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Research Paper

Effect of Visual Merchandising on Consumer Buying Behaviour

Management

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ABSTRACT

The retailers are facing a intense competitive market place and as a consequence, they find many difficulties to differentiate their stores. Retail store elements such as color, lighting and visual merchandising have always been considered as having immediate effects on the buying decision making process. Visual merchandising is the presentation of a store and its merchandise in such a manner that will attract the attention of potential customers. Visual merchandising utilizes displays, color, lighting, smells, sounds, digital technology and interactive elements to catch customers' attention and persuade them to make purchases. Visual merchandising helps convey the image of the brand and reflects the personality of the target markets that the retail store wants to attract. This study attempts to explore the effect of visual merchandising on consumer buying behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Visual merchandising is the activity and profession of developing floor plans and displays in order to increase sales. Both goods and services can be displayed to highlight their features and benefits. The purpose of such visual merchandising is to attract, engage and motivate the customer towards making a purchase. Visual merchandising includes everything the customer sees, both exterior and interior, that creates a positive image of a business and results in attention, interest, desire and action on the part of the customer. Visual merchandising has become a natural component of every modern point of sale and is characterized by the direct contact between merchandise and clients; it helps clients to easily approach goods visually, physically, mentally and intellectually without the help of a sales person .It is seen as an additional service, and therefore it is relevant for every modern shop, no matter what kind of store it is or what dimension the store has. Visual merchandising is a possibility for a shop to make their merchandise move towards the customer

IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING

Visual merchandising today forms a critical element of retailing. It is almost evident that if something comes across as unappealing to a person, it doesn't matter how good a product, a person would refrain from so much as even taking a look at it. It is for this reason that proper visual merchandising makes such a big difference, thus acting as the key component for the success of any business. It must begin with first understanding the floor plan and layout of the space that is getting used. The key areas that need to be targeted are the ones that are in direct view of people when either passing by the store, or when they first walk in. It is also important to bear in mind that visual merchandising and store design go hand in hand. One of the most important elements of visual merchandising is the placement of products. The most attractive and best selling items should always be placed in direct view of a person. At the same time it must be handled in the most effective manner possible. Working in opposition to this idea could lead to being detrimental for the business. It is also important to keep the customer's interest held.

TOOLS OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING AND THEIR EFFECTS ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Store Layout

The basic elements in a design that guides customers through the store are the layout, signage, and feature areas. A good store layout helps customers find and purchase merchandise. Managing space is the first and foremost concern of almost every retailer, when it comes to designing the store's interior. Space is always an expensive and scarce resource. Retailers always try to maximize the return on sales per square foot. Several types of layouts commonly used by retailers are the grid, racetrack, and free form. The grid design is best for stores in which customers are expected to explore the entire store, such as grocery stores and drugstores. Racetrack designs are more common in large upscale stores like department stores. Free-form designs are usually found in small specialty stores and within large stores' departments.

Exterior signs

Simple, brief, well designed, well lettered and easy to read signs will convey a pleasant feeling. Design graphics appropriate for the nature of the business, and create a message that is clear and simple. It is personal, original and continuously familiar to the public. It should create an image that is consistently carried throughout the existence of store.

Marquees

Marquee is an architectural canopy that extends over a store's entrance. It is used to display the name of a store. Entrances are usually designed with customer convenience and store security in mind.

Banners

Banners are great ways of displaying messages to an audience of potential buyers. Banner printing is key for both small and large shops on the high street and in shopping centres. They are a quick and easy way of boosting sales and drawing potential customers. Banner advertising can create engaging window displays for smaller independent stores but can also add key messaging to the large popular stores to compliment the seasonal creative window displays.

Landscaping

Landscaping should lead the customer's eye to the focus using color and texture to provide contrast and harmony. Landscaping can also screen unwanted things to see such as garbage receptacles, power transformers and refrigeration equipment. The fundamental nature of good landscaping is simplicity, simple landscape designs that are easy to maintain

Window Displays

Window displays can communicate style, content, and price. It may also be used to advertise seasonal sales or inform passers-by of other current promotions. Special emphasis should be placed on a stores window displays because they are the information link to the potential customer. Window display should attract attention, create interest and invite people into the store

to purchase goods. It is important to change the displays regularly in small towns where customers pass by several times a week. New displays indicate new up-to-date products are available.

Colour

In the world of business owners looking to market their products, color is one of the pillars of visual merchandising. For some businesses, color is one of the most powerful tools that can attract customers and delicately encourage them to buy. A person's mood can have a huge effect on buying decisions, so choosing the right color scheme for the store, branding and product displays can really ensure that store looks extra attractive to customers and sets the tone for their experience. Not only can strong contrasting colors can draw attention quickly, but they can inspire different feelings. Emotionally, cool colors like green and blue provoke calmness and feelings of trust while warm colors are associated with happiness, action and excitement. The color of the background in product displays can have a powerful affect on visual merchandising. If a background color is too strong, it can clash with main colors on the display or the product itself. Unobtrusive colors such as beige, white and light shades of cool colors can help keep consumer attention focused on the main color and products used in a display. Certain colors carry strong connections to specific ideas and industries, which businesses can use to enhance their visual merchandising. For example, green is strongly associated with environmental friendliness, so a company that is marketing to the environmentally conscious crowd might benefit from liberal use of green in its product displays.

Lighting

The use of lighting is an important visual component. Lighting is essential in calling attention to merchandise in a display. A shopper's eye is drawn automatically to the brightest item or area. Lighting treatment may be used to draw attention to the part of display area or to coordinate the parts of total display area. Lighting can also be used to direct the path of the customers and to make them see various displays along the way. Typically, bright lighting is preferred because it projects a more upbeat environment that induces feelings of happiness, aiming to spur spending. However, some stores use dim or darker lighting to coincide with particular store themes.

Props

A prop is something used with a product in a display that clarifies the function of the products being sold. Props are integral part of a display. A display prop may be something that is not for sale, such as floor coverings, wall treatments, backgrounds, mannequins, shelves and steps.

Signage

Proper signage has been shown to increase the sale of a product. Signage is the silent salesperson for the retailer and must reflect the correct brand image. There are various types of signage. For example, promotional signage informs the customer about off price events or schemes. Location signage directs the buyer to specific departments or merchandise. Institutional signage gives information on store policies, charitable events etc. Informational signage provides product related information like special features, benefits, sizes, price et

Technology Display

An increasingly popular visual merchandising technique is technology display, using video, digital graphics, and music and sound to display merchandise. Colorful graphics, engaging videography, popular music combine with electronic display on flat screen viewers, large and small, to get customers' interest and create instant emotion and desire for the products. Technology display is an accelerated way to show customers the product, how it's used and why they want it. Another advantage of technology display in visual merchandising is that it takes up a small amount of physical space compared with other forms of merchandising that use products and props to tell a story and influence customer sales.

CONCLUSION

Visual merchandising is a retail strategy that maximizes the aesthetics of a product with the intent to increase sales. Visual merchandising can also play a role in the look, feel and culture of a brand. Done well, it can create awareness while simultaneously increasing brand loyalty. Success factors of visual merchandising include the store's appearance, signage, lighting, uniforms, menus, point of sale material, color, shapes, textures, packaging, ticketing, presentation and the "wow" factor each of these elements bring together in a retail setting When these elements come together to showcase a brand, it enriches the customer experience, leading to a positive shopping experience and increased sales.

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