

The Effect of Visual Merchandising on Store Image and Patronage Intention

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ABSTRACT

The sector of retailing is seeing significant growth in India. The sector has significant potential for growth, which is bolstered by the construction of retail complexes and malls. In order for a product to be completely marketed, it is essential to effectively convey its image. "We aim to finalize transactions." The objective of display, usually referred to as visual merchandising, is to showcase items and ideas in the most effective manner in order to facilitate sales (Pegler, 1991). This study investigates the influence of store image on many areas of visual merchandising.

Key words: Visual Merchandising, Store Image, Shelf Positioning, Fragrance, Patronage Intention Introduction

India's retail industry is now experiencing a revolution. The quantity of shopping malls and plazas where consumers engage with professional business owners, workers, and other personnel is increasing. Companies in all sectors are increasingly acknowledging the advantages of having an appealing storefront and undertaking renovations to provide customers a distinctive experience, much as the ones mentioned above.

Visual merchandising is the first visual presentation that greets customers when entering a retail establishment. In order to attract customers, convince them to make a purchase, and encourage repeat business, it is essential to strategically arrange and display products in-store. It is a proven strategy meant to influence customer decisions within a corporation, making it crucial to retail marketing. (Mwazum, Alice Ngele, 2023) The study seeks to explain why a strategic marketing plan should give visual merchandising considerable attention in addition to boosting income for the purpose to foster a good store image that attracts customers.

Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandising is the process of arranging, designing, and presenting products to highlight their benefits and features. Its goal is to entice and motivate customers to buy something. "Visual merchandising makes the horse drink, but marketing brings the horse to the water" (G. Surrender, 2001) Visual merchandising is the process of positioning a store's merchandise and presentation to attract potential customers. It means stocking the store with furniture while preserving a unified exterior and interior aesthetic. It enables one to convert a bystander into a walk-in customer. Visual merchandising requires a contribution of skills, including artistic knowledge, creativity, and an understanding of store design.

Store Image

Store image is defined by Poloian (2003) as "a combination of concrete and esoteric factors that contribute to the total impression customers have of a retailer". A store's complete appearance, coupled with the thoughts and ideas it conjures up within the viewer's imagination, are typically referred to as its image. By building a great brand, a merchant may stand for a certain concept, distinguish themselves apart from the competition, and make a lasting influence.

Patronage Intention

Consumer judgments regarding their purchasing behaviors have an impact on their intentions to make additional purchases. (Burkrant and Page Jr., 1982) Patronage intentions have been exploited extensively in the literature to forecast subsequent purchases. Intentions in the retail sector are often described by a customer's desire to stay in the shop, make another purchase, make further purchases in the future, and recommend the store to others. (2002) Baker et al.

Research Gap

Many research on visual merchandising have explored a range of aspects, including image, shop atmosphere, window display, and signage. There is a lack of literature on shelf placement, and no studies have been performed in India on the problem. This study evaluated shelf placement in addition to other factors that effect business image and patronage intention in Chennai City.

Objectives

1. To find out the association between the Gender of the respondents and Store Image factors of Visual Merchandising.
2. To explore the association among the age category of the responders and shop image.
3. To explore the connection between business appearance and Patronage intention

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire was utilized to obtain the main data for the investigation. However, the relevant accessible material was gathered for the study's purposes via online databases and publications. Validation scales for the Store Image attribute were acquired from Spangenberg (1995), Zimmer & Golden (1998), Ashis Mishra (2007), and Youn & Faber (2004) for patronage intention.

SAMPLE SIZE

The approach of convenient sampling was selected for the study, taking into mind the size of the population. A total of 600 respondents who were working in a variety of industries, such as self-employment, banking, education, medical, IT, and homemaking, obtained questionnaires. For the data analysis, however, only 539 respondents' answers were obtained.

Theoretical Framework

A store's overall appearance, along with the feelings and visions it conjures up in the viewer's mind, are collectively referred to as its image. By building a strong brand, a merchant can stand for a single concept, set themselves apart from the competition, and make a lasting impression. Several studies have confirmed that customer loyalty is significantly influenced by store image (Nevin and Houston, 1980). More precisely, Buckley (1991) established a link between a customer's willingness to buy and the reputation of the shop. According to earlier research, purchase intention as well as perceived values are positively related (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal, 1991; Grewal, Monroe, and Krishnan, 1998).

