

**Retail**  
**Education**

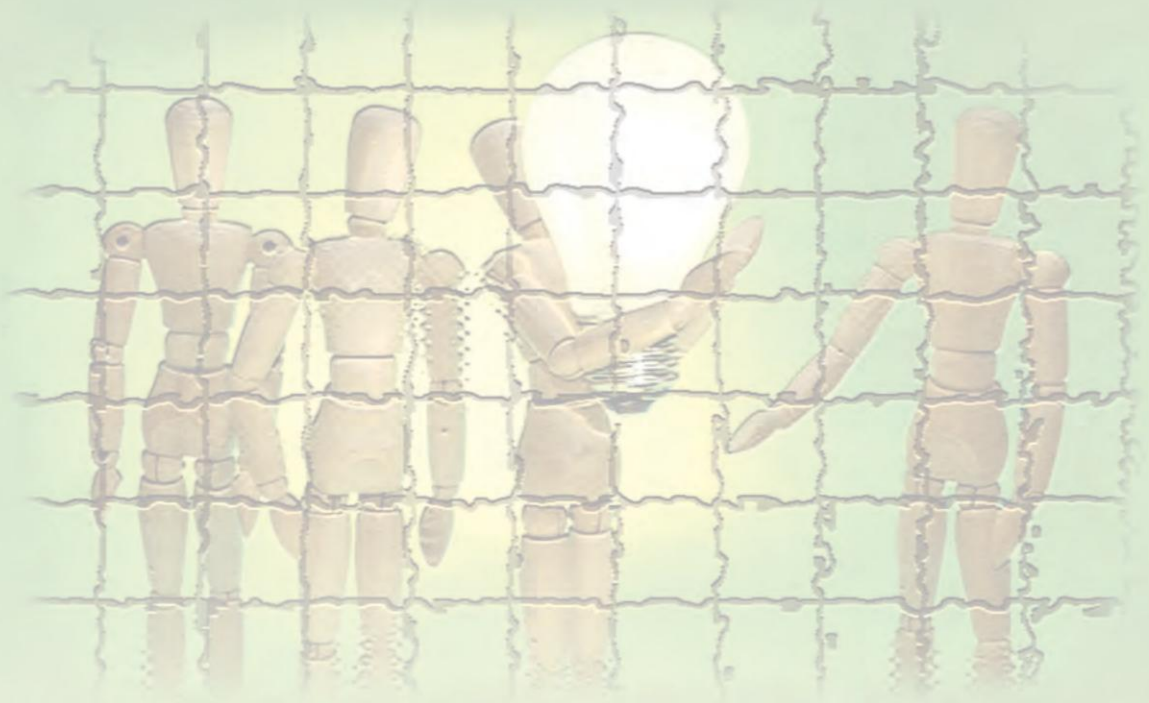
# **VISUAL** **MERCHANDISING**



• **Swati Bhalla** • **Anuraag S**



# VISUAL MERCHANDISING



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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A post graduate in Fashion Communication from NIFT (National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi) Swati has graduated in B.Com (H) in Financial Management and Tax Planning. She has been in the retail industry for quite some time now and understands the importance of Visual Merchandising in the retail environment. Her exposure to industry leaders like Pantaloon, Shoppers' Stop, Rohit Bal, Uni Style Image and Big Jo's shows in her elaborate training manuals and material used to guide and train the shop floor staff and management team of her clients. She also consults and advises showrooms and malls all over India.

She also teaches Visual Merchandising at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi under Fashion Communication (UG), Fashion Management Studies and Space Design (PG) course, at IILM Institute of Higher Education, Gurgaon under Retail (PG) course, at Institute of Apparel Management under the Fashion Retail Management (PG) course and at Pearl Academy of Fashion, New Delhi under FRMM (UG), FRM (PG) and Experience Design (PG) Course. Apart from being a guest faculty at all the above institutes, she has also been a guest lecturer at Sinhgad Institute of Management, Pune.

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He has conducted many workshops for middle and senior management on Visual Merchandising and Developing Creativity at Shoppers' Stop Ltd., Mumbai, Landmark Group, Dubai, National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi, SISI-Small Industries Service Institute, Ministry of Small Scale Industries, Government of India, Jaipur, Future Group (Pantaloon Retail India Ltd.), Gurgaon.

He has also been teaching Visual Merchandising at ARCH Institute of Fashion and Design, Jaipur and has been guest lecturer for National Institute of Fashion Technology, Delhi, Pearl Academy of Fashion, Delhi, Institute of Apparel Management, Gurgaon, Sinhgad Institute of Management, Pune, Deepshikha Institute of Fashion Technology, Jaipur and National Institute of Fashion Design, Jaipur.

He recently won the merit award for Best Visual Merchandising for Axiom Telecom at In-Store Asia, VHRD Design Awards 2009 held at Bengaluru on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2009.

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# VISUAL MERCHANDISING

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*We dedicate this book  
to  
the profession of Visual Merchandising and Store Design*



# Foreword

Retailing is an extension of community service simply because it's about serving to please and delight the 'guest' who visits the store by offering a great experience of service and merchandise offerings. Thus this is not just a job option but almost a way of life, needing an attitude to enjoy and be happy in this field. The professionals who are in here for the long haul are the self motivated kinds who keep learning on the way and give back the same to others who seek this. Indian organised retailing has been consistently evolving for the last 15 years and retailing is no more looked as a backup profession for business professionals to designers. From the days of 'local practices' the industry has moved to 'localised global practices' owing to retail professionals who have rolled up their sleeves, got hands-on and tailored these practices to work for our country.

