INTRODUCTION

Fashion stores are dressed to call customers, and visual merchandising plays a major role in that. In present times, consumers are not influenced anymore from the salers but they are influenced by the showcases, a product of the merchandiser. Store image and shopping environment for fashion stores is a significant determinant to spend time in the store and to spend more money than planned. On the other hand, retail store elements such as color, lighting and V.M. have an immediate effect on the buying decision making process. The elements such as flat screen videos, lighting, color and composition create a unique atmosphere and excite the sense of consumers.

The growth in competition and the changes of consumer habits obliges businesses to introduce new designs in order to attract more customers. Pegler (2006) suggests that displays as a tool of V.M. can be used to introduce a new product, a fashion trend, or a new idea in addition to selling actual merchandise. At this point, visual merchandising has a significant role because it helps consumers ensuring an attraction and finally, a personal connection with the product.

V.M. is a vital part of fashion stores. An effective visual merchandising can improve a store’s brand image and increases sales. Traditional appearance of fashion stores are changing rapidly. Contemporary designs have been possible through technological innovations.

The showcases should have a language. In order to have a visual language, V.M. should expertly employ some basic elements such as color and texture, line and composition, light and lighting. These are the indispensable instruments of visual merchandising. By using them, you can encourage the shopper to enter the store. At this point, the role of Visual Communication Designers is significant in the retail sales industry. Their task is to increase sales by creating attractive merchandise displays. They set design standards and create the theme, layout, colors, signage and props of all store displays.

In this thesis, I will examine the elements of visual merchandising in order to prove their importance in attracting consumer’s attention. The purpose of this study is to signify whether V.M. has an influence on consumers or not. I will conclude that the elements of visual merchandising have a huge impact on consumer’s reaction to the store or brand.
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REFERENCES
1. WHAT IS VISUAL MERCHANDISING


An inviting atmosphere brings people into the store and also keeps them there longer. Morgan (2008) suggests that the visual merchandising is a vital part of any retail operation. It steers shopping stoppers in their tracks as they admire a window display them through the store towards the season’s key buys. An effective visual merchandising can improve a store’s brand image and dramatically increase sales.

Store image and shopping environment is a significant determinant to spend time in the store and to spend more money than planned. On the other hand, retail store elements such as color, lighting, signage and visual merchandising have an immediate effect on the buying decision making process.

Morrison (2002) explains “one of the key challenges for retailers is to constantly add value to their brand. He recommends new and innovative elements to their existing retail marketing mix. Elements that excite the senses of shoppers such as flat screen videos, graphics, music and lighting help to create a unique atmosphere and shopping experience”.

![Figure 1-- Connection of Visual Merchandising, Image and Sales Performance](image)

1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF SHOPPING ENVIRONMENT

In today’s competitive retail environment, fashion retailers struggle in order to increase their sales and to carry their brands to the wider masses. The best way to achieve this purpose is to consider the significance of visual merchandising. The exterior of the buildings and their both exterior and interior designs can help to be recognized of the fashion brand.

Store image and shopping environment is a significant determinant to spend time in the store and to spend more money than planned. On the other hand, retail store elements such as color, lighting or signage have an immediate effect on the buying decision making process.

Store environment has a great impact on consumers. Today, consumers desire a comfortable shopping environment. An inviting atmosphere brings people into the store and also keeps them there longer. Ries (2010) asserts that aesthetics within the retail environment not only affect shopper comfort
level but can influence employee morale and productivity.

The importance of store or shopping environment as a tool for market differentiation is accepted by many retailers. Shopping environment means the physical surroundings of a store. There are many elements of store environment such as music, lighting, layout, directional signage and human elements. Lam (2001: 190) suggests; “Store environment can also be divided into external environment and internal environment (that is, exterior and interior of a store). The effects of store environmental elements could be complex. While many of these elements influence shoppers’ behavior through their effects on shoppers’ emotion, cognition and physiological state, some of these elements could elicit more direct response from shoppers with very little impact on their thinking, feeling or body comfort.”

THE ELEMENTS OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING

Visual Merchandising is commonly accepted as a merchandising technique that uses the visual elements effectively. Visual element refers to lighting, colors and signage. In short, they are the visual communications in the designing of an environment.

The key elements of visual merchandising are the elements of window display at the same time. First of all, I will explore the importance of windows display, and then other basic elements.

WINDOWS DISPLAY

“The display window is accepted as the most important part of the store design because it is the first meeting place the customer has with a brand and it gives passerby a quick impression of the store. A passerby can hold an opinion about the type of merchandise sold inside. The layout of the display windows should not take focus away from the clothes and it should suggest a feeling” (H&M Official Website, 2010).

Morgan (2008: 11) states that with the advent of new technology in the 1840s that allowed the production of large panes of glass, department stores were perhaps responsible for taking the art of window display to a higher level, using their large windows as stages, some of them as theatrical as a Broadway show.

Window displays are crucial whether a store is situated in a mall or in a busy street. They are mix of art, fashion, design and marketing. They must compel customers to enter a store by defining a brand’s image. Today, retailers are recognizing the importance of window display as the first point of contact between the store and the customer.