R Basu et al. did a thorough study of the literature on visual merchandising and shop atmospherics in 2022. Rituparna, Basu, et al. undertook a thorough review of the literature in 2022 utilizing the Theory, Context, Characteristics, and Methods (TCCM) typology as a framework. More specifically, Buckley (1991) found a relationship between a customer's inclination to purchase and the reputation of the store. According to past study, purchase intention as well as perceived values are positively associated (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal, 1991; Grewal, Monroe, and Krishnan, 1998).

Abdelmutalab Ibrahim Adam (2020) studied the impact of visual merchandising on the impulsive purchase behavior of Sudanese consumers in retail contexts. The results demonstrated a beneficial association between visual merchandising and customers' impulsive purchase tendencies. Ajith K.

Thomas et al. (2018) argue that window displays, mannequins, creative flooring, and promotional signs are closely associated to impulsive purchasing behavior. Store layout and shelf design have a major influence, according to Tijmen Elbend (2016). The researcher highlighted the impacts of grid, racetrack, and freeform.

Venkateswar N & Mahalakshmi V (2010) explored how a store's appearance influences the attitudes of its clients about its brands. M. Geetha (2009) retained methodological integrity while merging the literature on shop image with impulsive purchasing. The findings of the research reveal that a store's reputation has a beneficial influence on customers' tendency for impulsive purchases. Theodoridis & Chatzipanagiotou (2009) examined into the functional relationship between store image components and customer happiness in the Greek market scenario. Steve Burt and colleagues (2007) revealed in exploratory study the possibility of leveraging photographs to assess a store's look.

The goal of Elizabeth M. Visser's (2006) objective was to discover the major shop image features that appealed to female fashion customers. The study's output of store image attributes, which include promotion, physical facility, post-transaction satisfaction, service, and store atmosphere, received relatively high ratings.

In the setting of a retail home furnishings environment, Yoo.Kyoung seock & Young Eun Lee (2013) defined the essential visual merchandising aspects and explored the links between those elements and shop pictures and consumer behavior. Research by Maier R. from 2010 reveals that goods displays often have an influence on a store's sales and reputation. This implies that choices concerning interior and external displays should take the store's goods, intended client base, and desired image into consideration.

As per Brown & Swartz (1989), the caliber of a product or service is predominantly impacted by the interpersonal connections established between employees and customers. Consequently, the workers' views of the organization's quality had an impact on the actual quality that was supplied.

Conceptual Description of Store Image

After Pierre Martineau's 1958 characterization of the "personality of the retail store," the idea of retail store image began to garner acceptance. (Imran, Usman, and Kashif) Martineau characterized a shop's image as "the way in which the store is defined in the shoppers' mind" (1958, p. 47). "A set of attitudes based upon evaluation of those store attributes deemed important by consumers" is how James et al. (1976) defined store image. And because it is "one type of attitude, measured across a range of dimensions, hopefully reflecting salient attributes" according to Jacoby (1986). Store image is "the complex of a consumer's view of a store on different (salient) attributes," according to Bloemer & Ruyter (1998, p. 501). "A contribution of concrete and esoteric factors that contribute to the total impression customers have of a retailer" is how Polian (2003) defined store image. According to Chen-Yu and Kincade (2001), "Once a consumer's depiction of a store is formed, it will preserve and will continue to influence perceptions." "The behavioral approach defines image as discriminative stimuli for the expected reinforcements of an action." Hirschman & Greenberg (1978) defined "store image" as the persona that a retailer projects to the general public, or a complex of associations and meanings that help to define the retailer to the general public.

The researcher adopted the conceptualization of Bloemer and Ruyter (1998, p. 501), who defined shop image as the complex of a consumer's impression of a store in numerous (salient) aspects, based on a comprehensive assessment of the literature. Previous research have created a plethora of conceptualizations relating shop image (Doyle & Fenwick, 1974, James et al., 1976, Keaveney

& Hunt, 1992). different writers have established a difference between different features or qualities of the shop that impact the consumer's opinion of the company as a whole.

According to Bearden's (1977) proposal, a store's image comprises various elements such as its price, staff friendliness, location, parking facilities, atmosphere, merchandise quality, and assortment. "Once a consumer's depiction of a store is formed, it will persevere and will continue to influence perception," state Chen-yo and Kin Cade (2001). The primary focus of this study is on the variables of shelf positioning, employee appearance, cleanliness, and fragrance.