One in that pack is Anuraag who has gone a long way from being a cartoonist in a Sunday column in a newspaper to being a Customer Care Associate in Jet Airways that has lead him to becoming a Store Presentation specialist. I suppose his love for art and the attitude of customer service imbibed by him by the airlines was a great start-up block in this line. His vast experience in the field of advertising, display and visual merchandising, due to being a part of the pioneering teams in leading large-format retailers like Shoppers' Stop, Lifestyle and Future Group, has been the foundation for his hands-on approach to this subject. The need to document all the learning has been a great cause for the drive to put this book together. Swati, another retail presentation professional committed to this cause, complements the team that she forms with Anuraag with her rich experience working as a display specialist with prominent retailers, and by teaching in institutes offering Retail Management like NIFT and Pearl Academy. Her experience brings into this book the understanding of the needs of information seekers in the field of retail presentation, brand communication and training in visual merchandising.

The concepts of visual merchandising and display are subjective and keep changing with times. This subjectivity makes them pretty evasive to capture and organise into principles that can be interpreted and adapted across different market contexts. What works for one retailer could possibly bomb for another across the road! This puts up a challenge that can be overcome by recording hands-on experiences and learning through successes and failures, analysing them and inferring them into workable and flexible principles.

All the rich knowledge gained by both Anuraag and Swati by being retailers, visual merchandisers and trainers is put together in this book, which is certainly a great ready look-up source in this subject.

I wish them both great success in this never ceasing quest for knowledge and sharing of the same after acquiring it.

**Surender Gnanaolivu**

Vice President – Store Development

Mahindra Retail





# Preface

This book on *Visual Merchandising* (VM) aficionado is a trendsetter in Indian retail history. There are many challenges which make this book unique. For one, VM is a very poorly understood function of retail in the 'Indian retail circuit'. This is a coagulation (we have specifically used this word over 'collation' to pick up the nuances in the verb) of all the information and knowledge which we have picked up in the process of its journey. Each and every chapter brings out small but empirical and pragmatic solutions which we are sure will add to the students and retailers instinct.

The renowned epistemologist, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, in his book the *Black Swan* defines a black swan as a large-impact, hard-to-predict, and rare event beyond the realm of normal expectations. Taleb tells the story of author Yevgenia Nikolayevna Krasnova and her book *A Story of Recursion*. She published her book on the web and it was discovered by a small publishing company; they published her work unedited and the book became an international bestseller. The small publishing firm became a big corporation, and Yevgenia became famous. We, for one believe that retail is a black swan in the job starved Indian economy, and within retail, VM will be the black swan. The impact of a retail store which understands and leverages its VM well will differentiate the leaders from the 'also-rans'.

Lately, the subject of visual merchandising is being taught in various institutes of visual arts, management, interior decoration, fashion design, etc. Our fascination with this subject and passion with this profession took the shape of the book in present form. We have also sought and obtained the help of nine chosen visual merchandisers of the country and abroad who have contributed a great deal to this field and have brought visual merchandising in India to an international standards. And, most importantly, every section is introduced by the legends in their respective fields.

We also realised that there is no single comprehensive book available on this subject that suited the Indian market and its requirements. Whatever books available were by foreign authors and, in the Indian context, many of them were not relevant, though, we learnt many things from the foreign authors and tried to implement it in our respective jobs. Sir Martin M Peglar's books, especially, have been a true support to us since beginning of our careers.

The scope of this book is the A to Z about visual merchandising, especially in a very practical and Indian context. Professionals and students of this subject will find this book useful and valuable. We have arranged the topics and covered the basics (but essentials) in simple and easy-to-understand language. We hope the contents of this book will enable the students of this art of visual merchandising more meaningful and interesting.

The book is laid-out in five sections. The first section of the book deals with Introduction to Retail and Visual Merchandising. The second section is about Display Basics. In Section three we have included Store Planning and Fixtures. Section four consists of Merchandise

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Presentation, Window Displays and other important tools of visual merchandising, including the Quality Management and Standard Operating Procedures. In the fifth section we have incorporated something unusual and exclusive for the students. It is about Experience Economy, Brand Experiences, Experience Design and Experiential Retail.

Even after working for years in retail now, every chapter triggers new thoughts in us and we hope this effort will bring similar reactions in each one of you.

Happy Reading!!!

**Swati Bhalla  
Anuraag S**

# Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Mr. B S Nagesh, Customer Care Associate and Managing Director—Shoppers' Stop Ltd., Mr. Surender Gnanaolivu, VP and Store Development—Mahindra Retail and Mr. Rahul Rajamuthiah, Chief Business Development—Future Axiom Telecom Ltd., for their constant motivational support and guidance in completing this work. They have been our instructors in this beautiful subject of Visual Merchandising.

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This book would not have been completed without the write-ups by our professional friends and ex-colleagues—Prakash Uchil, Pradeep Immanual, Ajay Desari, Gagan Khanna, Vandana Verdia, Harshzad, Sandeep Mishra, Vandana Srivastava, Vishal Kapoor. A special thanks to Sharat Kumar, a certified PMP from Project Management Institute, Michigan USA, who is an alum of School of Planning and Architecture, India. He has over 10 years of work experience in various Retail Design firms and has lead many award winning projects.

