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A Study on Store Atmosphere in Retail Outlet-Review of Literature

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Abstract: Visual merchandising has long been considered as important strategic business decision for a number of reasons. Customer store choice decisions are influenced greatly by merchandising which denotes the relationship between the customer perception and buying behaviour. Retail store elements such as store layout, display, exterior and interior. This paper is focused on literature review of retail outlet atmosphere by customer point of view and satisfaction on retail outlet.
Keywords: visual merchandising, perception, customer satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

Visual merchandising plays an important role in the retail market and also it is new concept to present the product with light, color, music, interior, exterior, fixtures and display. Visual merchandising is the way of presenting store by displaying the products to the customer. A proper visual merchandising help the store to increase the customer walk-ins and in-turn increase the sales of the product. The increase in competition has necessitated retailers to differentiate themselves from their competition

II. STORE ATMOSPHERICS

Atmospherics is referred to as a store's physical characteristics which are used to develop the retail unit image and getting customers. It describes the physical element in the store design that appeal to consumers and encourage them to buy. The major role of atmospherics are generate excitement, enhance the store image, attract new customers, easy to move inside the store, optimum utilisation of retail space, reduce the time for the customer to search the product where it is located. In the competitive world retail store design play major role for attracting the customer and maximize the visit of the customer to increasing the sales. Retail store design is a well-thinked strategy to set up the store for optimising the space and sales. It is a part of marketing and also consider an overall brand of the store. The factors which are all in the retail store designs are interior and exterior store designs, store layout and visual merchandising. The four principals of the store designs are totality, focus, ease of shopping, change and flexibility.

A. Exterior Store Design

Exterior store design refers to all the characteristics of physical environment found outside the store. The exterior store is a function of place where the store is located. The elements of the exterior store designs are store front, marquee, entrance, display windows, height of the building, size of the building, visibility, uniqueness, surrounding stores, surrounding areas, parking facilities.
The important aspects of exterior store design are store front, marquee, entrance, display window and parking facilities.

1) *Store Front:* The store front is the one of the factor that influence the customer. The type of store front is based on the geographic location. Store fronts are mainly straight fronts, angled fronts, arcade fronts, circular front and window-less window display. Straight store front is parallel to the side walk. Arcade store front are setback door which are more spacious. Angled store front is similar to the straight front but the difference is they are away from the sidewalk contour. Circular front is also similar to the straight front but the difference is circular front is curved. Windowless window display which is open frontage and there will be no window. The glass which are be used for the store front are transparent glass, commercial stained glass, tinted glass, frosted glass and safety glass.

2) *Marquee:* The store marquee an important role for influencing the perception of consumer about the store. A marquee is usually a painted or neon light displaying the store name or with the trademark. The marquee play an important role in enhancing the visibility of the retail unit by giving a view of the store to the pedestrian and moving vehicles.

3) *Entrance:* Store entrance provide target customer access to the retail outlet. The most common type of store entrances in the retail outlet are shutter covered, modular fabrication, prefabricated structure, prototype storefront and a sensor door.

4) *Display Window:* Display window are very common in retail outlet. The different type of display window are one-item display, line of goods display, related merchandise display, variety or assortment display and promotional displays. The different type of display settings are realistic, environmental, semi realistic, fantasy, abstract and build-up display.

5) *Parking Facilities:* Parking facilities play a major role for the success of the retail firm. In the urban shopping centres where the number of car owner is increasing and people want to drive shopping centres. Now-a-days most of the retail outlet providing parking facility in underground and also in some metro cities they having an automated multilevel parking. The important aspect of parking facilities are spacious, duration of parking, cost of parking, security and underground or upstairs parking.

B. Interior Store Design

Interior store design refers to all the characteristics of physical environment found inside the store. The interior store design is one of the most powerful component of the retail positioning strategy and also powerful tool in attracting, influencing and satisfying customer. The important factors of the interior store design are flooring, color, lighting, scents, sounds, fixtures, wall textures, temperature, width of aisles, self-service, prices, technology, vertical transportation, personnel, merchandise, cash register placement and cleanliness.

