 95 “Face Facts” many cosmetics and fragrances companies heads had brought out the importance of a well-planned display. Clare Dowdy states that making a cosmetic brand stand out in-store when it is surrounded by its competitors is a tough challenge. He also finds out that how creative heads would differentiate products without overloading customers with information.

The article further states that it’s easy for the departmental stores and single brand outlets to attract for their category as these environments allow cosmetics and skincare products room to breathe and they are staffed by informed and well-groomed brand representatives. But in the Multi-branded environment of the high street, however is a different story. A plethora of brands compete for space and attention, and in the know assistants are few and far between, so display has to work very hard to attract attention.

The article also states that in-spite of product innovation in the cosmetics and perfumes category, a single-brand retailer would like to operate in environments that are strict on clarity, with regimented product displays and tendency towards simplicity. The article states an example of a New men’s skincare store where the wall display is divided into 12 columns because of the 12 products, where each product is easy to recognize by the colour. It was created by Emmanuel Fenasse, an independent designer.

The article further gives the views of Ian Caulder, creative director of Caulder Moore, London perfume house, Ormonde Jayne’s new Old Bond Street store. He states that ‘Everybody is trying to get the maximum visual impact. The result can be total visual chaos. If there is too much going on, the customer gets confused and they walk away because they can’t make their minds up, so what is need is a planned visual display.

In the article **Dan Smith, Managing director of Clockworx Design** which has gone into brands like Boots etc., states that ‘Cosmetics are small items, so the unit had to be easy to access –for customers as well as store staff, who will need to replenish it. On the top of that, it had to build brand identity, and communicate the products’ benefits.

**Ian Caulder** points out that, merchandising units for new product ranges that make bold claims face quite a challenge. ‘Consumers aren’t sure how much to believe. They need brands to have credible backing, from research to endorsement. Yet despite such backing, a savvy consumer will still research the market. So a brand needs emotional attachment, as well as research and endorsement and that’s expressed through **display and presentation, communication and point-of-sale**.

The article is summed up by stating that cosmetic and fragranc is a category where designers really have to strive to express points of difference.

**2.3.14 - VISUAL MERCHANDISING --- PERFUME CATEGORY**

**Skaredoff Lisa (2004)** in the article ‘**Counter Intelligence**’ states that Display design can be a major brand differentiator in a competitive marketplace and 80% of what a person perceives is visual. The writer further states that ‘Fragrance brands that understand the limits of traditional advertising are creating excitement at the counter and pulling in the profits’.

The writer explains the views of **Rob Wallace**, managing partner of Wallace church, Inc. a company focused on strategic brand identity. As per his views today high consumer expectations and companies eager to satisfy their demands mean fragrances will all result from superior development and good ingredients. Quality is no longer a unique selling feature; rather, it is a barrier of entry one have to get through. Instead of relying on the fragrance’s inherent excellence to sell it, companies are focusing on building brand image through effective point-of-purchase design.

The writer also had put forth the views of **Jerome Kathman**, president and CEO of Eibby Perszyk Kathman (LPK), an international identity firm focused on building leading brands through brand strategy and design. As per Jerome “Design awareness is in its ascendancy as companies are looking at their opportunities through design as a brand building process,”. He further states that the visual message intended for the brand to convey to the consumer is

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crucial, and, most important, it has to come across when the consumer is actually in-store. "Design can be a major brand differentiator-sometimes it's the only differentiator in a competitive market, and 80 percent of what a person perceives is visual, according to Wallace's research, a display that is most attractive to the eyes will do best. And, within the visual category, what a person first notices is color, followed by shapes, numbers and words.

The writer also states that ‘Being noticed is not enough; it’s about reinforcing the image and the character of the brand. Together the elements create an image for the fragrance to project and also a set of emotions for the person to believe he will sense when using the product. He further beautifully adds that “Brands are no longer products; brands are experiences’

The article is concluded by stating the words of Kathman that marketers should take note: as a result of the many advertising approaches and visual merchandising, Beyond Paradise still holds a strong position in the prestige fragrance market. How well you market your fragrance in-store always will be a telling sign of whether it will last. "Determine what the most compelling idea is and go with it,”

2.3.15 - VISUAL MERCHANDISING -- RELEVANCE IN CURRENT INDIAN RETAIL INDUSTRY- the changing scenario.

Visual merchandising in India is in its infancy stage, where people still think of it as a luxury that they don’t require. Many retailers believe that they have been doing business for many years without VM strategy. So why need it now? But retailers need to look at the perspective that the foreign competition is entering in its full swing and at this moment Indian retailers need to catch up the play to be successful. Visual merchandising is all about creating identity and presenting brand value in every nook and corner of the store which is not happening with the Indian Retailers. Some retailers have started looking at design and have begun to improve their store design and merchandise presentation. However they are still hiring interior designers instead of retail design firms, which never work. Retailers are slowly realizing that this is not going to work and we are seeing some improvement in merchandise presentation. What India need today are good VM professionals to help the large growing organized retail formats.

Long with the retailers changing their attitude towards design it is also necessary that the support industries for quality mannequins, fixtures, signage Industries and props suppliers
should also improve and develop. Also the CEO’s need to change their ideology towards this important mantra of success and start looking at budgeting for VM.

Retail designing is seeing a progressive growth. The Indian retail design industry is seen as a sector that’s fast evolving and booming with numerous trends and innovations. India has market itself on the map in the global retail design industry. However there is a long way to go with design being a never-ending process, and the process of learning which has no end.

A) **Shashidhar, Ajita (2004)** in his article ‘**Lifestyle’s new identity**’ had mentioned about how visual merchandising along with other important elements have helps Lifestyle gain a new identity. **Kumar Sitaraman, Managing Director**, Lifestyle International, who says that the new identity helps to reinvent the brand. "We are not what we were when we set shop in India five years back. In 1999, we were trying to target the mid-market, understand the response of the customer and react to it. But today, we find that we are accepted at a slightly higher level and, therefore, felt that it was time we positioned ourselves as a premium lifestyle store, which is youthful and vibrant, and delivers the best of international fashion, vibrancy and colours, and is the foremost retail player in the country in terms of product offering and store experience." He feels that the customers would be able to relate to the new identity far better.

The writer finally concludes with the words of **Arvind Singhal**, Chairman, KSA-Technopak, that “The industry too feels that a change in identity does help a retail brand to a considerable extent, and in a rapidly evolving market such as India, most retail brands which have started many years ago (such as Lifestyle, Shoppers' Stop) would certainly benefit from making infrequent but planned changes in their overall identity (signage, interiors, visual merchandising and even category/product mix) to keep their overall business proposition and product/service offer contemporary for the consumers across various cities in India.”

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The researcher believes that ‘Product is the star’ but every star needs a stage and visual merchandising provides this stardom. Views regarding Visual merchandising by some leading Visual Merchandisers.


According to Rahim (2009) M.A, Assistant Manager-VM, Allen Solly, “Visual merchandise is like a crisp trailer of an interesting movie which allures the audience to want more”. He further says that a customer devotes only a few seconds to any store window or its display and if the display is able to generate interest and attract attention within that time frame, it can convert any passer into a potential customer.

For Unni Augustine Senior Manager (2009) Visual Merchandising Reliance Retail says “Visual Merchandising is all about passion! More than work to me, it’s fun. Also it’s very satisfying to see when your displays bring in higher sales, footfalls or customer experience”. He further says “I found visual merchandising very interesting because there is a bit of everything in it. It has a good blend of creativity, commercial aspect of sales, innovation, providing quick solutions and many other aspects.”

Ajay Shah, Director of Ajay shah Design studio says” Good retail design must be synergistic in nature. It must embody the value of the brand and communicate it in the most interesting fashion.


Balaji Natrajan (2009) Head Visual merchandiser Tanishq says “ Visual merchandising is pure fun as it is very spiritual”

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98 From couture to windows, Visual merchandising & Retail Design, Volume 4 (sept. 2008), issue 1, pp8

Ashima Vora (2011) Head-VM, Calvin Klein. Says “Visual merchandising is an applied art to grab maximum attention.”

