Chapter 5
CONCLUSION
To see is to believe is an old adage which can be adopted to understand the purpose of visual merchandising. Right from the beginning of the concept of marketing store keepers rely on display of products to attract customers and influence their decision making. Where the store keeper is a roadside seller or a departmental store of owner of branded goods showroom, all rely on displaying the products in influence buyers. Today's consumers make independent and individual buying decisions. They are now better educated, sophisticated, fashion conscious and discriminating in their choices. Also, they cannot be dictated or manipulated at will by advertisers or promoters. One would also notice the growing 'mall culture' in the metros, which again means many stores selling the same or similar goods. Competition in the market place is growing more and more intense and imaginative by the day. Stores that once had monopoly in the marketplace for certain goods now find this monopoly being challenged by competitors. Retailers also are now moving by choice and by necessity into more varied media selection for promoting their stores.

5.1 Visual merchandising – Store keeper’s perspective

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 bying 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 shopping experience to the customer of today.
So in the process of providing a total shopping experience the store keeper is expected to have a clear knowledge of the principles of visual merchandising. The study basically aimed at this very concept of the knowledge principle and practice of visual merchandising among store keepers and as to how it can influence the buying decisions of customers. There has been a noticeable shift from conventional media like posters, hoardings, etc to more sophisticated media like the internet, SMS advertising, electronic kiosks, etc. Visual merchandising is one of the latest additions in the form of a vital visual promotion tool. The main aim is to push the product off the shelf into the hands of the customer. It therefore acts as a silent salesman which helps the customer make purchase decisions. It adds an ambience to shopping thereby adding to the store environment and ultimately induces buying. Visual merchandising is therefore the makeup that differentiates one store from other both in terms of exteriors, right up to every nook and corner of the store. It also attempts to convince the viewer the value of the product, and educate him or her about the basic concept of the products.

Then what is the basic principle on which visual merchandising operates. In a simplest understanding of the concept 'Visual Merchandising is basically the function of 'displaying' or 'showing goods', and encompasses all the aspects of the total visual impact of the store and its merchandise. Generally, it is an expansive term that includes window displays and interior displays, and all the goods for sale on the floor of the store'. To display is to show, to exhibit, to make more visible. A display refers to individual presentation of goods, which shows merchandise in order to sell to the customer. The purpose of a display is to sell specific merchandise.
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.

The study shows that majority of the store owners did not any practical training on visual merchandising nor have an understanding of it principles. For majority of them it was just a practice or some kind of a daily routine. It was simply entrusted to a salesman in the store to see that products are displayed properly to attract customers. This is akin to a roadside shop owner who does the same to attract customers. Perhaps his displayed is influenced by the natural light. In a store visual merchandising simply does mean display of products. It has lot do with lighting, colour, background and use of support material like mannequins, other display supports.

Another major finding of the study is that majority of store keepers' practice visual merchandising just because their neighboring store keeper does so. It is some kind of a competition among the store keepers to make their shop look better than their competitor. What most stores keeper lack is the understanding of the purpose of visual merchandising? The purpose of visual merchandising is basically to promote the sale of merchandise along with reflecting the 'store image'. It also informs the public about the type of merchandise in the store. The price range of goods, fashion character, and the quality of merchandise is also generally represented in the visual merchandising of the store. It is therefore one of the most creative aspects of retailing.
The study also reveals that a majority of the store keepers do not have firm belief that visual merchandising enhances the buying decision of the customers. To them visual merchandising is another form of advertising which only persuade customers and cannot force a buying decision. The study reveals that there is a total lack of understanding of the objectives of visual merchandising among store keepers. For majority of the store keeper is was daily routine and is a onetime investment to gain customers loyalty. Most store keepers interviewed said they do not have budget set apart for visual merchandising. This clearly shows as to hope store keepers view the advantages of visual merchandising.

The store keepers also lack the knowledge that visual merchandising is a powerful marketing tool which influences a customer by affecting the five senses—sight, smell, sound, touch and taste. The store keeper were ignorant of the kinds of display like window display, interior display, isolated display, life expectancy of display on the one hand. On the other they had very limited understanding of the various elements of display like merchandise, mannequins, props, signage, colour and lighting. It is interesting to note that majority of the store keepers agreed that to them visual merchandising means display of products to the customers no matter how it is done. In majority of the cases the store keepers agreed that the mannequins and other props are changed only when they are broken. 'Truly a onetime investment for the store keeper'. Overall, it is quite evident that Visual Merchandising is a fast-emerging trend, that it soon becoming inevitable for most stores. It cannot be compared to other media, but is a highly supportive medium. Some of the most important findings from the responses sought form retailers, customers and visual merchandising planners are listed below:

- A store with strong visual merchandising definitely ensured more walk-ins in a store
- All retailers feel that what is seen by a customer is sold faster
- Retailers of stores expect from visual merchandising, to establish that store image and give an impression
While salesmanship emerged as the most effective way to achieve sales target, arrangement of merchandise was also the most important factor. There was absolutely no involvement of professional planners in unbranded stores. Salesmanship and word of mouth are most effective media.

5.2- Visual merchandising – 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 undecided 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. There was a strong preference of unbranded store customers for a particular store because of good salesmanship, which played an important role in this segment. Store image was found to have a strong link, a direct link in most cases to customer's self-image. Most of the shopping is done by the respondents themselves in both branded and unbranded stores.