To complete, we thank the followings whose contribution has been significant Lt.Col. (retd.) P K Singhal, Micky Jagtiani, Managing Director—Landmark Group, UAE, Mr. Chandraakant Dalal, Chairman, JD Institute of Fashion Technology and Mr. Manu Bhalla, Director, Operations—Giga Soft Systems Pvt. Ltd.

**Swati Bhalla**  
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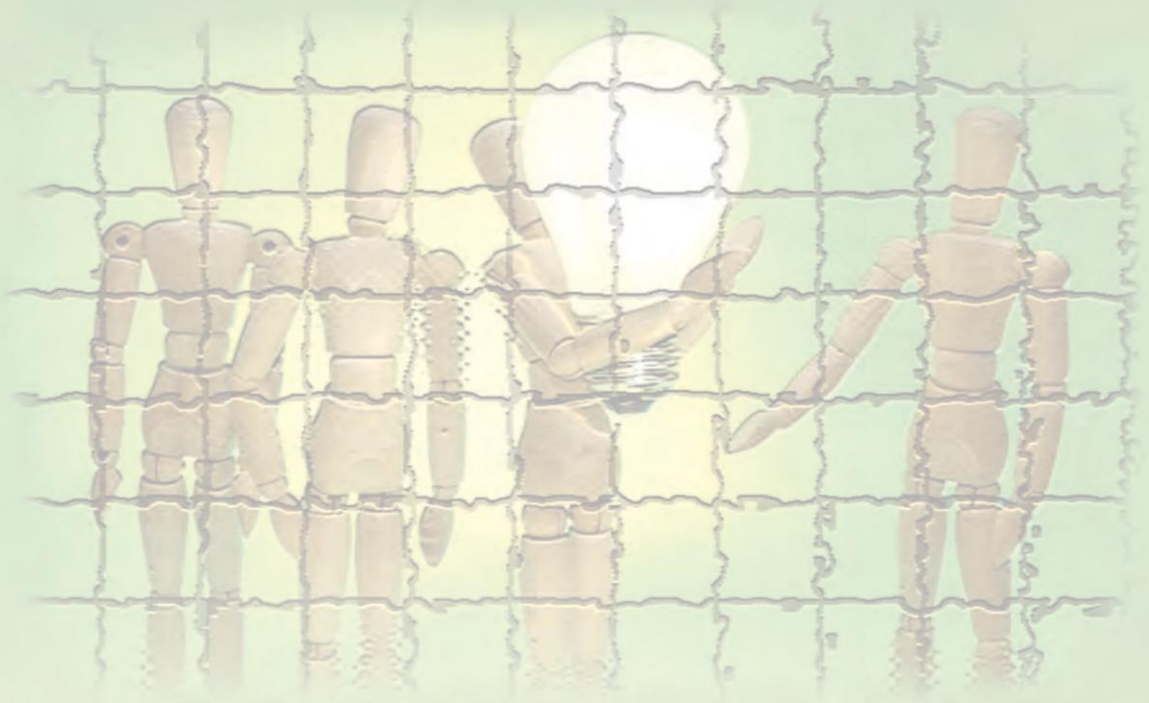
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# VISUAL MERCHANDISING





# PART I

## Understanding Retail and Visual Merchandising

On the one hand, retailing pertains to the sale of goods or merchandise to final consumers or end users. Visual merchandising (VM), on the other hand, refers to the art of showcasing or presenting the same goods or merchandise.

VM puts the merchandise in focus as well as in the right perspective. It educates the customers, creates desire and finally augments the selling process.

Visual merchandising (VM) achieves the following:

- Creatively and effectively educates customers about products offered.
- Enables a successful selling process, from browsing to buying.
- Makes for a creative medium to present products in a lifelike environment, thus creating strong impact and recall value.
- Establishes correct context – or background – for the merchandise to be sold.
- Attracts attention of the customers.
- Assists customers in matching their needs with the merchandise.

VM is the idiom of smart retailers. Similar to the use of language to communicate, retailers use visual merchandising techniques to communicate with customers. And just like language follows its own grammar and logic, visual merchandising abides by its own rules and principles. Much like a poet makes creative use of language to connect with the readers, a visual merchandiser creates visual effects inside and outside a store to communicate with the customers.

In modern retail, where employee productivity is critical to the profitability of a business, visual merchandising is the most effective way to improve productivity. A great visual merchandiser uses plenty of colours, signages, and visual breaks to create an oasis of merchandise to attract customers, hold their attention to specific merchandise, throw critical information at them and aid the process of selling. VM is the key function which a retailer is involved in from the start of store design, to the execution and continuous innovation in the store. With modern retail ready to explode in scope, there is tremendous opportunity for a new set of young, energetic and, most importantly, creative bunch of people who can proudly call themselves 'Visual Merchandisers'.

With the growth of retail, the scope of VM is also growing exponentially. In fact, in the western countries, VM receives highest priority in the commercial planning of a product. So much that merchandise collections in a retail store change with each season; an entire store transforms its decor and visual presentation so as to appeal to the consumers while announcing new arrivals in merchandise.

Visual merchandising is the most effective way to improve productivity in modern retail; it is, as they say, the 'silent salesman for a retail store'.

This section will focus on understanding the basic aspects of retail and visual merchandising.

## Industry Insight

### The Business of Retail

*By B.S. Nagesh, Customer Care Associate and Managing Director, Shoppers Stop*

Retail is a very detailed business but is seen as very simple by one and all.