Jose Maria Bustos (2009), President/creative Director VM Asia Pte. Ltd. Says “VM is not about selling but creating beauty; let the sales personnel do the selling. A visual merchandiser must look at doing a beautiful presentation and draw the attention of the customer to the store, the brand and the products. But the display must never over shadow the product but rather enhance the product and its qualities”. According to him Visual merchandising in India is in its infancy stage, where people still think of it as a luxury that they don’t require. Many retailers believe that they have been doing business for many years without VM strategy, so why need it now? But retailers need to look at the perspective that when foreign competition arrives, Indian retailers can either be prepared or play catch-up.

He believes that Retailers must prepare from the beginning to understand VM, to budget for it and support and nurture creative talent in VM, so that they are not caught off-guard when the country opens up and international brands arrives.

According to Jose, Visual merchandising is not about pretty displays and windows, but a part of the branding effort, and Branding is not just about a nice logo or marketing campaign, but understanding the customer base and creating an environment that reflects the customer aspiration. He thinks it’s all about creating retailers identity and presenting brand value in every nook and corner of the store as well. Which according to him is not happening with the Indian retailers? That is the reason why the topic of visual merchandising is of my interest to know as to what is the impact of the same on the store image? And what is the perception of today’s consumers regarding visual merchandising which is slowly and steadily becoming a very important technique in different areas of retail?

105 Jose Maria Buston (2009),article Stimulate the shopper, Magazine ‘Visual merchandising and Retail Design, volume 4, issue 5, pp8
2.3.17 - Visual Merchandising ---- Importance of Atmospherics

**Introduction:**
Alexendra Roach (2010) in his book ‘The Golden rules of Visual Merchandising’ defines “Visual Merchandising as promotion of goods through attractive and engaging product display design to encourage the sale of a product or service. VM doesn’t just refers to a special promotion display; it refers to the presentation of an entire store.”

Display or visual merchandising is ‘showing’ merchandise and concepts at their very best, with the purpose of making sale. It may not always result in selling the displayed merchandise, but it conveys to the customer

- The value of the merchandise
- The message of store image/ Brand image
- Sales promotion or idea through window display or in-store display
- The concept behind the display

Today’s 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.

Today it has become an important element in retailing that is a team effort involving senior management, architects, merchandising managers, buyers, the visual merchandising director, designers, and staff. Visual merchandising starts with the store building itself. The management decides on the store design to reflect the products the store is going to sell and how to create a warm, friendly, and approachable atmosphere for its potential customers. Recently visual merchandising has gained in importance as a quick and cost effective way to revamp retail stores

**Important elements of visual merchandising**

Researcher personally feels that a good merchandised store is worth its weight in gold as it inspires, executes, educates and stimulates the customers, resulting in healthy sales. To further understand the role of visual merchandising let us elaborately look into its important elements. It is very important to be clear about this aspect because usually people think of
only window display when they hear about visual merchandising. Window displays are only a small portion of what visual merchandising means to the store. The important Exterior and Interior Elements of Visual merchandising are as follows:

**Exterior Elements:**
- Location of store
- Exterior signage, logo
- Entrance
- Marquees, Banners and Awings.
- Window display

**Interior Elements:**
- Store design, color schemes, floor coverings and fixtures
- In store display
- In store merchandising of stock
- Atmospheric—Fragrance, sounds, mood of staff, props etc.
- Fixtures, Concept tables and wall units
- Lighting
- Color, music(sounds), scent (smell)
- Store un-keep and cleanliness (maintenance), service areas etc.

The elements of visual merchandising can also be discussed keeping in mind the concept of store Atmospherics.

A) The physical in store environment has been examined in relation to various elements for example: Orienting factors by (Davies and Ward, 2002); signage by (Bitner, 1992); Spatial factors and ambient conditions by (Davies and Ward, 2002), Atmospherics by (Kotler), Chetan Bajaj gives the classification further.

B) According to Chetan bajaj and Rajnish Tuli\(^\text{106}\), Store Atmospherics is referred to as “a store’s physical characteristics that are used to develop the retail unit image and draw customers. It describes the physical elements in store’s design that appeals to consumers and encourages them to buy”. They also explains Visual merchandising as “everything the customer sees both exterior and interior that creates a positive image of a business and result in attention, interest, desire and action on the part of the customer. A story can be

\(^{106}\) Chetan Bajaj, RajnishTuli, Retail Management, oxford higher education, pp 403.
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 sublet features that create the stores overall atmospheric”.

The authors have beautifully put down the classification and had summed up atmospheric in four key components they are as follows.

- **Exterior atmospherics**
- **Interior atmospherics**
- **Store layout**
- **Visual merchandising**

The author’s further states that all the above components are highly interrelated and appear to be organized in a complementary way. Many key aspects of atmospheric design like use of lighting, color, and signage play an effective role in both interior and exterior atmospherics and also in visual merchandising.

They had also given a tabulated classification which is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exterior atmospherics:</th>
<th>Interior atmospherics:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store front</td>
<td>Flooring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquee</td>
<td>Lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrances</td>
<td>Odour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display windows</td>
<td>Fixtures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of the building</td>
<td>Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>Temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjoining stores</td>
<td>Aisles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>Trail room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Dead area</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personnel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of retail store atmospherics</th>
<th>Visual merchandising:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store layout:</td>
<td>Assortment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor space allocation for selling</td>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic flow</td>
<td>Ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department location</td>
<td>Racks and shelves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space/merchandise category signage</td>
<td>Payment counters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Retail management; Chetan Bajaj, Rajnish Tuli, Nidhi V. Srivastava

C) As per a study made by W.M.C.B. Wanninayake regarding Consumer store choice decision finds out that, The atmosphere of the shopping environment can influence customer attitudes and their perceptions in relation to the overall quality of the store in terms of the
uniqueness of the product, service levels (Baker, Grewal and Parasraman, 1994), the purchase price (Areni and Kim, 1993) and purchase volume (Milliman, 1982). The role of ambience in store choice has also been found significant. Kotler (1974) has proposed atmospherics as an important part of retail marketing strategy. It is also found that the shoppers determine the value of the merchandise based on monetary as well as non-monetary costs (Zeithaml, 1988). It was found that recreation (a non-monetary value) was the major drive for visiting a regional shopping centre (Treblanche, 1999). The shopping experience, as created by the store environment, has been found to play an important role in building store patronage.

2.4 - Exploring Theories - Visual merchandising - An in-depth study of its important elements.

Image -2.1- An example of stock before the application of visual merchandising

Image -2.2 - An example of Application of Visual Merchandising technique for display of Cosmetics

Source : www.google.com visual merchandising displays
It is very important to know that many elements of the exterior, interior and store layout today have become a part of the visual merchandising functions.

2.4.1 - **Exterior Atmospherics:**

Exterior atmospherics refers to all aspects of physical environment found outside the store. It significantly affects store traffic and sales. It is generated by all aspects of the store exterior. Elements of Exterior Atmospherics such as store entrance, display windows and marquee discussed earlier are today important elements of visual merchandising.

**Parking facilities:**

Parking Facilities plays an important role in the success of a retail firm. The importance of parking facility is of great significance in urban shopping centers where the number of car owners is increasing day by day and people want to drive to shopping centers.

**Aspects of parking Facility which may affect sale are:**

- **Spacious:** This facilitates movement of vehicles within the parking space and availability of parking space even during peak time.
- **Duration for parking:** The management can state the duration for which shoppers can park their vehicles.
- **Cost of parking:** It is the amount charged by the shoppers.
- **Security:** This is required to ensure smooth passage of vehicles, to keep record of the cars exceeding allotted time duration, and ensure safety of the shoppers from criminals.
- **Underground or upstairs parking:** This provides a convenient location for parking where shoppers have to travel less from the parking place to the desired stores.

2.4.2 - **Interior Atmospherics:**

Interior atmospherics refers to all aspects of the physical environment found inside the store. Interior atmospheric affects sales, time spent in the store, and approach/avoidance behavior of the target segment.