Window displays play an important part in visual merchandising and some of the objectives of window displays, is to create:

1. Impact
2. Image
3. Theme
4. Composition
Magotra (n.d.) suggests: What makes an effective window display?

— Keep it simple.
— Don’t try to put in everything at once, focus on one product or theme.
— Keep it clean.
— Change displays frequently to keep the fresh look.
— Bright lighting is crucial, both during day and at night.
— Use lights to highlight individual items or signs.
— Use repetition of shapes and colors to attract attention.
— Cluster items in groups of three or five, odd numbers are most pleasing to look at.
— Vary height and depth of items to carry the eye throughout the display
— Use motion to catch the customer’s eye.
— Use light, bright colors.
— If you have more than one window, balance the display between them to give the entire storefront a coordinated look.
— Continue the theme of the window display with other displays inside the store.
— Each individual has socio cultural influence on their thought process as we tend to overdo the basic concept. Do not clutter the window as it loses its appeal and would hardly attract any passer by.

1. This windows display silently announce what customers can expect inside. It attracts attention, creates interest and invites the customer into business. It serves as a silent salesperson with its simple, brief and well designed image.
Today, there is a growing trend intended provocative storefronts and interiors and architects have begun to create in such a manner. Their purpose is to create a special aura to draw in customers and also attract media attention. Store design and its display windows are the most important communication channels for fashion stores.

COLORS

Color is accepted as the biggest motivation for shopping. Pegler (2006: 7) suggests that people buy color before they buy, size, fit, or price. Colors says something about the kind of merchandise and merchandiser.

Pegler (2006: 8) suggests:“color psychology is very important in visual merchandising. Colors can immediately create a mood. Most of us have colors that tend to cheer us up when we are feeling down and colors that calm us. Each of us also has colors that can make us physically feel hotter or cooler. As an instance, orange, green and purple are the colors used in the windows display of a brand in below picture”.

Orange: is described as a friendly, sociable color; agreeable, overt, glowing, and incandescent. It is exciting, vibrant, and filled with anticipation.

Purple: This traditionally regal color has become a favorite with children. In some shades it is a happy, youthful color, while, in its deepest and richest form, it is a color of taste, distinction, and discretion. It is a high-fashion color that has to be sold. Green: An alive, cool, and growing color. It is springtime and summer- lawns, bushes, vegetables, trees, and forest- the perfect accent to almost any setting, especially if it is alive and growing (Pegler, 2006: 9). Colors are considered as one of the effective way to capture customer’s attention. This realizes with the effective and knowledgeable use of colors. As the most powerful and effective tool of the Visual Merchandising, colors pulls more customer into the store. In this context, a retailer has to focus on the right choice of color.

2. This application attracts attention, create interest and invite people into the store by creating a “question mark”.

Figure 2- An application for Windows Display
The theme of display and its harmony with color is, of course, significant at this point. As an instance, a Christmas display contain colors such as red, green, gold and silver.

LIGHTING

Lighting is another elements of visual merchandising. The choice of the right lighting in fashion stores should be well considered. There are numerous products that offer many choices for shopping environment. Lighting deals with create an ambiance and make environments visually pleasing. The right utilization of light is highly important for shopping environments. Light reflections and energy requirements should be well analyzed. Pegler (2006) advises that the cheapest and most effective starting place in getting attention and recognition is with good lighting (p.24).

Ries (2010: 23) points out lighting quality and quantity. He calls attention that:

3. This shopwindow with its colors make us physically feel hotter and cheer.
Ries (2010: 23) points out lighting quality and quantity. He calls attention that: “insufficient foot candle levels may result in poor visibility and a dark environment.

Low light levels will also prevent consumers from comparing and possibly purchasing products. However, too much light can make shoppers uncomfortable and will waste limited operating dollars on energy that is not needed”.

Quartier and Cleempoel (2008: 368) also suggest: “Lighting has an influence on the mood and hence the behavior of humans in retail environments. Lighting has an influence on how spaces are perceived. It can arouse positive or negative feelings in the perception of that space. Lighting in retail environments encourage people to stay longer in that retail environment and increase the sales numbers”.

Lighting is an integral part of design. It contributes greatly to the look of a space. There are many types of lighting that affect the perception of any space. In retailing, to create a special ambiance by using special lighting techniques should be one of the main tasks of visual merchandisers and designers.

The objectives of lighting are explained as:
— To attract the customers’ attention
— To create an appropriate mood for the merchandise
— To contribute to a positive visual image of the merchandise
— To allow careful inspection of the merchandise

SIGNAGE

Signage is not a new concept and is used for promotional purposes by merchants. Initially, the purpose was to provide basic information. Today, it is considered as an integral part of the retail environment because it plays a growing role in creating the unique image and atmosphere.

Businesses operates in a highly competitive environment. They must communicate with customers quickly and effectively by introducing themselves and their products or services. “For most businesses, the most cost-effective and efficient form of advertising to potential customers is on-premise signage” according to James and Susan Claus (2001). They explain that signage is a business’s basic link to customers. The purpose is to promote impulse “stop and shop,” to create awareness for the product or service for future reference, and to influence purchasing decisions once the customer has stopped.