This is the only business in the world where one can get advice from a daughter-in-law to your mother-in-law, on every aspect of retailing from Customer Service to Merchandise or Displays. The reason being, that the whole business revolves around customer centricity. Therefore, a customer, who exactly knows, what he or she wants, the expectation get spelt out very clearly.

In such a simple business, the complication arrives due to:

- millions of consumers who interact with retailers;
- millions of customers in different moods;
- retailers have to interact with such customers creating complicated moments;
- retailers have to deal with thousand of SKU's;
- retailing is operated out of small shops of 50 sq.ft and also stores of 100000 sq.ft.

The efficient management of million of such details is a complicated matrix that requires sophisticated handling of every aspect of the retail business.

All this makes the business of retailing very complex. Retailers are constantly endeavouring to make such businesses successful – managing customer expectations, employee relations and profitability at the same time. Put together, it makes the business of retail a challenging task.

In such an environment, distinction can be created by ensuring that a store is visually presented in a fashion that a customer finds it easy to see, select, try, buy and make his or her aspiration to the process of buying.

As a student of retail, it is important to understand the complexity of the business of retail and to manage the same, with the use of technology and dedicated management of employees, so as to ensure that the organisation is created for customer service and customer satisfaction.

# Introduction to Retail

## 1 CHAPTER

### RETAILING: DEFINITION, EVOLUTION AND FORMATS

Retail is defined as the sale of goods to end users, not for resale, but for use and consumption by the purchaser. Manufacturers sell large quantities of products to retailers, and retailers sell small quantities of the same products to consumers. Marketers see retailing as part of their overall distribution strategy. And retailers are at the end of the supply chain.

The activity of retailing can take place either from a fixed location such as a department store or a kiosk, or from subordinated services. A person, or customer, who wants to obtain a product for personal use, will usually purchase it at a retail store or from some other retail marketing channel.

#### Evolution of Retail<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, retailers always went to where customers were; locating retail venues that represented the highest concentration of potential customers, and facilitating access to goods and services to the same. This mostly happened in urbanised areas such as villages, towns and

<sup>1</sup>*Shopping Environments: Evolution, Planning and Design* by Peter Coleman, Architectural Press, Woburn, 2006.

## Learning Objectives

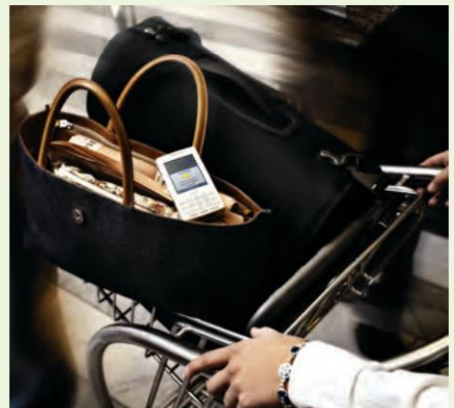
After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- Definition and evolution of retail
- Different types of retail formats
- Scope of the Indian retail industry

cities. Potential consumers were thus ensured ready and convenient access to daily needs through retailers, who, in turn, enjoyed a ready and available market.

Up to the mid-19th century, shop formats were unplanned and often parts of other building uses. The eastern bazaars of Istanbul and Isfahan were exceptions in those days, when most shops remained secondary to even the commercial purpose of the town hall, market hall or the guild hall. 19th century witnessed an evolution of shopping, as planned collections of shops, recognised in their own right, marked individual pieces of architecture.

Originating in the late-18th century, the arcade was the first European building planned primarily to accommodate a collection of shops. Arcades are thus a milestone in the evolution of retail. France led the way with the first shopping arcade, the Galeries de Bois, Palais Royal, built in 1788 in Paris. The considerable number of shops



## 6 Visual Merchandising

aligning each side of an arcade provided the space to display and consume the growing amount of manufactured goods that were available then. Gradually, towards the late-19th century, these shopping areas increased in width, length, height and, most of all, organisational complexity. Around the same time, in the US, department stores such as Macy's (New York, 1858) and Marshall Fields (Chicago, 1865) were being established. Basically a large store of single ownership, a department store housed multiple counters – each one displaying and dealing with a variety of products. These new stores discarded historical influences to adopt not only innovation in materials (glass, steel, etc.) and movement (lifts, escalators, etc.), but also merchandising (jewellery, clothing, perfume, etc.) of select brands and manufacturers.

Towards the late-19th century and early 20th century, the chain store format of retail came into being, facilitated by the development of transport systems as railways and roadways allowed easy distribution of goods from central warehouses to the networks of stores. Today, every country has its own national chain stores – with some expanding to become international global retailers. They store and sell exciting and successful merchandise from within grand interiors as well as exteriors.

By the middle of 20th century, suburban malls had established themselves as the shopping destination of choice. These enclosed and specialised shopping spaces were in stark contrast to the open arcades. As greater understanding of customer behaviour was applied to designing shopping malls, it challenged even the opulent interiors of department stores.

### A Brief History of Shopping Malls<sup>2</sup>

Isfahan's Grand Bazaar, which is largely covered, dates from the 10th century A.D. The 10 kilometre long covered Tehran's Grand Bazaar also has a long history.

The Grand Bazaar of Istanbul was built in the 15th century and is still one of the largest covered markets in the world, with more than 58 streets and 4000 shops.