**Point-of purchase** interaction and **retail unit decoration** influences the customer and in turn sales of the retail unit. Some key ingredients of interior atmospherics are **flooring, music, interior store design, level of cleanliness**, etc. A store’s physical environment has an influence on shopping behavior of customers through mediating emotional states. The retail unit environment contains various stimuli that might be perceived by the customer’s senses.
and each stimulus offers many options with regard to shopping behaviors. For example Store music varies by volume, tempo, pitch and texture, and by the specific songs played. In addition, various individual stimuli can be combined to create a unique atmosphere. To project an upscale image, a retail owner/manager chooses folk music, modest colors, elegant perfumes, cool temperatures, inadequately displayed merchandise, and soft lighting.

2.4.3 - Exterior presentation

The basic objective for visual merchandising is a desire to attract customer 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 overall theme. Creating and maintaining a store 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 elements such as Location of store, signage, logo, marquees, banners, Awings and window displays107:

Location of store

Largely location of the store strengthens the success of the business and the retail store. Before deciding location it is very important to answer the below given questions by a retailer and a visual merchandiser.

- Is the location suitable to the image and branding of your store?
- Is there good visibility?
- What is the position in relation to other competitors?
- Is there ample space for parking for customers?

One may have a spectacular store, but the wrong location can result in certain death of a business so research of other businesses in the area, demographics, pedestrian activity etc is crucial. It is a known fact that corner sites are the most valuable location, as it will give the

opportunity to capture different flows of traffic. Knowing your neighboring competitors is also vital as their store image will affect ones business.\textsuperscript{108}

**Streets and Exterior signs.**

*Image 2.3 - An e.g. of ‘Look at Me’ Signage*

**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 at least 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. A sign design conveys a great deal about the business inside. A shabby design and limited materials may suggest discount prices and no frills. Elegant and expensive sign material may suggest luxury goods and services. Signs may also be used to target a specific market segment such as youth, women, senior citizen, singles etc.\textsuperscript{109}

The outside of the store is the most under used form of retailing. From the signage to the smallest item in the window – the shop front should be considered to be a tactical marketing method with the same appeal and branding ability as any advertising campaign. It may not be evident at first that signage not only highlights the name of business, but it also adds visual beauty to the street. A row of well-maintained, unique and at times 'whimsical' (fantastic) signs adds a lot of character and personality to any shopping strip. Signage should be clear, bold and reflect the point of difference of the business. Large, colorful 3D cut outs of daisies could form part of the signage. A cafe could be highlighted with a coffee-cup and customers


walking down the street, or people in public transport may only have a few seconds to scan
the line of shops on the street.\textsuperscript{110}

Where many signs compete for customer’s attention, design and logo becomes even more
important. They should be unique, noticeable and readable. Simple, brief, well designed well
lettered and easy to read signs will convey a feeling of welcome. Signs with unlit or missing
light bulbs, flaking or faded paints or cracked and peeling background can hurt the overall
store image. Signs should be well maintained.

A store’s sign is its signature. It is personal original and continuously recognizable to the
public. It should create an image that is consistently carried throughout the store.\textsuperscript{111}

**Marquees, Banners and awings.**

**Marquees** are special type of sign used to display the name of the store. An effective
marquee must stand out from the other business to attract attention.

**Banners** are used increasingly as an expensive but colorful eye-catching means of
promotion. A new and interesting appearance can be offered by changing the banners
frequently. Consumers will think exiting changes are taking place and will be drawn into the
store. The design concept used on the banners will be more effective if an attempt is made to
carry the colors and graphics throughout the store, and on promotional materials and
newspapers advertising.

**Awings:** color and appeal can be added to a stores exterior with the use of awings. They
provide the customer with protection from weather and makes viewing the window display
more pleasant as it reduces the heat, cuts down on glare and reflection and prevents fading of
the merchandise from exposure to the sun.

\textsuperscript{110} A Botany Bay council, NSW Dept. Visual merchandising simple and practical ideas to improve your
business, retrieved 15\textsuperscript{th} Jan 2012, from

\textsuperscript{111} Holly Bastow-Shoop, North Dakota State University, Dale Zetocha, North Dakota State University, Gregory
Passewitz, The Ohio State University, RRD 155,May 1991, Visual Merchandising , a guide for small retailers,
North central regional center for rural development retrieved 18\textsuperscript{th} Sept 2012 from
http://www.soc.iastate.edu/extension/nrcrd/NCRCRD-rrd155-print.pdf
Importance of the Entrance of the store

*Image -2.4 - The above picture is the entrance of Titan store, Bandra(west)*

An Entrance creates a desire to attract guest into the shop. A shop entrance needs to have the right visibility and signage, which will create a welcoming environment. Today visual merchandisers put all their efforts to create an inviting Entrance:

The entrance of the store is extremely important, as it is the access to the store and merchandise. The pavement area in front of the store and entry should always be kept clean and uncluttered. Stores with selling racks and tables outside the store should always ensure the entrance is not blocked. Decorative tile work or inlaid signage on the floor of the entrance could reflect the image of the store or simply add character. Adding greenery, for example, a topiary tree on either side of the entrance will effectively 'frame' the entrance to the store.

Store entrances provide prospective customer access to the retail outlet. Store entrance has to fulfill two important criteria- functional and aesthetic. In India, most of the traditional retail stores enjoy open entrance with no provision for entrance doors and security guards. In some leading markets, retailers or owners of the stores even stand outside and invite the passing shoppers to visit their stores and tell them about the availability of specific merchandise.

It is well researched that a wide opening for the store entrance is perceived as inviting by shoppers. Retail units in enclosed shopping centers tend to prefer wide-open entrances as they are already secured from environmental threats. In India, independent retailers prefer to have
some pavement in front of their stores in order to place a part of their merchandise outside the store. This helps to draw attention and motivate shoppers to effect purchases.

The most common store entrance alternatives used by retailers are as follows:

- **Shutter-covered**: It is the most common storefront among Indians retail stores. The shutter is raised to remover during the working hours of the day. This is used because of security concerns and also because it ensures usage of the entire storefront.

- **Modular fabrication**: It is one piece rectangular or square entrance that may attach several stores.

- **Prefabricated structure**: It is a store frame prepared in a workshop and assembled at the store site.

- **Prototype storefront**: It is commonly used by franchisers and chains to maintain a uniform image of their stores.

A small independent retail store usually prefers one entrance, but in some cases they have provisions of backdoor entrance used prominently for receiving fresh stocks. On the other hand, large departmental stores or shopping centers operate with four or more entrances as they are supposed to attract a large number of visitors in comparison to independent stores. These retail units have to make sufficient arrangement of entrances for vehicular traffic to their stores also. Retailers have also to give due weight-age to the kind of walkways with the store entrance. Walkways are important features of planned shopping centers of franchised/chain outlets, which cater to high income section of the market. Wide, well-decorated, and consistent with the interiors of the store, these have positive effects on the customer’s shopping behavior.\(^\text{112}\)

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2.4.4 - Window display – An important element

Image 2.5 - The picture above is the window display at the entrance of the Departmental store “Shoppers stop” 2. Pune.

Significance of Visual Presentation & Window Display for Business

Window display is more than just a display of wares. It is a unique form of advertising. It is the first contact point between the store and the customer. It defines the store and gives an idea of what the store is all about to the customer. It determines whether the customer will walk into the store or walk away from it. It is an effective tool to use when the image of the Store needs to be changed. Window display can be used as a means to portray seasonal merchandise. Window display can convey what age group or income group of customers the store caters to.

Windows, are also the face of the store, they convey the brand image and help in converting passerby, into shoppers and then buyers.

Windows in retail are essentially a three-dimensional advertising space for the store. It is usually the first point of communication with the customer.

Display windows are the most direct means of introducing product to potential buyers. 80% 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.

Therefore the benefits and impact of having a great looking storefront can never be underestimated. As storefront plays a key role in attracting new customers and maintaining
loyal ones. People by their very nature are visual creatures, when we see something visually stimulating we tend to investigate it further and to a retailer that means sales.