Today, technology allows us to use from digital signage. Digital Signage is one of the important tools in store design. Digital signage is a form of electronic display. Customers can show information, advertising and other messages concerning the brand. The aim is to convey a message or information to customers and digital signage displays are most usually controlled by basic personal computers.

Signage in shopping environment has a great importance to enhance the customer’s shopping experience and is accepted as an integral part of a building’s design. Designers know the importance of using signage inside and outside of a building. The choice of materials used in the signage and their styles is important details. Timlen (2009) states that a graphics
designer, who understands the implementation of architectural lettering, can put together the right fonts, font sizes, font spacing, and coloration mixtures, to ensure that a sign not only tells the story that it needs to tell, but also does so with style and elegance.

The objective of Signage are explained as:
1. To assist customer in their flow across the store.
2. To lead the customers in newer sections opened in the store if any
3. Through Color and contrast, add to the visual ambience of the store

SHOP INTERIOR

Shop interior is a significant part of merchandising because designing a modern retail store can affect the profit and image of the brands. Designing a shop interior is the art of planning because it is a creative process. It is the art of drawing, composing and selecting colors, materials, furnishings and accessories to enrich the design of a store interior. The main purpose is to create an attractive shopping environment and to enhance the presentation of merchandise. To create a distinctive image should be the main task of a designer because such an image will create a brand recognition which will be immediately perceived by the consumers.

Today’s competitive retail environment, fashion retailers struggle in order to increase their sales and to carry their brands to the wider masses. The best way to achieve this purpose is to consider the architectural and interior design. The exterior of the buildings and their interior designs can help to be recognized of the fashion brand.

As a customer response to these new building, we, sometimes, see pictures of long queue down the street the night before these buildings opened. There are many brand loyalists who sleep overnight on the street and their purpose is to be the first to see the new designs.

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CREATIVE APPLICATIONS

These creative window displays will stop anyone in front of the store. This is a mix of art, fashion, design and marketing Creative windows displays quickly grab our attention and compel us to enter store. These displays also have the important duty of helping define a brand’s image.

Picture 5: Louis Vuitton Windows Display
The creative idea is explained as:
This creative window display makes us think we’re constantly being watched by Big Brother.

Then again...maybe if we’re holding a Louis we become an instant celebrity! Hello, paparazzi!

Figure 6- Calvin Klein Windows Display

This creative windows display is explained as:
The windows of the Calvin Klein Collection store on East 60th Street in New York devoted pairs of pillows to some of the world’s most celebrated couples. The installation is a response to a particular work - ‘Pillow Talk Bed’ - by artist Jonathan Horowitz.

Another example is Polo Ralph Lauren’s window displays. It allows customers to shop from outside of the store with touch of their hand-24 hours a day. Like a ‘regular’ store windows, it shows the merchandise available in the store. “with cutting edge sensory technology, the store window also becomes a virtual store. The store window is powered by a lightweight touch foil applied directly to the glass, the touch screen is also a rear projection screen that displays an image similar to a web-page. Customers can then browse the available merchandise that matches with the theme of the store window” (Davis: 2009).

Figure 7- Polo Ralph Lauren Windows Display

4. Picture 6: This window refer to Barack and Michelle OBAMA as one of the world’s most celebrated couples inspir- ing by famous -Pillow Talk Bed- motion picture.

5. Picture 7: This window display is a good example for advanced technology allowing a virtual shopping experience.

It is obvious that technology is becoming more important in visual merchandising. The customer has to be surprised by the window designs over and over again. The use of these technologies is accepted as an
alternative to create surprising effects and products. We also understand that store design, its display windows and other visual elements are the most important communication tools for fashion stores and all retailers.

CONCLUSION

The Visual Merchandising uses visual communication by putting the product or brand at the point of sale by making it as a title character. Visual Merchandising Designers are responsible for visual communication within a store. Their objective is to make evident the characteristics of a product in order to favour the selection process of the customer. They achieve this through the organisation of display systems in the store. The visual merchandiser is in charge of the display systems. They changes them according to seasons, promotional campaigns or special events.

Without communicating, it won’t be completed to sell a product. This refers to have a image of any brand. Right image is very important for brands. There are many businesses that neglected the visual communication. Visual merchandising is accepted as the art of presentation. It puts the merchandiser in focus and informs the customers. It also creates a desire to the products or brands.

The findings of this study can be summarized as:
1. Visual merchandising starts with the store design to reflect the products in the store and window display. The purpose is to create a warm, friendly, and approachable atmosphere for customers.
2. To predict future merchandising trends is important.
3. Majority of customers respond to the lighting more positively. Visual merchandisers should select appropriate lighting system that creates satisfaction of psychological needs of customers.
4. Sophisticated Visual Merchandising requires convenient lighting combined with display themes.
5. Most people give buying or shopping decision by looking at the shop’s ambience and visual display.
6. Store window displays is the most important tool to draw people into the store, because they are a great way to highlight certain types of merchandise.
10. Graphics and Signage are cost-effective and efficient tools for delivering a message or inform the customer about the products available in the department store.
REFERENCES

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