The major six key aspect of interior designs are flooring, lighting, color, scent, sound and fixtures.

1) *Flooring:* Flooring is a general form which permanently cover the entire floor. The material which are used for covering the floor are carpet, area rugs and resilient flooring such as linoleum or vinyl flooring. The material which are all commonly used for flooring are tile, stone, terrazzo and chemical coatings. The different types of flooring are wooden flooring, store flooring, brick flooring, glass flooring. The flooring should be maintained properly.

2) *Lighting:* Lighting arrangement can only create the significant meaning to the entire retail store. The purpose of the lighting is that the shoppers can see the merchandise with ease and also the retail selling would be looks brighter and more attractive to the customer. Retail outlet use various type of lighting based on the store image and positioning. Poor lighting will affect the shoppers and make them to feel uncomfortable. The major role of lighting is to improve visibility and attractiveness, make it easier to access the color, easy to evaluate the product attributes. The retail outlet can always introducing the new lighting trends for attract the customers. The different types of lighting which are used in the retail outlet are primary lighting, fluorescent lighting, compact fluorescent lighting, incandescent lighting, high- intensity discharge lighting, MR16 and MR11, Metal halide lamps, ceramic metal halide lamps, light-emitting diode (LED), colored lights and filters.

3) *Colors:* Color is one of the major psychological factor which influence the shoppers a motivate them to buy. Color is the central coherence because we react instantly. Most of the children like pink and blue, youngsters like the bright primary colors. Now we can see the psychology of the colors. The color orange is associated with the emotion of fun and warmth. The color yellow is associated with emotion of joy, youthfulness and intelligence. The blue color is associated with trust, loyalty and confidence. The green color is associated with the emotion of nature, health and wealth. The black color is associated with the emotion of formality, power and elegance. The white color is associated with the emotion of peace, purity and freshness. The red color is associated with the emotion of love, passion and power. The purple color is associated with the emotion of prestige, notability and luxury. The grey color is associated with the emotion of practicality and timelessness.

4) *Scent:* The shoppers think twice about what a store smells like or the way it makes us feel, thin or do. The reason is it's intentionally subtle that it trigger s a reaction of shoppers without being overbearing. In the retail outlet, rose macros will be used in the men side and the vanilla were used in the women side.

5) *Sound:* Most consumer didn't think about the music playing in the background while entering in a retail shop once inside in the retail shop majority of us will start to sing along when they know the song playing, otherwise they didn't take care of the song playing. The main reason for playing music is relaxing the customer, lightening the moods and inspiring them to spend money.

6) *Fixtures:* Fixtures are used for storing and displaying the merchandise. The most common type of fixtures are shelves and also many type of fixtures are available like mannequins, display racks, hangers, drapers, stand, pipe racks, floor and free standing fixtures, round rack, t-stands, four-way face out. Choosing the right store fixture is part of the store experience.

C. Store Layout

The store layout refers to the arrangement of department in the interior retail store. It is important for retailer to evolve the customer friendly layout. This involves giving attention to the factors such as expected number of customer visiting the store, space allocated for customer to shop, these concerns important for the retailers so they contribute to the capital cost and overall image of the retail firm. Customer friendly layout will motivate the shoppers to motivate around the store and shop more, for some stores the counters are placed at store entrance. Most independent retailers prefer rack and shelves along with walls because this provides reasonable space within the store to place a large stocks. Based on the type of retail store retail outlet will be chosen and also it will be plan according to the shopping habits of the customer at the store. Store layout planning involves decision like allocation of floor space,

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product grouping and nature of traffic flow, which can take the form of straight or grid traffic flow, free form flow, race track flow, geometrical retail floor plan, diagonal retail floor plan, angular retail floor plan, loop store layout and mixed layout.