Studies have shown that it takes a woman approximately 9 seconds to decide if your business is inviting enough to enter. A man may give you 13 seconds. Storefront needs to be inviting, fresh, and exciting to stimulate potential customers to come in and buy. Having great looking window displays can make all the difference to your bottom line revenues.

**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. 113

Good window displays will enhance communication of the product, brand and image. It gives the customer a reason to enter the stores. According to Paul Smith, Fashion Designer the theatrical windows or windows with humor can be the most effective way of transcending the barriers of both language and budget. This does not always have to be a costly operation and effective windows are windows that show imagination. Use of the simplest items can make for a dynamic statement and aid in the sales of product.

**Tashi- Image 2.6 -A best example of Window display which is larger than life and attracts the shoe lovers. (Linking Road , Bandra)**

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Types of window displays:

Exclusive windows: windows are exclusive when they have an absolutely closed backdrop. The store’s show window is a separate area and displays are organized in the windows following the theme and seasonal theme.

Open windows: Open windows do not have backdrop, and the passing customer can see the interior of the store through the displays. This is often done in large stores, especially those that sell apparel and related accessories.

Semi-closed Windows: have a partial background that shuts out some of the store interior from those viewing the window

Island windows: four-sided display windows that stand alone, often in lobbies

Advantages of Window Displays:
- Establish and maintain an image
- Arouse curiosity

Image -2.7 -An example of window display for perfumes. Exclusive and open windows

Closed back windows require a high level of general illumination. Massed window displays are often lighted with overhead fluorescent which are supplemented by closely spaced clear incandescent lamps.

Window treatments that have proven successful in India today are as follows:
- A single object against seamless paper.
- Merchandise displayed as it would be utilized in a realistic settings
• A theatrical setting using fantasy and drama
• Straight merchandise glamorized with props.
• Use of Animations
• Use of painting, sculpture or art objects for a classy look.

**Interior presentation:**
Researchers had found out that 64% of all purchase decisions were made inside a store, which includes impulse purchase.

A customer will be attracted to a display within 3 to 8 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. A design attracts attention in a way that strengthens the store image as well as introducing merchandise to the customer.

Selling space is the most important part of a store and therefore the retail designer makes every effort to utilize each square foot which will help to maximize sales. One proven way to do this is through interior displays that effectively show merchandise to the customer. When planning interior display one has to 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.
• Keep expenses to the minimum.

Promotion and advertising are less effective or wasted if efforts are not made effectively within the store to merchandise the products.\(^{114}\)

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2.4.5 - **Store Design and in store merchandising**

A store designer requires in-depth knowledge of the product mix. A Visual Merchandiser needs to include customer and sales staff-friendly fixtures. In a well-designed store, everything is inter-connected and design reflects the purpose of the business. Small detailing, or the ‘Micro detailing’ such as door handles on change rooms, for example, is also a matter of consideration. It is these small details that customers notice and appreciate. Height of counters and efficiency of counter space is also a key factor.

**Interior signage:**

![Image - 2.8 - The above given picture is the example of interior signage done by ‘Diamond Signage’ for the shoe store ‘Tashi’ Mumbai, Bandra.](image1)

![Image – 2.9 - The above given picture is the example of interior signage indicating happiness sale of the central 2, Pune.](image2)

Signage is a critical part of interior display and point-of-purchase promotions. Store signage that communicates a sales message to the customer can make up for lack of sales personnel. A good point-of-purchase sign, properly placed acts as a salesperson without wages. Signs commonly advertise vendors, colors, styles, quality, and prices. They can be used to explain customer benefit and describe merchandise features. Benefit sign or a combination of benefit and price, are of the most effective merchandising tools.

A good sign provides the most information in the fewest possible words.

Signage includes individual letters and complete signs. Often on some kind of holder. It generally:

- Tells a story about the goods.
• Tries to answer customer’s questions.
• Gives information regarding prices, sizes, department location etc.

**Point-of-purchase signs or shelf-talkers:**
- Draw the customer’s attention to the product.
- Identify the merchandise items being sold
- State a customer benefit
- Tell something about the product which customers do not know or understand
- State the price of the item

**There are four different types of signs:**

1) **Promotional signs**: For off-price events or specials.
2) **Location signs**:

*Image – 2.10 – An example of Locational signage -direction to specific departments.*

3) **Institutional signs**: For store policies, charitable events.
4) **Informational signs**: For product related features/ benefits/prices.

When done properly hand-written signs can be very effective, otherwise retailers may use a sign-making machine.
These days Visual Merchandiser gives special attention to sign and show card margins. Generally they keep the focal point of a sign in optical center of the sign and try to maintain as much white space as possible around the copy. Today one can see the use of key words that attracts shoppers for e.g. You, Money, Save, New, Easy, Love, Discover, Result, Health, Proven, Free and Guarantee.

**In store merchandising**

**Figure -2.1 -Floor Layout/Traffic Flow**

A well-planned floor layout will effectively maximize the retail space for greater return. The careful arrangement of fixtures and display racks form and influence the traffic flow. The traffic flow is the ‘intended’ path of navigation for customers to access all areas of the store – paying closer attention to promotional, in-season or slow-moving stock.
As a Customer enters the store, he gets into the “Transition Zone” – about the first 5 feet or so past the door. Here the customer is taking the store in, removing sunglasses, adjusting to the sights, sounds and smells. Not much retail is done here.

Next is the “Strike Zone” – or first impression Zone “speed bump”. A Good Visual Merchandisers generally places a table presentation here “Speed bump” with a good average price point. Not “sale” items, but not high-end either. Generally the theme from the windows is continued here.

The back of the store is generally reserved for high-demand and higher-priced items. This makes customers walk the entire store to get to the good stuff – whether it is a sale zone or the high-ticket merchandise. A Good Traffic flow plan makes sure that this area is visible from the front. Visual Merchandisers mostly plans to display add-on and impulse items here.

**A few points to consider by visual merchandisers today while determining traffic flow are as follows:**

- Easy access (wheelchairs, prams etc.)
- Visible aisle-ways (Aisles are passage between rows)
- Suitable aisle patterns.
- Register point/s.
- Display points (their position, to highlight departments etc.).
- Fixture configuration (to move customers).
- “Dead Spots” and “Prime Positions” are in the own store.

**Dead Spots:**

- Not clearly visible.
- Odd corners.
- Left/right of entrance when narrow.
- Reverse side of racks (facing away from the entrance).
- Behind columns.
- No clear line/bad lighting.
- Bottom shelves.

**Prime Positions:**

- Clearly visible.
- Near the front.
- Cash desks.
- Main aisle.
- Eye level.
- End of gondolas (facing entrance of store).
- Where the line of vision meets the wall.

A Good Visual Merchandiser while setting the promotion display tables or walls follows a theme with the items –

**Figure 2.2 – Promotional Display Table theme - Light to dark ----Left to right ------Small to Large.** One can achieve this horizontally or vertically as shown in the diagram below:

![Diagram showing a promotional display table theme with light to dark, left to right, and small to large items.]

Source of the diagram\(^{115}\)

Figure -2.3 – Placement of the Tables generally are set along an entrance or aisles with the lower items to the inside of the corridor and the taller items to outside like the image below.

![Diagram showing the placement of tables along an entrance with items arranged vertically.]

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\(^{115}\) Steven “Fish” Fisher(2010), Sr. Buyer Relations Manager for Surf Expo The Power of Retail Store Design retrieved 18 Oct 2012 from [http://www.boardretailers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=RfhTqx43q%2Bdw%3D&tabid=137](http://www.boardretailers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=RfhTqx43q%2Bdw%3D&tabid=137)
The traffic flow is driven by the type of stock in the store. In most businesses, stock can be divided into these five categories: Seasonal Merchandise, Best Sellers, Basic Stock, High Profit Lines and Impulse Merchandise. The role of Visual Merchandiser is to understand the stock selection and placement of merchandise to maximize sales. 116

VM generally divides the merchandise as follows: Seasonal Merchandise:

- Summer: swimwear, special events: Christmas, Diwali etc.
- Seasonal merchandise has a planned, limited floor life from one week to three months.
- Should be at the front of the store.