Gostiny Dvor in Saint Petersburg, which opened in 1785, may be regarded as one of the first purposely-built shopping malls, as it consisted of more than 100 shops covering an area of over 53,000 m<sup>2</sup> (570,000 sq ft).

The Oxford Covered Market in Oxford, England opened in 1774 and still runs today.

The Burlington Arcade in London was opened in 1819. The Arcade in Providence, Rhode Island introduced the concept to the United States in 1828. The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, Italy followed in the 1860s and is closer to large modern malls in spaciousness. Other large cities created arcades and shopping centres in the late 19th century and early 20th century, including the Cleveland Arcade and Moscow's GUM in 1890. Early shopping centres designed for the automobile include Market Square, Lake Forest, Illinois (1916) and Country Club Plaza, Kansas City, Missouri (1924).

## Retail Location and Formats

Salient features that go on to describe a retail format are as follows:

- **Footfall:** This is the customer traffic inside a retail space. In the case of a mall, for example, since the anchor store draws most of the customer traffic, other relatively smaller retailers do not have to incur additional cost of advertising themselves.

<sup>2</sup>Shopping Mall'; Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shopping\\_mall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shopping_mall)



- **Ambience:** This includes air-conditioning, comfortable rest areas, play areas for children, clean washrooms, conveniently located escalators/lifts, and other aspects that make for a safe and enjoyable shopping environment.
- **Parking:** This comprises designated safe parking floors/levels, with well-organised parking spaces for a comfortable shopping experience.
- **Rent:** This refers to adequate choice of medium-to-high rents for retailers to choose from, according to their budgets. For example, rental for the anchor store on the ground floor is much higher than that of the corner store on the second floor.
- **Freedom:** This pertains to the rules and regulations which retailers adhere to. While mall retailers follow the dictates of the overall mall management, free-standing retailers have much more operational freedom.

Now, let us examine the retail formats.

## Mall Retail Space

A shopping mall or shopping centre is a building or set of buildings comprising retail units (spaces), with interconnections that enable visitors to easily walk from one unit to another. A mall has many retailers – not necessarily dealing in the same products – competing with each other under the same roof.

Generally, a mall houses an anchor store (also referred to as draw tenant, draw store or key tenant) or a large chain store, among dozens of other smaller retail stores/shops. This anchor store usually occupies the largest retail space in a particular mall, and is owned by a major department store or retail chain. Typically, the rent in a mall location is much higher than other retail locations, mostly due to higher customer traffic and the resulting higher scope of purchase.



**Ibn Battuta Mall, Dubai**

## Innovative Retail Spaces

Today, retailers are introducing more and more innovative formats – Wedding Mall, Jewellery Mall, and Furniture Mall among other specialised retail spaces.

Perhaps unheard of in the far west, such retail spaces are gaining ground in the Indian market. The Wedding Mall, for instance, houses the complete range of wedding merchandise – ranging from designer apparel and jewellery, to beauty parlours and wedding planners. These retail industry players are successfully blending knowledge from the experiences of the global retail industry with the unique requirements and preferences of Indian consumers.

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Such customisation to the latent needs of the consumers has also brought about a great deal of innovation in the product offerings as well in the visual presentation of the retail formats in which they are being offered. For example, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission will introduce a string of swanky 'Khadi Plazas', to showcase the traditional handloom textiles in a completely new format. Over 7000 existing outlets are to be beefed up to cater to the changing tastes of the young Indian consumer, and thereby provide a boost to the presently stagnant sales of khadi textiles.

### Free-standing Retail Space

This can be described as a retail outlet on a street as against retail space inside a mall or shopping centre. Free-standing retailers are often located on highways or are tucked away in the neighbourhood of a busy street or area. A stand-alone building makes for an ideal free-standing retail space; it has no restrictions on how the retailer should operate his/her business. It also offers ample parking space and reasonable rent/cost per square foot (sq ft).

While a retailer at a free-standing location has all the operational freedom to run its store/shop, it faces certain constraints like the road traffic congestion around the retail space. So, unlike a mall or a shopping centre, where customers can wander in at will, a free-standing retailer may have to work harder to draw the customers in.

### The Largest Mall in India

Ambi Mall comprises an area of 1,800,000-square-foot, making it currently the largest operational mall in India. Developed by the Ambience Group, Ambi Mall is located on the NH-8 highway, at the Delhi-Gurgaon border, and is a 'Free standing location'.

Ambi mall will eventually have more than 300 premium retail shops and specialty stores along with a large 50,000 sq ft food court. The mall's USP is that it's a kilometre long inside. There is also a 7-screen PVR Cinemas multiplex. The mall will also have a platinum shopping tower, a hotel, and serviced apartments.

### High Street Retail Space

Simply put, this kind of a retail space is defined by the street it is located on. High street refers to the primary business/retail street in a particular town or city, where the older, and more established retail stores are located. It is also the principal street defined mainly by the merchandise it offers and the customers it attracts (in terms of both psychographics and demographics).

Generally, high street retail stores have high traffic. Being older and more known, these stores have a strong and loyal



Ilfracombe High Street, Devon, England.

customer base. High street store clusters are mainly based on product categories, and afford high rentals.

## RELATING RETAIL WITH CUSTOMER PROFILE

Prior to selecting the store location, a retailer has to ensure that the store profile matches, more or less, that of its target audience. For the same, a retailer must fully understand the demographics (age, gender, income, etc.) and psychographics (values, attitudes, lifestyle, etc.) of its customers. This is important not only to know which customers buy what, but also to comprehend why they buy and how the products fit into their overall lifestyle. Success in satisfying the shopper means half the retail battle is won.

