ABSTRACT

The point of purchase advertising which is considered to influence buying decision of the consumers seems to play a critical role and is used as a chief marketing strategy by the manufacturers. Such display advertisements, which have served since the beginning as a powerful tool in product promotion, have evolved drastically and have undergone radical changes both in its principles and approach. New materials, new strategies and new techniques have made this medium a most potent tool in aiding sales and product promotion. In the modern day marketing, the point of purchase advertisements or simply the display of products has acquired a new nomenclature called 'Visual merchandise'. Visual merchandising cannot be compared to any other medium but is considered to be a highly supportive medium.

Visual Merchandising is the act of selling or marketing a product effectively so that a satisfactory transaction is made. Ideally, a merchant is one who buys a product from a wholesaler or someone and sells it to anyone else. Merchant is actually a person who is in between a buyer and a seller, who initiates the process of sales and completes it with a sale and this takes place in most of the countries. It is the act of taking a product from a manufacturer and selling it to end user. This involves a place where the product is kept and it is exhibited before a buyer comes and buys a product. The merchandiser gets his income from a customer as he buys at a cheaper rate and sells it at a competitive rate and in this process makes a profit.

General Objectives of the Study:
To examine the use of basic principles of visual merchandising
To analyze the importance of visual merchandising as an effective promotional tool in marketing
To examine the consumer behavior towards visual merchandising
To study the knowledge, attitude and practice of storekeepers with respect to visual merchandising.
Visual merchandising.

The study on visual merchandising helps to understanding the underlying factors that helps in making a buying decision on behalf of the customer and as to how to make visual merchandising as marketing tool to influence customers on behalf of the store keeper. Therefore when so many retailers of similar products are vying for the top position, a strong Visual Merchandising practice steps in as the answer. It is first essential to study and understand the changing choices of a retail customer when it comes to garments. One should determine if the preference or choice shown by a customer towards a certain retail outlet over the other, is due to – prices, salesmanship, availability of variety, or simply because the store is attractive enough to induce purchase. It is extremely essential to provide a good

The study clearly delineates that a majority of the store keepers do have a basic understanding of the concept of visual merchandising. They understand it is necessary to display the products and this display has a profound effect on the customers. However, what they lack is the scientific principles on which visual merchandising has to understood and practiced. The main aim is to attract attention and stimulate the customer sufficiently to lead to a purchase decision. The image the shopper can acquire through using the merchandise should be presented through the display.

Customers perspective

At this point it is interesting to quote the remarks made by to respondents of the study which reflects the views of the majority. One of the respondent when being interviewed said “when start from our house we have had the decision to buy a particular brand of product…..the display, the demonstration of the product…..and over enthusiastic salesmanship does influence and we land up buying what has been suggested”. Incidentally the respondent wanted to purchase a particular brand of TV. This may look like an extreme example of the influence of point of purchase display of product. Here is another extreme
statement from a respondent“ what we see we believe…….displays are made to influence customers…….they are intentional……. But we need to buy what we want…….in most cases of purchasing……the decision is influenced by the money in our pockets”.

The study reveals that like the store keepers, the customers also lack clear understanding about the objectives and advantages of visual merchandising. This clearly indicates that customers are very decisive about their purchase decisions. This is particularly true shoppers of unbranded products. The study shows that customers with low income levels and education are the most un-decided lot. This may be due to fact that they may not be in a position to purchase high value products and also lack the educational level to understand product details. Also found this group lack brand loyalty. Another major finding is that younger generation are the most volatile buyers but are most attracted by what is displayed. This younger group goes by their instinct and visual merchandising has little effect on them. The study also revealed that women are impulsive buyers. However, what they see they believe. Women don't seem to believe or expressly concerned about visual merchandising. The study also shows that most customers preferred to shop in local retail stores rather than in retail show rooms. This may be due to the fact that they are more familiar with the local stores which they prefer to shop. This perception and practice of preference on local stores does not give any credence to visual merchandising. Another important factor to note is that majority of the customers do not exhibit brand loyalty but do have a strong store loyalty.