Best Sellers:

- Customers will go anywhere in the store for it (something the store is ‘famous’ for, destination product etc.)
- Creates traffic flow.
- Should be merchandised in the most prominent position.

Basic Stock:
- “Bread and Butter” lines.
- They represent a large part of the business.
- Must always be in stock.
- Generates repeat business.
- Should be placed towards the back.

High Profit Lines:
- Usually carry a higher % markup and generate few markdowns.
- Not always the ‘best seller’.
- Forms part of the ‘product/profit mix’ – a blend of high and low profit merchandise.
- Should be placed in a prominent position.

Impulse Merchandise:
- Used to generate ‘add-on’ sales.
- Located in eye-catching positions - at the register point/s, near the related stock (e.g. napkin rings near napkins)

2.4.6 - Store Layout and Fixture planning - An important element of visual merchandising.

Image -2. 13- Layout

A Visual Merchandisers first mission is to set the fixtures in a pattern that allows for maximum traffic flow. The store layout will determine how customers will shop the store, and it very often is affected by the shape and size of the sales floor. Three of the most popular are the Grid layout, the Loop or Race Track layout, and the Free Flow layout. Grid layouts are commonly used in grocery stores.
In a Grid layout the fixtures run parallel to the walls, so customers typically grab a shopping cart, start in a front corner and walk each and every aisle. Grid layouts are easy to shop because they offer clean sight lines throughout the entire store. Another advantage of the Grid layout is that it allows for maximum End Cap exposure.  
Below picture is the example of an end cap exposure which encourages impulse purchase and so high promotional and impulse items are generally found displayed on them.

**Loop—or Race Track—layouts**

This layout offers a clearly defined main aisle which circles through the store like a race track. Fixture placement in a Loop layout differs in different parts of the store: The perimeter fixtures run perpendicular to the wall, and the fixtures in the center of the loop run parallel to the side walls.

In a Loop layout customers typically flow to the right and move up and down the aisles in a serpentine manner. In a Loop layout, perimeter walls are just as important as end caps because the layout leads customers to the wall each time they go down an aisle. This means that walls need to be merchandised with particular care.

**Free Flow layout** this layout offers multiple opportunities to highlight merchandise and create display that makes the merchandise more romantic. But unlike the Grid and Loop layouts, the Free Flow doesn’t allow to maximize inventory per square foot. In a Free Flow layout there are no set aisles, so customers roam the store freely. Fixtures are not placed in straight lines; rather they are angled to easily move customers throughout the store, exposing them to merchandise displays at every turn.

**Checkout Counters** also have a big effect on business. A better choice is to place the checkout counter on the front left side of the store where it becomes a natural end to the shopping experience. They must also provide enough space for customers to complete their transaction.

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These days’ checkout counters are stock with fun items customers can pick up on impulse, such as “shut-up toys” mom can buy to keep the kids quiet, and those items customers most frequently forget. Interesting displays are set behind the checkout counters so that customers are constantly thinking about the merchandise that is sold in the store.

**Impact of Decompression Zone on the first 10 seconds of the customers inside the store.**

First impressions—first perceptions—are formed within the customer’s first 10 seconds inside the store. Customers enter the store at the same speed they had in the parking lot. This means that many customers are rushed and distracted when they walk in the door, so the store need to offer them the opportunity to slow down from walking speed to shopping speed. That’s the job of the Decompression Zone.

**The Decompression Zone** is generally the first 5’ to 15’ (the amount of space depends on the size of your store) just inside the store. This area needs to be uncluttered, inviting and easy to navigate. The shopping carts and baskets and floor signs are generally placed at the end of the Decompression Zone or customers will walk right by them. The concept of **Greeter** is also used these days. The mere presence of the Greeter will delight most customers. The Greeter can offer a cart or a basket—a good thing because studies show that customers with shopping carts spend 25% more in the store, and up to 15 minutes longer browsing. The Greeter can also tell customers about things in the store that they won’t want to miss.

*Image – 2.15 - The above picture shows how shoppers stop, departmental store, pune 1, had kept 2 greeters for the full day on maker sankarnti day to greet the customers with special sweets of that particular day called til ladoo. This type of greeting gives a warm and sweet welcome to the shoppers of that particular day and makes them feel nice.*
**Speed Bumps** The Decompression Zone refocuses the customer to a shopping pace, but strategically placed Speed Bumps gets them shopping. Speed bumps are displays that work much the same way as speed bumps in parking lots: they slow customers down so they do not miss important merchandise in the front of the store.

**Power Walls** Just inside the store and to the right is a key wall. It’s one of the first things customers see as they turn right, and in too many stores it’s just another wall used to house basic merchandise. These days’ visual merchandisers use this highly visible space to showcase new items, to tell product stories, and to display high-demand, high-profit items.

**Merchandise Outposts** are tables of product near the aisles in stores. Their purpose is to entice customers to pick up product on impulse. With the help of merchandise outpost the customers are presented with a cross section of merchandise while they are in a buying mood. Use Outposts throughout the store for cross-merchandise is the best plan these days as it act as a magnet to draw customers through the store; to introduce a new department or merchandise story; and to feature top sellers and other highly profitable merchandise.

**There are two ways to place merchandise product on shelves:**

**Horizontal and Vertical**

A **Vertical Presentation** is almost always best for the sake of demonstration. These days in almost all presentations, **Vertical Merchandising is what is generally been used** because it is experienced that any time when the product are displayed vertically, the customer are exposed to a greater variety of the assortment at any eye level. And since everyone is naturally inclined to read from left to right, Vertical Merchandising encourages purchases because customers will see the entire selection of merchandise.

**Color Rib boning versus Color Blocking**

Vertical use of color is called **Color Rib boning**, and it’s always a better choice over **Color Blocking**, the horizontal use of color.

**Small Sizes on the Left, Large on the Right**

Stores that sell similar items in various sizes obviously profit from selling the largest size because it’s likely to be the higher priced item. Generally **small size of the product is place on the left, and the larger size on the right.** This trick works because most customers are right handed, and will often unconsciously reach for the item closest to their right hand, rather than reach across their body or shopping cart. This trick can be used in many areas of the store.
“Hot Spot Cross” Merchandising

Every section of every fixture has what’s called a “Hot Spot Cross”—the part of the fixture that sells the best. This is a good thing, because customers have a tendency to stop at the center of the category, so the Hot Spot silently points out important merchandise. To locate the Hot Spot in any fixture, simply draw an imaginary cross through the center of a fixture. Incidentally, fixtures such as gondolas with many sections will have a Hot Spot in each one of the sections. Generally these spaces are used to display new items, and to energize classic product that might be suffering from sagging sales.

Variety of Shelf Heights

Is the shelving on all of your gondolas set at the same height? If they are then you are likely putting customers to sleep! **Vary the shelf heights on longer gondola runs** to highlight product and get the customers attention. In addition to exposing customers to more of your product assortment, a variety of heights will help you better manage your display space.

Visual Curve Merchandising involves the use of slanted shelves to increase the customer’s strike zone which helps the customer sees to see many products in just one glance.
Cross-Merchandising
Cross-merchandising was very under-utilized technique but these days many visual merchandisers had used this technique. It mixes different product categories together: customers see and buy more because they can easily visualize how the items will work together.

Fixtures, concept tables and wall units
*Images – 2.18-Below are some pictures of few fixtures used for the category of cosmetics and perfumes:*

When buying store fixtures and display merchandise for retail store, a number of factors are considered to be able to make the best possible choice. Some of the key factors are discussed below.

**Product line:** Characteristics of merchandise need to be considered while deciding the fixtures to be used for display. Wooden racks or shelves can be effectively used for apparel or packaged FMGC products. However, mirrored showcases are preferred for jewellery, Cosmetics and Perfumes or gift items since they ensure better safety and presentation.