D. Visual Merchandising

The role of visual merchandising is to enable sales of the product, to inform and educate the customer about the product, to enable the shopping with ease for the consumer, by informing about the color, size, price and the basic location of the product and the last is to creating and enhancing the store image. The tools to be used for visual merchandising is color and textures, fixtures, signage, window, lighting and mannequins. The person behind these is visual merchandiser and the role is being creative, fast paced and also knowing all the trends in the retail outlet.

1) Display: For organising the display the concepts can be based on one or more combination of the following themes like seasons, special occasions/holidays, colors, trend and activities, themes and event. There are many location within a store where display can be setup. Some of them are front window, small platform at the entrance, end caps, display and on counters. The most important component of the display are wall display, floor fixtures, display products, supplier and equipment, promotional items, lighting fixtures, signage. The popular wall display are slat wall and slotted wall standards. The important type of floor fixtures are grid wall panel and accessories, garment rack and displayers, display cases and counters, metal shelving gondolas. The key product of the display fixtures are mannequins and body forms, clear acrylic displays. The factors to be considered in organising an effective display are balance, rhythm, proportion, texture, harmony, emphasis.

III.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Lindquist (1974), store image consists of a combination of tangible and intangible factors that consumers perceive to be found in retail stores. Consumers use store image as a criteria for selecting, evaluating the retail store outlet.

Hansen and Deutscher (1978) used a base of 485 consumers in Ohio and finded the equal importance of the various feature of retail image to different types of consumer. They compare different attributes across departmental and grocery and finalize that the same attribute are important for any type of store.

Leung and Oppewal (1999) had conducted research on the roles of store and brand names in customer choice of a retail outlet and concluded that a brand and a quality which is high it should be sufficient for attracting a customer to the retail store. The study also revealed that store names creating a large impact on store choice than the brand names of the products is based on the stores have on offer.

Kaul (2005) made a study on what are all the store attributes are appealing for self-image of consumers and their impact on in-store satisfaction. Consumers who are all satisfied with service quality they like to come more and also they become loyal customer. (Wong and Sohal, 2003). Kaul (2005) further observes that a store having modern technology, good and clean physical facilities and ease in transactions would be able to get satisfaction.

(Varley, 2005). Store attributes refer to all the components of the store like store interior, exterior, layout and so on. Research on store image has provided a more number of attributes (Martineau, 1958; James et al, 1976; Peter and Olson, 1990). Store image is the linking factor for getting store loyalty and making trusted decisions. (Assael, 1992; Wong and Yu, 2003).

Hedrick et al (2005) propose that the retail store environment and retail store atmospherics can influence customer's expectations on the retail salesperson. They conducted a study on sales people and store atmosphere, and identified that customer satisfaction is important driver which is get from the salesperson's attributes by building a relationship. In retail, intentions are usually determined by a how long to stay in the store, how long to repurchase, willing to purchase more in the future and to recommend the store to others.

Tripathi and Sinha (2006) have studied the choosing of retail store from the family perspective rather than an individual. They argued that most of the family and are the consumer of the retail offering.

Visser et al (2006) studied the importance of apparel store image attributes as perceived by the side of the female consumers. Results indicated that merchandise and clientele were perceived as the most important dimensions are followed from the service only; physical facilities were the least important.

Yildirim et al (2007) did a study focusing on determining the effects of a store window type (flat or arcade) on consumers' perception of store windows (promotion, merchandise and fashion) and shopping attitudes (intentions for store entry and purchase) in the context of retail outlets. To test the assumption that there are relationships between various types of store windows and consumers' perception of store windows and shopping attitudes, they conducted a study based upon digital pictures of two types of

store windows hypothetically located in a big store. Results revealed that consumers seem to have a more positive perception of flat windows than arcade windows with respect to promotion, merchandise and fashion.