### Choosing the Store Location

Building and designing a retail store that looks and feels beautiful can please its architects, but not necessarily its customers. For the latter, it is important to select the right location based on the understanding of its customers and the competition.

#### Remember

No matter how unique, creative and distinguished the retail store, or how superlative the quality of its merchandise, it is of little value if the store doesn't cater to what customers want and expect.

Retail always has always been and always will be about the customer. Besides customer centricity, the three other important factors for a successful retail venture are:

Location!

Location!!

Location!!!

A retailer has many options when it comes to setting up shop. But before finalising the store location, it is necessary that the retailer ascertains the shape and scope of business, both in the present and in the future. It is necessary for a retailer to:

- Know exactly what is to be sold and what the business should be known for;
- Determine the space required for shelves, storage, service, etc.; and
- Visualise the retail outlet (structure, façade, etc.) as well as the customers (youthful, rich, etc.)

### Category of Goods to be Sold

What kind of products will your store sell? Not all goods can be sold from the same location. Some goods will require certain types of locations. Will your store be considered a convenience store, a specialty shop or a shopping store?

Convenience goods require easy access, allowing the customer to quickly make a purchase. Such products are frequently purchased consumer items providing a convenience in terms of

## **10 Visual Merchandising**

time savings and utilitarianism. Examples include hair spray, shaving cream, bread, eggs, milk, tissues, etc. If a store only deals in such a product, a mall would not be a good location for such a convenience goods store. This product type is not very expensive and is purchased by a wide range of customers.

Certain consumer products are exclusive or special enough to persuade a consumer to exert unusual effort to obtain it and are called Specialty Goods. For example, the work of a particular designer may be offered for sale in only one store. If consumers are interested in the designs, consumers will go out of their way to visit the store. Specialty goods are exclusive and unique than most products. Thus, customers don't mind travelling out of the way to purchase this type of product.

A shopping store usually sells items at a higher price which are not bought frequently by the customers. Furnishings, jewellery, cars and designer wear, etc. are some examples of goods found at a shopping store. Because the prices of these items are higher, this type of customer might want to compare prices before making a purchase. Therefore, retailers will do well to locate their store near like stores.

### **Customer Demographics**

Demographic data generally includes race, age, income, disabilities, mobility (in terms of travel time to work, or number of vehicles available), educational attainment, home ownership, employment status, and even location. Demographics are frequently used in economics and market research.

Before making a final decision on where to locate a business – or, before choosing a city or state for the final location of the retail store – a retailer needs to research the area thoroughly. This would include reading local papers, speaking to other small businesses in the area; obtaining location demographics from the local library, chamber of commerce or the Census Bureau, etc. These sources should have information on the area's population, income and age. Once a retailer knows who his/her customers are, he/she needs to make sure to find a location most suitable to his/her customer base.

### **Ease of Access, Visibility and Customer Traffic**

Lot of traffic does not always mean a lot of customers. It is important for a retailer to be located in a market with high customer traffic, but it is even more important that the customer walking into the store meets the definition of their target market. Small retail stores often benefit from the traffic of nearby larger stores. Like most family eating joints have a small pan shop right outside the restaurant.

- Study the customer traffic. How many people walk or drive past selected location?
- Is the area served by public transportation like the city metro, bus service, etc.?
- Is the location convenient for customers and operations of the store? Can customers and delivery trucks easily get in and out of the parking lot?
- Is there adequate parking for customers?

Seeing a store from the customer's perspective helps a retailer avoid expensive mistakes. Is the store visible from the main flow of traffic? Is your sign easily seen by the customers? Does the

retailer need to add extra signs in the parking, mall or market area to pull in more customers? In most cases, the better visibility a retail store has, the lesser it needs to spend on advertising. A specialty retail store located out of town in a free standing building would require more marketing and advertising than a shopping store located inside a mall.

### Got Parking Problems?<sup>3</sup>

Scott Noble, owner of SewVac Ltd. “In Southern California we have the ongoing war of ‘No Parking Places’.” In our small strip centre we’ve got two exercise places and we offer sewing classes. This means we have lots of people who park for long periods of time.

This is awful customer service for the person who wants to do a quick stop and shop! So we started a “parking ticket” system that rewards our customers for good parking behaviour, instead of punishing them for bad. I made an arrangement with the landlord to reserve some parking areas in the alley behind the store for our customers. When our sewing classes start, we leave the back door open and when the customer enters in through this door, she is issued a “parking ticket”. Sometimes they turn these tickets in for a “freebie,” sometimes it’s turned in for a 50% discount on selected notions or books. It works great and now our parking problems are solved because all the long-time parkers come in at the back!”

## Neighbourhood and the Competition

Other retailers near or around the store can be an advantage or a disadvantage; it should, therefore, be determined whether the types of businesses nearby are compatible. For example, a high-end designer label boutique, if situated beside a discount store, may not draw the right customers, but, if placed beside a premier nail or hair salon, it may do much more business.