Visual merchandising is believed to talk about a price of merchandise. Most customers, visual merchandising is nothing but enhancement of the store image. Customer's feel visual merchandising is mostly exaggeration of what really is. Posters, mannequins and shopping bags are the most popular in-store promotions which almost all customers are aware of. Impulsive purchasing is highly prevalent among customers.

Overall, it is quite evident that Visual Merchandising is a fast-emerging trend, that it soon becoming inevitable for most stores. It cannot be compared to other media, but is a highly supportive medium. Customers therefore begin to relate to a certain store image when a certain brand comes into their mind. Unbranded stores however concentrate more on arrangement of merchandise well, so that it directly leads to more customers walking into the store. That could be the reason why good display and other factors like lighting, colour, play an important role in bringing in sales for unbranded stores. The main aim of unbranded stores is to attract as many customers as possible, and keep them loyal to their store. However, visually not too much emphasis is paid on 'decorating' the store or following any set guidelines for visual merchandising.
Most customers of unbranded stores have given suggestions relating to the interiors of the shop, which directly reflects on the quality of visual merchandising for unbranded garments. On the other hand, customers of branded stores would like a reduction in prices, which is true considering most branded garments are priced exorbitantly. A want for better salesmanship and customer services reflects that the choice of salespersons or training given to them needs to be worked upon. Displaying wider variety of clothing is a suggestion from both customers of branded and unbranded garment stores because, displaying only a certain segment or type of garment could lead the customer to believe that is all the store has to offer.

5.3: Creating Your Masterpiece

Designing and building a display is like painting a still lieyou must include a ocal point (your product), ixtures (whatever holds the product), props (accents that bring the product to lie) and various other design components. I this sounds overwhelming, be assured that it isn't. Study works o art in books, museums or online, and you will discover how artists combine the basics with their own style to create varied looks, themes and moods. You can do the same thing in your displays. Remember, you aren't just selling productyou're selling your unique ideas and inspiration!

Color: Just look out the window during any season and discover the perect palette. Every color combination ound in nature is successul because there is a balance o warm and cool hues and light and dark shades and the inclusion o a neutral (black, white or brown). Be inspired, not intimidated!

Light: Study black-and-white photos or sketches to see the power o contrast; both light and shadow are necessary or establishing an eective ocal point. Pull this concept into your displays by varying the strength o light in your setupswash the backdrop with sot light; ocus a bright beam o light on the products; and let the ixtures holding the products ade into partial shadow.

Space: Empty space is not a waste. In displays, empty space is as important as the products: You cannot ill every surace to the brim with color and product and then expect people to look at it. The visual conusion
overpowers people! The eye needs a place to rest, so you must incorporate clear spaces to balance the weight of your props and products. Train your staff to leave empty spaces empty! Loading the spaces with products will not increase sales.

Scale: The size of the display area plays into the equation. Your props and the size of product you place there must be balanced with the space. In the case of windows, large-scale displays are best, as they are viewed from a distance. Keep your colors vibrant, your lighting strong and your products large. Once
Composition: Combining perspective, angles and textures allows for varied looks. A triangle-shaped arrangement, whether centered or offset to the side, is always successful; the dynamic angles add energy to your display. Height in the rear of the display is vital for lighting product to the customer’s eye level. Your focal point should be in the middle third of the display area—place your largest or most colorful item there. Study still-life paintings by the Dutch masters or placement ideas.

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5.4: Is your store friendly to human beings?

The first principle behind the science of shopping is the simplest one. You are dealing with people. People have certain similarities and tendencies which the retail environment must take into account.
There are certain physical and anatomical factors and limitations which are common to all the people shopping in your store. Whilst there are many differences in shoppers based on tastes, preferences, gender, age, income etc. there are a large number of similarities which should be reflected in the design of your store.

When you consider some basic facts there are some things which to be remembered in the design of your retail outlet. Most of your customers will have two hands and when they are standing normally, these hands will be situated approximately 36 inches off the floor. This means that if you merchandise products below that height, your customers are going to have to bend over. If they bend over, is there sufficient room for people to pass without knocking them?

Do you use shopping baskets in your store? Where do you store them? Are they in stacks around the store or are they located just in one place near the entrance? A good tactic to increase sales, is to get your sales staff to carry some baskets and give one to any customer that has two items in their hands. Immediately this will free up one hand so that they can add more merchandise to the basket. Tactics like this increase the dollar value of each transaction and there is no cost.

The longer you can keep your customer in the store, the more they will buy. The quicker your customers walk, the less they will purchase. If your store encourages a leisurely pace, your customers will see the merchandise and the signs clearly. This will also contribute to purchasing more.

If the customer is walking through the entire store and considering a wide range of merchandise, a substantial amount of time is required. In some stores, buyers have been timed and spending four or five as much time as non-buyers. If you can get your shoppers to shop longer, then your average transaction will also rise. However, you have to know how long your customers spend shopping in your store. It for you can design strategies to increase it. The science of shopping shows quite clearly that store design and profitability are linked very closely. If your store has a good design, you will be more profitable.
Image : No. 01 - Displaying an item effectively helps in the marketing of goods affectively
Image: No.02 - A place where the product is exhibited before a buyer
Image: No. 03 - Powerful display is very impressive young generation.
Image: No. 04 - Lighting plays an important role in window display
Image: No. 05 - A place where the product is exhibited before a buyer
An innovation in window display is definitely a real treat to the eyes.
Image: No. 07 - Arranging goods in array helps the customer to view all the goods properly
Image: No.08 - Window display is an effective way to grab the attention of the customers.
Image No. 09 - Colors and lighting used efficiently helps in retail customer.