Maria et al., (2010) has studied the impact of visual merchandising in shopping centre's fashion stores. His dependent variable was visual merchandising and independent variables were shopping store window according to gender, Factors valued by consumer on going into a store attributes that influence on purchase options according to gender. He took sample of 334 respondents and applied mean standard deviation as a statistical tool. His findings are that significant differences in the shopping centre window display influences over consumer buying behavior according gender, little significant differences in the factors valued by consumers on going into a shopping centre according to gender.

Mahmood and Ahmadinejad, (2011) has studied the role of store environmental stimulation and situational factors in impulse purchasing. He has taken impulse purchasing as dependent variable and environment of store, promotions, examination of goods, and availability of money as independent variables. He took sample of 329 customers visiting shopping malls of Iran and applied variance coefficient as statistical tool. His findings are that environment of the store is significantly correlated, visual merchandising is related.

Ridmi et al., (2011) has studied the impact on patronage intentions in supermarkets of selected visual merchandising techniques. His dependent variable is visual merchandising an independent is store layout, color, product display, music, lighting, cleanliness. He took sample of 384 customers who are visiting shopping malls of Srilanka and applied regression as a statistical tool. His findings are that no relationship between patronage intentions and store layout. There is bond among color and patronage intentions. There is relationship between patronage intentions and product display. There is relationship between patronage intentions and music. There is connection among cleanliness and patronage intentions.

Dr Tausef, (2011) has determined the impulse buying of consumer for FMCG products. His dependent variable was impulse buying behaviour for FMCG product and independent variables were classification by gender, classification by age, classification by education, classification by income. He has taken sample of 160 respondents of Jodhpur, a city in India. He used (SPSS Version 16) Factor analysis as a statistical tool. His findings were impulse purchasing and the customers of different age group were significantly different, impulse buying behaviour and the customers of different genders were significantly different, and significant difference in education.

Sonali and Sunetra, (2012) has studied the unplanned purchasing triggering the senses in retail stores. His dependent variable was frequency of shopping and independent was gender of customers. He has taken sample of 100 customers visiting Indian shopping malls and used chi-square as a statistical too. His findings were that no significantly associated with gender of customers and frequency of shopping.

Mehta and chugan, (2012) has studied the contact of visual merchandising on shopper and unplanned decision of a shopper. He took sample size of 84 customers of Indian retail and find that window display has direct relation with unplanned buying decision to buy a product. However there is no significant relation is found between form display and impulse buying but they found out the direct relation on floor merchandising. Bashar and Irshad, (2012) has considered impact of form display, window display, promotional signage and floor merchandising by taking sample size of 250 Indian respondents by applying Pearson correlation. His findings are that window display and impulsive purchasing are positively correlated. Impulse buying and store display are not correlated. Floor merchandising is also correlated with impulse buying. Sujata et al., (2012) has shown impulse buying as an antecedent to impulse buying. He has taken window display, form display, floor merchandising as independent variables. He has taken sample comprising of both male and females of age 18-45 and applied Pearson correlation. His conclusion is the strong correlation among window display, impulse buying and forum display. Low correlation is found between impulse buying and floor merchandising. Vinamra et al., (2012) has studied impact of visual merchandising on consumer behavior towards toward women's Apparel. His dependent variable is visual merchandising and independent variables are neutral role in influencing the purchase and significant role in influencing the purchase. He took sample size of 150 Indian women's who were visiting shopping malls. His findings are that visual merchandising has a very strong impact on customer purchasing behaviour. To some extant visual merchandising also leads to impulse buying.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the retail store outlet should be based on the interior, exterior, store layout and visual merchandising. These factors are very important for maintaining and running an outlet successfully. If any one of the factor is missing or out of trend the retail store image will goes down so the merchandiser should be in trend and also know about future facts and trends related to the retail store. The retail store is running successfully many consumer were walk-in, spend money and time to purchase the product and get satisfaction.

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