**Customer profile:** Visual merchandiser has to take into consideration the profile and expectations of their target segment. Stores targeting the high-end customers invest a lot in fancy and unique fixture designs and arrangements to generate an exciting and inviting store environment, thereby attracting customers and building their own store image.
Levels of competitions: Levels of competitions is a significant factor in determining the kind of fixtures to be used by a retailer since it provides them with a unique selling proposition (USP). For instance, most of the eating joints and garment stores in urban centers of India were using very limited display options. However, with the advent of international players such as McDonald’s, KFC Marks and Spencer, Benetton, Levis, etc., the most up-market retailers are pushed to change their displays and interiors to keep pace with competition and continue to attract customers.

The various components of the display in context to fixtures generally used these days are as follows:

- Wall displays Fixtures
- Floor fixtures
- Display products
- Promotional items
- Lighting fixtures
- Signage

1) Wall displays fixtures: The popular wall displays fixtures are discussed below:

Slat wall is the most popular wall system to display merchandise and maximize total use of wall areas. Slat wall panels and accessories allow complete versatility to display merchandise anywhere on the panel.

Slotted wall standards: are a long established, effective means of displaying heavier merchandise, allowing you to display more merchandise on wall areas. Display hardware accessories such as shelving brackets, hangrail bracket, and face-outs provide organized, effective merchandise presentation.

Image - 2.19 – An example of slotted wall standard
2) **Floor fixtures:** The important types of floor fixtures used today are as follows;
   a) Grid wall panels and accessories
   b) Garments racks and displayers
   c) Display cases and counter
   d) Metal shelving gondolas
   e) Mannequins and body forms
   f) Clear acrylic displays

3) **Fixtures related to Promotional items:** Windows signs and banners are traffic-stoppers, and create an opportunity to draw a shopper’s attention. Many retailers underestimate the powerful pull of an effective window sign. Before a retail store can sell merchandise to its shoppers, it has to entice them at first. This is where effective signs, banners, and promotional displays come in. Once a shopper is inside the store, a well thought out and effectively signed promotional signs and sign holders, and colorful sales tags can plant a seed of interest in the customer’s mind and help increase sales.

4) **Lighting fixtures:** include track lighting and accessories such as rope lights. It is important to use proper lighting to make the product “pop” in the display. Incandescent spots are very effective here. Lighting needs to come from more than one direction for a balanced presentation.

5) **Signage:** Signage is generally professionally done never handwritten. A shelf tag is also a type of signage. It is a tag or sticker with merchandising information of what belongs in that place on the shelf or hook in the **Plan-o-gram** or display.

**Plan-o-gram** - A visual graphical representation of the space to be allocated to selling, merchandise, personnel and customers-as well as to product categories. Plan-o-grams a plan-o-gram 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 plan-o-gram 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.  

**Image – 2.20 -Below diagram and picture is an illustration of a plan-o-gram**

![Planogram](image)

### 2.4.7 - **Display Techniques the retail science and main tool of success of Visual Merchandiser**

Image as well as the products displayed is important in attracting many customers and selling to them. All aspects of the store contribute to its image as perceived by customers. As shopping is an ongoing process rather than a predetermined activity. The store takes on the characteristics more of a theatre than an art museum. The staff and the customers are the actors and the displays are part of the props that stimulate the imagination and contribute to the enjoyment of the play. Appropriate and imaginative displays are very important in developing customer enjoyment of retail process and in supporting their interaction with the sales staff. Here the visual merchandiser has to play the role of art director.

The first function of display is to show the customer what the retailer has to offer. The retailer should use display equipment to enable the customer to see as much as possible of the available stock. This saves the customer time and inconvenience, because in most stores now the customer has been trained or conditioned to know that if it is not out on the shelves, it probably is not available. Modern display methods also save the retailer time answering simple queries about availability and visual features of the products. This reduces the number of sales staff to concentrate on customer queries that are likely to lead to a sale. The method of display should allow the customer to see the most important aspects of the product as well

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as the product itself, by taking account of the customer’s field of vision. From the distance the walls of the store are used to draw the customer in. If the displays have successfully impressed the potential customer, the sale will be automatic. The customer will walk into the store or department and buy.

In display, the observer’s mental process is directed systematically toward the target. For the most part, passersby approach windows without purpose. Attention is gained by something positive, some striking point that we will term the focus of the display. This focus may be created by lighting, movement, and color, or the merchandise itself. From there, the eye of the observer will move in the desired direction through the display by use of devices such as arrows that lead to the saleable merchandise. These days VMs use quality effects and make every attempt to create a favorable reaction in the mind of the customer.

A well planned display always create a desire by demonstrating the qualities and benefits of the product, demonstrating the use of the product, Presenting the product in such a way as to increase the possibility of inducing a sale. It is not sufficient just to please the observer; the objective is to sell the merchandise.

Retail theory has identified two types of display:

Visual merchandising and On-self merchandising. (On-shelf merchandising refers to the way goods are displayed on shelves, racks and other types of fixtures in the store). Today even on-self merchandising has become an important part of visual merchandising

**Visual Merchandiser keeps in mind certain aspect related to customers sight lines while planning a display. As eye level is buy level.**

**Front and Back Sight Lines**

Customers should be able to see clearly to the back of the store in order to determine whether browsing longer is worth their time. A centre aisle, strategic lighting, alternate floor covering, further displays all can help "pull" the customer through the store.

**Taking Advantage of the Highest Profile Location**

As shoppers move from the front of the store, most in fact walk in 6to 10 paces before they stop to look around. They then move to the left at a 45-degree angle, unless the counter is to the left, in which case they will walk to the right. The store's most exciting and best-selling merchandise should be displayed in these positions. Important rule: eye level is buy level; merchandise is generally planned on an accessible height for the customer to reach.

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Direct and Redirect Common Customer Traffic Patterns

Shoppers in addition to walking towards the left, also quite typically walk down one side, across the back and up the other side of the store. Color, angles and motion in the store's displays can attract the shopper's peripheral vision and encourage them to zigzag through the store, pausing and "shopping" the selling floor.

Intelligently designed cash counters

The cash counters are the last stop for that extra purchase. They encourage last impulse buy with a display positioned beside the counter. Display should take account of customer expectations, as customers are more likely to see what they expect to see. Therefore the arrangement of items follows a clear pattern. Accessories or complementary items are made noticeable. Contrasting items have a clear purpose for the customer, as well as being clearly visible; otherwise they will not register within the customer’s shopping scheme.

2.4.8 - Important principles of merchandise display - The visual merchandiser learns to follow are:

Sales appeal: The displays should always show the very best merchandise that the retailer has to choose from.

Simplicity: Too many items in a display will confuse the customer and tend to create an atmosphere of chaos.

Variety: Variety adds interest by creating contrast. It is necessary to attract and hold the viewers’ attention. Displaying one small item with several large items or a single round shape with numerous square shapes is another variety creating idea.

Dominance: Attractive, effective displays have a centre of attention or dominance to which the customer’s eye is drawn and held. Without a dominant display feature, the customers’ eye will be attracted elsewhere and the display does not communicate its sales message effectively. Dominance within a display allows the outlet to emphasize a single promotional message or focus on a direct purchase incentive.
Grouping
A balanced display consists of small groupings within one large grouping. Each smaller group formulates the depth (as explained below) within the display. A small area of space between each depth acts as a full stop giving the customer time to absorb the message. Each smaller group overlaps to form the main body of the group. Too much product within each group can cause a heavy/bulky appearance. Display arrangement is placing Merchandise into interesting and stimulating forms to ensure an effective and clear message is communicated to the customer. Special display merchandise is frequently presented in one of four definite arrangement patterns.

Depth
Depth is the distance from the front of the window to the back of the window. It is important to give the display the right amount of depth. Consider the way we watch movies or look at a painting; we step or sit back from whatever we wish to see. The same applies to windows - to grasp the whole picture it must be set back from the window, not positioned right at the glass. The rule of thumb is to start 3 quarters away from the glass then work forward. At the same time the display should be stepping down from the highest point.