Evaluation and Findings

H₀ 1: There is no significant variation between gender and Store Image

Table 1: Independent test for Considerable Variation among the Gender and Variables of Store Image

VARIABLES	GENDER	MEAN	SD	T VALUE	P VALUE
STORE IMAGE	MALE	3.62	0.473	0.792	0.061
	FEMALE	3.66	0.403	0.752	

Table 1 indicates that the alternative hypothesis is rejected at the 5 percent level of significance indicating that there currently is no considerable variance in the way that genders view the store because the P value is bigger than 0.05. This shows that respondents' evaluations of store image components are similar for both genders. This is because clientele of all genders prefer to select places that are visually beautiful, colorful, and create a better atmosphere.

The conclusion is likewise in accord with the findings of M. Krishnakumar's (2014) analysis into the impact of visual marketing on clothes purchases. The research resulted to the conclusion that shop image variables are not substantially influenced by the respondents' gender. The shop image is crucial to both genders in the identical manner.

H₀ 2: There is no significant variation among Age group of the responder in relation to elements of Retail Image

Table 2: ANOVA FOR SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE AMONG THE RESPONDENT'S AGE GROUP IN RELATION TO THE STORE IMAGE

VARIABLE	AGE GROUP	MEAN	SD	F VALUE	P VALUE
STORE IMAGE	BELOW 20	3.697	0.426	0.634	0.638
	20-30	3.642	0.417		
	31-40	3.623	0.452		
	41-50	3.694	0.401		
	ABOVE 50	3.616	0.501		

The table demonstrates that, with regard to the Store Image variables, there is no statistically significant deviation in the age groups of the respondents. Since the p value is bigger than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis is rejected at the five percentiles of significance. It is stated that a store's outlook is untouched by age. This indicates that respondents of all ages have equivalent opinions about the components of a store's image.

Consequently, retailers should concentrate more on visual merchandising techniques to attract customers of all ages. To satisfy each respondent about the overall appearance of the store,

separate sections that address different age groups and consider all aspects of visual merchandising need to be provided.

H₀ 3: There is no significant link between Store Image and patronage Intention

Table 3 Correlation Between Store Image and Patronage Intention

		Store	Patronage intention
Store Image	Pearson Correlation	1	.265**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	539	539
Patronage intention	Pearson Correlation	.265**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	539	539

** . Correlation is substantial at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Customers' views of the shop and their desire to frequent it were shown to have a positive and significant association ($r=0.265$) with a p value of 0.000, which is less than the alpha threshold of 0.01 in the correlation test conducted by Pearson. With 99.99% confidence, this association may be declared statistically significant.

A Pearson relationship test was done to investigate whether store image and patronage intention are associated. Table 4 indicates the connection between store image and intention to patronize. The P value of 0.000 suggests there is enough evidence in the data to support the hypothesis that store image and patronage intention are connected. This illustrates the direction of the shift in both store image and patronage intention, as indicated by the strong positive link. It implies from this that the null hypothesis is equally refuted. As a result, there is a strong 99.99% confidence level link between store look and patronage intention.

SUGGESTIONS

Product engagement is believed to be a primary element driving impulsive purchase, according to Jones et al. (2003). Zaichkowsky (1995) defined product engagement as a person's judgment of the object's relevance based on their underlying needs, values, and interests. Highly engaged clients are ready to work more when they shop. For them, one of the most crucial elements of their existence was shopping. They are consequently more prone to linger and look over various things for a longer amount of time. In 2004 Arnould et al. To construct an eye-catching display, the items should be organized in a variety of colors and themes. (2018, S. Meena)

Sufficient space should be allotted to each product to facilitate easy selection for customers. Most purchases are driven primarily by emotions. More than any other sense, smell has an emotional impact on people. Smell is the sense that most directly leads to happiness. A particular aroma has the power to uplift customers' spirits and entice them to stay in a store longer. When there was a better order, sales increased. S. Meena (2016) When selecting which scents to use, retailers must take their target market into account.

When putting the items, take in mind the height and width of the shelves. It shouldn't be too high so customers won't check out products which rise higher compared to their eye level. Meena, S. (2016).

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The current study includes just a few factors on shop image and so more investigations might be carried out concentrating on other aspects of store image. Nowadays internet buying has gotten more popular among all clients. Future study might be performed for determining the impulsive visualising variables for online selling.

CONCLUSION

"Once a customer forms an impression of a store, that impression will stick with them and continue to shape perceptions." (Kincade & Chen-Tu, 2001) The impression a store produces on a customer's personality on their first visit could determine whether or not they return again. A merchant should be able to satisfy the expectations of customers via retail by having a knowledge of their growing lifestyle.

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