## Location Costs

In addition to rent, there are many other costs that a retailer needs to consider before finalising a location. Some of the costs involved are as follows:

- Building maintenance, lawn care, utilities and security
- Maintenance and repair of the heating and air-conditioning
- Additional marketing that the retailer has to incur to get the target customers attention (that is, if the finalised location is isolated or remote)
- Average utility bill(s)
- Repairs – painting or remodelling that is required so as to make the location fit for business (after the condition of the selected location has been analysed)
- Property taxes

<sup>3</sup>Tips from WhizBang! Training, Bob and Susan Negen; Source: <http://www.whizbangtraining.com/sb/tips.aspx>

## Some Special Considerations

Every store is different in its identity. Some retail stores may require special considerations. Unique characteristic of a retail business that may need attention can be listed as follows:

- The store could require special lighting, fixtures or other hardware installed.
- Restrooms for staff and customers.
- Safety concerns: Is there adequate fire and police protection for the area?
- The state of sanitation service available.
- Adequate lighting in the parking lot and building exterior.
- Safety of the area (If there is a high crime rate in that area, extra security would be needed).  
Need for electronic supervision or guards.
- Special permissions to be obtained so as to retail 365 days a year.

Generally, most decisions taken before starting a business are based on intelligent assumptions and estimates derived from industry research. Often, comparisons are made between similar stores operating in similar areas, to arrive at the selling space a store must have, or the volume of sales it can achieve per square foot.

$$\text{Sales Volume} \div \text{Sales per Square Foot} = \text{Selling Space}$$

## THE INDIAN RETAIL INDUSTRY<sup>4</sup>

The Indian retail market is the fifth largest retail destination globally. It is estimated to grow from the US\$ 330 billion in 2007 to US\$ 427 billion by 2010 and US\$ 637 billion by 2015. Evolving rapidly with growing consumer spending and increasing investment by global players, the Indian retail market, according to AT Kearney's 7th annual Global Retail Development Index (GRDI) in 2008, is the most attractive emerging market for investment in the retail sector.

### Retail Store Directory<sup>5</sup>

It is now possible to navigate through the entire expanse of India's retail terrain in virtual comfort. 7000 stores, 600 cities, 2000 markets and arcades, 1000 visuals and exclusive Retail Maps of India. Plus easy-to-use E-maps of Indian cities, complete with zoom levels to locate cities, malls, markets and catchments. All at a simple click, at [www.dataalive.co.in](http://www.dataalive.co.in)

According to the findings of CB Richard Ellis, the commercial real estate services company, India's retail market – valued at US\$ 511 billion – is poised to grow to US\$ 833 billion by 2013. The report also states that organised retail that currently accounts for less than 5 per cent of the total retail market is expected to register a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 40 per cent and swell to US\$ 107 billion by 2013.

<sup>4</sup>Report on Retail sector, FY 2008-09, [www.ibef.org](http://www.ibef.org)

<sup>5</sup>Powered by RVG News Vision Pvt. Ltd., India.



Another study by McKinsey & Company titled 'The Great Indian Bazaar – Organised Retail Comes of Age in India' states that India's overall retail sector is likely to grow to US\$ 450 billion by 2015.

Retail sector in India is primarily categorised by the type of products retailed, as opposed to the different retail formats in operation.

- The Food and Beverages accounts for the largest share of revenues at 74 per cent of the total retail market. This category has the highest consumer demand across all income levels and retail formats.
- Apparels and consumer durables are the fastest growing verticals in the retail sector.
- Mobile phone as a product category has witnessed the highest growth in consumer demand amongst all retail offerings, with the telecommunications sector adding on an average 5 million new mobile phone users every month.

## Rural Retail in India

Interestingly, with modest store formats being pursued to attract average rural customers – compared to the plush and vibrant formats adopted by urban retailers – rural retailing is set to provide a new dimension to the Indian retail scenario.

The India Retail Report 2009, by Images FR Research, India's rural markets offer a sea of opportunity for the retail sector.

- The urban-rural split in consumer spending stands at 9:11, with rural India accounting for 55 per cent of private retail consumption.
- Rural India accounted for almost half of the Indian rural market, which was worth about US\$ 273.64 billion in 2008.

Now with most urban markets, including tier-I and tier-II cities, reaching saturation, the next phase of growth is likely to be seen in rural retail.

## Luxury Retail in India

Higher disposable incomes, easy availability of credit and high exposure to media and brands has considerably increased the average propensity to consume over the years.

India's luxury retail segment offers huge opportunity, with affluent households estimated to rise by 8.5 per cent in 2010-11. Some salient features of India's luxury retail market are as follows:

- Affluent households account for about 4.5 per cent of India's population, and over 22 per cent of the total retail sales, clocking US\$ 62,340 million revenues
- The number of affluent households are projected to increase to 8.5 per cent, translating into a retail opportunity worth US\$ 152,000 million in 2010-11
- Delhi and Mumbai are the prime contributors to the luxury retail space, with the highest density of luxury brand outlets

## IN SUMMARY

- Retail vis-à-vis Visual merchandising: Retailing pertains to the sale of goods or merchandise to final consumers or end users. Visual merchandising, on the other hand, refers to the art of showcasing or presenting the same goods or merchandise. VM educates the customers, creates desire and finally augments the selling process. Visual merchandising is reflected in many ways – shop signage, window display, indoor and outdoor communication about the store, and so on.
- Retail – Evolution and formats: Early 20th century heralded the chain store format, with the development of transport systems allowing easy distribution of goods from central warehouses to the networks of stores. Today, every country has its own retail chains, some even global retailers. They store and sell carefully selected merchandise from within grand interiors as well as exteriors.
- There are 3 types of locations, viz. At Malls, Free Standing & on High Streets.
- Mid-20th century saw suburban malls being established as shopping destinations of choice. More and more understanding of customer behaviour is now applied to designing such shopping malls, making retail a challenging and exciting business.
- Criteria for selection of retail space: Prior to finalising retail location and format, a retailer needs to ascertain how he sees his business in terms of the present as well as the future. Significant aspects to consider are:
  - Category of products to be sold
  - Customer demographics
  - Ease of access, visibility, customer traffic
  - Neighbourhood and competition
  - Location and rental costs
- $\text{Sales volume} \div \text{Sales per square foot} = \text{Selling space}$