Step
Step arrangements lead the eye in a direct line; they begin at a low point on one side of a display area and progress directly to a higher point on the opposite side of that area. Typically step displays are constructed so that the base of each step increases in area; the larger base area is used for displaying accessory items, while the steps are used for featuring merchandise.

Fan
A fan arrangement is spread up and out from a small base, like an inverted pyramid, thereby directing the viewer’s eyes upward and outward.
Zigzag

This is a modified pyramid that zigzags its way to the apex of the display. No two display levels should be at the same height. This arrangement is less monotonous than the pyramid.

2.7 -Diagram of zigzag display

Pyramid

One of the most commonly used principles in display grouping is the pyramid display. This is a triangular display of merchandise in vertical (stacked) or non-vertical (un-stacked) form. The pyramid begins at a large or broad base and progresses to an apex, or point, at the highest level. When displaying different sized merchandise, larger items are positioned at the base, and the smaller items at the apex. This principle can be applied to almost anything from small cosmetic items (bottles, creams, lotions etc.) to mannequins (e.g. tall one up the back and two seated mannequins on a box with accessories grouped into the display).

Image – 2.21 – pyramid display

The 5 design principles which every Visual Merchandiser takes care of today in planning displays are as follows: 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, color, 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. No matter what the theme and type of product being sold, good visual display embodies 5 main design principles they are as follows:

Balance
Proportion
Emphasis and
Rhythm
Harmony

1. **Balance**: It refers to an equality of optical weight and importance that creates a unified presentation. I.e. Balance involves the equilibrium and weight of elements between two sides of a display. Balance is based on a theory of equals. Balance could be of two kinds – Formal (Traditional or symmetrical) and informal (asymmetrical)

   Formal balance refers to symmetry. It is rigid and static but is simple and easy to use consistently. It helps keep wall displays organized and maintain uniformity. This balance is large on one side and large on the other. This can be effective where expensive and quality merchandise is being presented.

   Informal balance is asymmetrical. It uses optical weight to balance the display. This 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 with several small items. There is great freedom to express movement and activity in informal balance.

2. **Emphasis**: Emphasis is the point of initial eye contact. From this spot all other eye movement flows. Emphasis is therefore a focal point. There should be emphasis in all displays. Emphasis should always be on the merchandise. Hence, it should be in accordance with what will the display feature and how will it be communicated to the customer.

   Emphasis could be through the use of colors, dramatic lighting, signage and graphics, and strategic placements. For e.g. an isolated item can be emphasized when surrounded by blank space. Color is a powerful medium for creating emphasis. Repetition usually means something is important; so repeated shapes, color together creates emphasis.

3. **Proportion**: Keeping the ratio of one aspect of a display in relationship to others. I.e. proportion is the ratio of the parts to the whole display. It is comparative relationship of distances, sizes amount degree or parts. Each item may look normal when isolated, but if it is inconsistent in area or dimension with neighboring items it seems out of proportion. Each
piece of merchandise must be considered in relationship to all the other merchandise e.g. pyramid, step, repetition (explained earlier).

When planning a display and its proposition following points following aspects are taken care of.

- All large objects are generally not used as it becomes difficult to break monotony.
- Adding an odd number of smaller, related items to large pieces creates more interest and balance.
- Proportion takes one more meaning when items define one another. For e.g. the size of a dinosaur is defined when it is placed next to a huge building structure.
- The ratio of props to merchandise is planned in proportion to avoid the appearance of selling the props rather than merchandise.
- Drastically changing the proportions and the color and texture work wonders in attracting attention to a display.

4. **Rhythm**: Rhythm or flow involves the measurement of organized movement; a self-contained movement from object to object, background to foreground and side to side. The rhythm in a display should lead the viewer’s eye from the dominant object to the subordinated objects or from the primary presentation of the grouping down to the arrangement of accessories or alternate parts of display. Creating a path the eyes will follow once they’ve made initial contact with the item of emphasis. A display with good rhythm leads consumers’ eyes throughout the entire display.

When planning a display following points concerning rhythm are very important

- Various line shapes can be used to create rhythmic effects. Vertical lines send a message of dignity, strength and height. Diagonal lines speak of action, effective mood-makers in sporting goods, and toy departments. Horizontal lines are more restful and remind us of landscapes. They also help to downplay the height of a room. Curved lines are graceful, relaxed, and indicates careful movement and a sense of femininity. Hence, it is effectively used for bridal shops and cosmetics.

- Repetition also creates a sense of visual rhythm. An instance of this is when merchandising message is repeated again and again. Flow is accomplished by such repetition of items which can be placed in a variety of position in a display.

- English reading people read from left to right. A left to right reading should be created in the display.
• Elements that mean something together and relate to the merchandise are generally used
• A pattern through the use of light and dark either with color or light.
• Flow is created by progression of sizes for e.g. small to large.
• Flow is created by radiation from the center or dominant object to subordinate object in the display.
• Overlapping is one of the most effective tools for creating good flow.

5. Harmony: Is arranging the various elements of display, including the merchandise, props, signage and lighting, as well as color and texture, to produce a pleasing effect. It is important to build the display such that it is in harmony with the whole store. The visual merchandiser should keep the whole store image and merchandising goals in mind when building displays. 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.

In a display the three forms of harmony must be in agreement:
• Functional
• Structural
• Decorative

Functional Harmony: deals with how something works physically which means it must be realistic and must work. An e.g. is a kitchen counter used in a display should be of 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 e.g. A good window display may have pots and pans, fishing rod and outdoor furniture all mixed together as all these items would be used on a camping trip. Hence a camping theme is carried out which would create a mood of camping.

Decorative harmony: includes the parts of a display that are included only for decorative purposes. If an atmosphere of spring is being developed, butterflies or flowers may be used as props. These items are attractive and add to the theme.
2.4.9 - **Types of displays used by visual merchandisers in fashion retail in Mumbai are as follows:**

**Window displays**

**Live displays** (Live models are used sometimes for product display at the entrance of the store. They may also demonstrate the use of products. Children’s stores often use people dressed as cartoon characters to attract Kid’s attention.)

**Marquee display** A marquee is usually a painted or neon light displaying the store name alone or mixed with trademark and other important information of a retail store at the store front or entrance. These are done under a marquee panel erected in the front of the store or in the forecourt. Marquee panels have an extended roof, which are sometimes used in spacious stores. Marquee panels are often used in large super markets to. In India, most independent retailers use marquee (painted tin boards) placed outside the storefront. The quality of marquee influences the image of the store perceived by the customers. Pizza Hut, McDonald’s Barista and Bombay selection own widely acknowledge marquee.

**Free standing or island displays:** These are displays of merchandise found generally at the entrance of stores (inside) to announce new arrivals, special offers, etc. A display podium is erected and decorated suitably to highlight the merchandise.

**Counters displays:**

Merchandise is displayed in counters that have glazed display shelves. Categories like jewellery, perfumes, cosmetics and watches have counter displays lit from within to highlight the merchandise.

*Image –2. 22 - The picture shown is of counter display of Lakme products in a Shoppers stop at Lakme counter. The counter is lid with lights from within.*

**Brand corners:** Brand corners are displays of exclusive brands and are common in supermarkets and convenience stores. A devoted space in shelves or gondolas carries the
exclusive displays of the brand. This happens during a paid promotion campaign or when the brand has an offer or a scheme to benefit the consumer.

**Waterfall display:** Found commonly in garment stores, these displays are done on the liner walls with the help of stooping rods. Such waterfall displays are used for blazers, jackets etc.

![Image](image.jpg)

*Image – 2.23 -The above picture shows the waterfall display of Biba brand at Inorbit, Malad.*

Apart from waterfall display there is two more type of merchandise presentation they are:

**Shoulder-out presentation:** The way most garments are hung in home closets with only one side showing from shoulder to bottom.

**Face-forward presentation or face out presentation:** Hanging of clothing with the front fully facing the viewer which is generally done at the entrances and aisles.

