



THE EFFECT OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING ON COSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

The effect of visual merchandising on buyer conduct, regardless of whether as inside presentations, store design and different atmospherics is exceptionally clear. In the present day and age where the customers have begun obtaining through online stages and negatively affected the offers of the physical stores, some may contend that it has brought about restricting the extent of visual merchandising. Picking the correct shading, making a point of convergence, conveying a story are the fundamental components of visual merchandising. Fulfilling a need is the fundamental reason which comes about an assortment of behavioral examples. The conduct is principally subject to the purchaser's condition. The political, financial, social, innovative condition and the legitimate condition. The customer is presented to a few factors that influence his/her purchasing choice including visual merchandising. A research was conducted to evaluate the impact of illumination on retail stimuli. A study of Chinese Hong Kong female consumers to study the same had the following observations. Characteristics of a store's environment play a role in the consumer's buying decision. This decision is not only built on the premise that the product in itself provides the satisfaction but that the service quality is an influence as well. Upon analyzing previously conducted studies it was found that the factors that encompass a store's environment have different effects on the buying decisions of the customers and the perceived value of the product from their viewpoint.

Keywords: Visual Merchandising, consumer behaviour, Environmental Psychology, Marketing.

Introduction

The impact of visual merchandising on consumer behavior, whether in the form of interior displays, store layout and other atmospherics is very evident. In the current day and age where the consumers have started purchasing through online platforms and had a negative effect on the sales of the brick and mortar stores, some may argue that it has resulted in limiting the scope of visual merchandising. Choosing the right color, creating a focal point, communicating a story are the main elements of visual merchandising.

Satisfying a need is the main reason which results a variety of behavioral patterns. The behavior is mainly dependent on the consumer's environment. The political, economic, socio-cultural, technological environment and the legal environment. The consumer is exposed to a several factors that affect his/her buying decision including visual merchandising. There are mainly three stages involved in the purchasing decision:-

- Attracting the customer
- Convincing the customer
- Purchasing decision

Visual merchandising has proven time and again that anything that attracts a customer will be the only chance of ensuring or confirming a sale.

Qualities of a store's situation assume a part in the

purchaser's purchasing choice. This choice isn't just based on the commencement that the item in itself gives the fulfillment yet that the administration quality is an influencer also. It was discovered that the components that include a store's domain effects affect the purchasing choices of the clients and the apparent estimation of the item from their perspective. These elements were observed to be social setting, stylish outline, music in the physical store, the lighting utilized as a part of the store and lastly, episodic perspectives. The impacts that each of the previously mentioned had on the client's conduct added to their official choice on whether to purchase the item or not.

Method

The following study was conducted using only secondary data and previously conducted experiments. It is a conceptual paper with the hypothesis that a couple of aspects of visual merchandising and environmental factors do affect the consumer behaviour in a retail store. The limitations of this study, however, are the lack of recent studies and primary data to support the study. Furthermore, the topic is rather broad and does not discuss only one aspect although being specific to retail outlets and primarily focusing on apparel stores.

Results and Discussion

Competitive market places are slowly causing a rising strain amongst retailers in terms of differentiating their

stores in terms of 3 P's of Marketing - Price, Place and Promotion. The environment of the physical store in itself can present an opportunity to influence the customer's decision. A key role store environment plays, is to provide informational cues to customers about merchandise and service quality (Gardner and Siomkos 1985). Integrating concepts from Marketing and Environmental Psychology, the cognitive effects of the store environment have been found to be twofold. First, the store social factor that encompasses the individuals present in the store that notes that the physical presence of another person is an important part of any environment (Russel and Snodgrass 1987). Several studies have shown that crowded conditions that involved other customers in a retail store negatively affected their inferences (Eroglu and Harrell 1986). Secondly, the store ambient factors have been said to affect the customer behaviour. These include a multitude of factors such as temperature, lighting, music and scent. Apart from these, aesthetic design factors were also seen as an influencing factor in a customer's buying behaviour. Thus, a combination of these aforementioned factors has helped to prove that a store's environment have been developed into being used as marketing tools by retailers as well as a means to improve the store's social image. (Julie Baker, 1994)

A study of Chinese Hong Kong female consumers to study the same had the following observations. It was observed that the subjects did not only assess from the view of likings on the aesthetic content, but to look for the possibility of fit with the perceived images in the displays. It is probably for this reason that retailers resort to creating visually satisfying displays for the customers. Thus, it was evident from the study that having the right perceived female image is important in gaining reactions towards displays. Furthermore, the result indicates that when the goods deliver both practical and aesthetic results, social and local values should also be addressed as they can affect consumer shopping mood, approach response and purchase decision. (Derry Law, 2012).

Furthermore, it is important to evaluate the direct effect that specific environmental and situational variables have on consumer behaviour.

A situation has been defined to be a "definite point in space and time" (Belk, 1971). Thus, a behavioral setting is essentially such a situation bound not only by space and time but by patterned actions too. There were 13 situational factors deducted through "description protocols" from architecture students which resulted in the following list: "size, volume, scale, mood, color, texture, function, illumination, aesthetic quality, climate, color, acoustical quality, and miscellaneous," however, neglecting social attributes (Allen, 1965). In this acoustic quality refers to the sound aspect of the situation.

A research was conducted specifically in clothing retail stores evaluating the effect of both foreground and background music (Yalch and Spangenberg, 1990). In-store interviews were conducted to deduct the effect that it had. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of

using interviews to gather information. It is most likely to be biased and may also be difficult to collate data. The effect of the music was compared to other factors such as the age of the respondent, type of music and the time of the day. Further to these factors, a no-music control environment was also taken into consideration. The general hypothesis was that while foreground music will create a good mood, either will still be better than no music. The sample for divided on the basis of age into two categories, which was under 24 and above. While, the first had most impact on foreground music in particular, the latter two factors had very little or no effect on consumer behaviour. Moreover, foreground music was preferred to background music in all age groups, but the good impact was lower in ages 50 and above. However, it did not induce unplanned purchases in the customer. Thus, it was concluded that it would not be effective enough to play music simply to cater to the customers' preference rather than to induce sales.

Another research conducted to evaluate the impact of illumination on retail stimuli exhibited the following results (Summers and Hebert, 2001). Merchandise displays were illuminated further temporarily in two retail stores. The research evaluated the customer's behavior on the basis of the how much items were touched or picked up and included the effect that time had to play in this. The data collected was through observation, thus the research was exceedingly time consuming, however accurate in collating only the necessary data. From 2367 subjects, it was observed that the supplemental lighting did have a positive effect on the observed factors, the correlation being high. It was concluded that in-store lighting was a fruitful addition to the store's atmosphere to attract and retain customers.

The other factors that seemed to affect customer purchases were anecdotal aspects. Even the presence of sales executives (Albaum, 1967), friends (Bell, 1967) or children (Wells and LoSciuto, 1967) affected customer behaviour. These are such social cues that add to the space and time dimensions of the situational setting.

CONCLUSION

Characteristics of a store's environment play a role in the consumer's buying decision. This decision is not only built on the premise that the product in itself provides the satisfaction but that the service quality is an influencer as well. Upon analyzing previously conducted studies it was found that the factors that encompass a store's environment have different effects on the buying decisions of the customers and the perceived value of the product from their viewpoint. These factors were found to be social setting, aesthetic design, music in the physical store, the lighting used in the store and finally, the presence of anecdotal aspects. The effects that each of the aforementioned had on the customer's behaviour contributed to their final decision on whether to buy the product or not.

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