**End cap displays:** These are done at the terminal sides of the gondolas on both sides, and are commonly found in the gondola fixtures used in supermarkets, convenience stores and book stores.

**Displays Techniques which are commonly used today are**

- Display by family
- Display by color
- Display by product group
- Display using props
- Display with themes
- Display using visuals
Display by family

Image – 2.24 - The picture below illustrates display of associated merchandise at shopper stop, Pune 2.

Display by Color

Image – 2.25 - The picture below displays the perfume bottles with colors theme in mind

Image – 2.26 - The above picture at the men’s section is an example of use of good color scheme display and a creative fixture for displaying ties.

Good visual merchandising also uses color to maximum effect to attract passersby’s attention. As regards the display’s components the visual merchandiser keeps in mind the merchandise and the shop’s image along with the customers’ likes and dislikes when working with color schemes.
Display by product group

*Image – 2. 27 - The picture below illustrate the display as per product group.*

Display using props

*Image – 2. 28 - The pictures below illustrate a display with props using the larger size of the main merchandise.*

*Image – 2.29 - The picture below is a brilliant example of use of a prop of Barbie doll in front of the kids section at Anderi shopper stop.*

Props are defined as the items that go into a display but aren’t being sold. It can be anything from simple, colorful foam-based cut-outs, to antique furniture to children’s toys. Almost anything can be a prop - a rock, a tree branch, a child’s red wagon, a lacy table cloth etc. Other critical component which has been already discussed earlier is that it is the props that either make or break the store’s display’s effectiveness. The key to using props in displays is to avoid having the props overshadow the items the store is trying to sell. One must also use props that enhance the merchandise, rather than detract from it.
Display using themes

Image – 2.30 -The above picture of window display is an example of display using theme - season (Malad shoppers’ Stop Inorbit)

Image – 2.31 -The above shoppers stop window designed by Arden J Dsouza, Head Visual Merchandising, Shoppers stop, Says that the above floral summer theme was design to touch the emotive sense of customers, which will take them back in the days of walking in the field of tulip and lilies.

The store visual merchandiser team may have a theme at their disposal for e.g.

- Holidays
- Back to school
- Seasons
- Festivals
- Sports
- National “months” or “weeks”
- Birthday, Mother’s day etc. (gift giving occasion)
Displays are the main tool of visual merchandisers and if properly planned can give benefits like:

- Publicizes the business.
- Publicizes the product
- Lays a foundation for future sales
- Builds prestige
- Educates the public
- Improves the amenity of the street
- Offer the public useful, practical demonstration
- Informs the public of the operations of the business
- Support popular trends
- Harmonizes pure business interest with aesthetics

These benefits are sometimes not achieved even after spending a huge amount on displays due to some common errors which is been made by some common hired designers who do not possess same knowledge as visual merchandisers.

- **Too much merchandise**: some retailers display area appears cramped with many similar items or many different items that selling message is lost.
- **Too little merchandise**: A window or display area with too little merchandise makes a store appear to be going out of business or indicates to the customer that the establishment
is less prosperous. Poor planning of what merchandise is to be placed in a display may also cause a display to appear empty.

- **No display budget**: Money is a problem for everyone in and out of retailing. Display areas are often budgeted with what left over after all other monetary needs have been plans. Creativity is needed to plan and execute a great display with no budget.

- **Lack of underlying theme**: Merchandise is often placed in a spaced with no selling message, theme. Regardless of the type of merchandise used, the location or the store type, a display needs to have a strong message or underlying theme. The customer should be able to understand the concept presented by the display in few seconds.

- **Too many props**: There is no specific rule that stipulates the number of props appearing in a display. However, the error of over propping a display can be more serious than using too few props. The type and number of props are dependent on the merchandise. The display of a living room suite will need fewer props to complete its message. Other goods, especially smaller items, will need more props to elevate it to eye level or provide a central theme to the grouping. Props are important to effectively present a display with a theme. Therefore the props must be in harmony with the goods shown. For e.g. a green velvet backdrop will not be effective in a display promoting summer merchandise.

- **Display changed too slowly or Displays changed to seldom**: Many interior displays are changed daily, because they are effective and merchandise sold directly from them needs to be replaced. Large window displays may be changed as often as two times a week or as frequently as every other week. Special windows and internal store promotions have a longer display life. However some display or set of props remain until it collects dust and every person in the community has seen it a number of times which is a bad sign. Frequently changing displays presents a positive message to the community, provides opportunity to show more merchandise and present more message to the shopper.

- **Length of time necessary to change a display is too long**: An empty display area is a time of no sales. Display work should be generally changed when there is least amount of traffic and necessary equipment and merchandise is gathered prior to tearing down the earlier display.

- **Lack of attention to detail**: making a good impression is very important. One of the best ways to do this in display work is to pay attention to the small details. This is generally the first thing the customer notices. For e.g. Checking displays daily to be certain that everything is in proper place, cleaning the glass and dusting all surfaces, removing all
display tools from the display areas, checking the display area from all angles to be sure all merchandise is easily visible and aesthetically pleasing

Thus Visual merchandising is all about creating a good and lasting ‘first impression’ in the mind of the customer about the store and its merchandise. Psychologically speaking, value comes with abundance, which means if a retailer puts 10 T-shirts at one place, and then the product looks a little premium. Again, if this particular place is occupied by only one T-shirt, the product certainly looks exclusive – and expensive. So when you find only one cell phone on a glass top, it looks more expensive than when 25 cell phones occupy the same space. Visual merchandising shares many of the same principles as advertising, graphic design, and interior design the purpose of visual merchandising is to create a logical and visually pleasing Environment that will grab attention and translate into increased sales. If I put down in an easy way Visual merchandising basics are pretty easy to understand - a clean store, well lit, with merchandise displayed in neat groupings. But as an industry, **visual merchandising delves a lot deeper, focusing on the psychology and motivations of the target customer.**

Visual merchandiser with the technique of Visual Merchandising tries to achieve the following:

- Making the shopping experience more comfortable, convenient and customer friendly by
- Making it easier for the shopper to locate the desired category and merchandise.
- Making it easier for the shopper to self-select.
- Making it possible for the shopper to co-ordinate & accessorize.
- Providing information on sizes, colors & prices.
- Informing about the latest fashion trends by highlighting them at strategic locations.
- Educating the customers about the product/service in an effective and creative way.
- Establishing a creative medium to present merchandise in 3D environment, thereby enabling long lasting impact and recall value.  
  {121}
- Setting the company apart in an exclusive position.
- Establishing linkage between fashions, product design and marketing by keeping the product in prime focus.

It enhances the shopping experience by providing the right ambience, besides creating an image of the store in the minds of the customers.

Communicating the right message about the merchandise by projecting the latest trends, colors and fashion, latest arrivals. VM are perfect communication vehicles, and an opportunity for retailers to sell a variety of merchandise.

Combining the creative, technical and operational aspects of a product and the business. Drawing the attention of the customer to enable him to take purchase decision within shortest possible time, and thus augmenting the selling process.

It also works as an AIDA Model. The buying process initiated by visual merchandising starts with the act of grabbing the **attention** of the customer. Then the presentation creates in them the **interest** to buy. The story telling in visual merchandising generates the **desire** in the customers. The final **action** of buying is triggered by the visual merchandising and displays communicating one message – the merchandise are for the esteem customers.

Thus in this chapter we have discussed how exteriors, window display and merchandise display in a scientific manner which entices the customer to enter the store and get into the process of buying the product. The role of visual merchandisers gets more difficult as his job is to retain the customers who have entered the store and make him stay there for a longer time. His objective is also to put the customer at ease and help him in his buying procedure and make sure that the customer will visit the same store in the future. For this the visual merchandisers today take the help of sensory retailing. In the next chapter we will discuss about the elements of sensory retailing which has helped in upbringing the mall culture today and helps in creating a unique impression about the store image. We will also deal with the stress reliving aspects in today’s shopping arcades. We will try to understand the visual merchandising practices and its impact on store image and customers.