## Exercises

1. Define retail.
2. Discuss the different types of store locations.
3. Before finalising a retail store location, a retailer needs to define how he sees his business, both now and in the future. Explain the statement.
4. Fill in the blanks:
  - (a) A \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the larger stores in a shopping mall, usually a department store or a major retail chain.
  - (b) A \_\_\_\_\_ is a building or set of buildings which contain retail units, with interconnecting walkways enabling visitors to easily walk from unit to unit.
  - (c) \_\_\_\_\_ has an array of retail stores in small sizes.
5. True or False:
  - (a) Retail pertains to the sale of goods to final consumers, of the sale of merchandise to end-users.
  - (b) Malls have designated safe parking areas. Parking is well organised at such a location. This adds to the comfort factor.
  - (c) A free standing location has high real-estate rentals.
6. Visit at least 5 markets in your town and classify the locations as high street, free standing and malls.

## VM Speaks



**Name:** Vishal Kapoor

**Present designation:** Head | Experience Design

**Company:** Future Group

**Location:** Mumbai

He is a NIFT Delhi graduate with 15 years of fine experience in Visual Merchandising. Being a Himachali, his love for nature has been an inherent trait – one that he would not bargain for anything in the world. His philosophy in life is to ‘flow’ with the times and circumstances, and, like ‘water’, simply seep through and move ahead.

### What led you to pursue a career in visual merchandising?

**Vishal:** A perfect mix of business and design was a tempting enough proposition for me to take this career. A profile, which encapsulates the key creative ingredients for enhancing customer experience and brand building while providing both strategic and tactical support to the business, is an ever exciting challenge. The key thought of developing a business strategy not based on rudimentary management techniques, but on aspects more humane and emotional was an interesting proposition to make this a career choice.

### What is the typical process you go through for implementing a display?

**Vishal:** The design process is simple: Discovery, Ideation, Design, Building and Adaptation... the stress and the criticality of the steps of process are case-specific. The idea is to take inferences and references from larger aspects of business and environment and finally converge it into a design solution which attracts /invites/communicates and sells.

### Where does India stand today when one talks of retail and where do you see the future of visual merchandising going?

**Vishal:** India has just seen an introduction of modern retail. A country where the trade has been primarily dominated by the middlemen – stockists, banyas and dukandaars – modern retail is bringing about a slow but a steady change in the shopping behaviour of the Indian consumer. As organised retail grows and number of players increases, the pressure on bottom lines and throughputs in stores increasing the role of visual merchandisers would become more and more crucial. Higher conversions would be the key business accountability for all visual merchandisers.

Even as of today the key metros have already seen a boom in terms of malls, hypermarkets/supermarkets, fashion and department stores and multiplexes and initiatives like ‘adhaar’ and ‘choupal’ and efforts being made by corporates to percolate into the smaller towns and even villages.

Visual merchandising would have to find its own path of growth in these evolving markets. I see the future of visual merchandising evolving into more as a tool for management of customer experience making sure that the brand ethos touches not just a customer’s mind but also her heart.

This is from the fact that visual merchandising in India has to find its own unique and more wholesome way of identifying its contribution to the business and create its own USP in the retail industry which is not just limited to peripheral value addition but find its place in evolving the core business decisions.

It needs to be growing as a complete design solution resource which affects the strategic intent of the organisation and caters to the overall experience of the customer redefining the customer behaviour.

Hence, I would always propagate the terminology as Experience Designer rather than only a 'visual' merchandiser a theoretical term defined by the western norms not necessarily applicable to Indian scenario.

# The World of Visual Merchandising

## 2 CHAPTER

### VISUAL MERCHANDISING: DEFINITION AND FUNCTION

Visual merchandising is defined as the presentation of any and all merchandise at its best: (i) colour coordinated (synchronised colours); (ii) accessorised (related products/props); and (iii) self-explanatory (descriptive/illustrative).

The world of visual merchandising is all about fascinating tools of display which help transform shoppers into stoppers; walk-bys into walk-ins; and passers-by into passers-who-buy!

VM is one of the final stages in the process of setting up of a retail store which customers would then find attractive and appealing. The way a store is presented should follow and reflect the principles that underpin the store's image. A visual merchandiser sets the store and its merchandise in such a way as to reflect the image a store wants to reflect. VM is the way in which to display 'goods for sale' in the most attractive manner, with the end purpose of making a sale. If it does not sell, it is not visual merchandising.

Robert Colborne<sup>1</sup> opines that VM is a commercial art form that enables a retail sales associate to work in all art media to communicate information such as price, promotion,

<sup>1</sup> *Visual Merchandising: The Business of Merchandise Presentation* by Robert Colborne, Delmar Cengage Learning, 1996. (<http://www.popai.it/index.php?method=section&action=zoom&id=2307>, accessed on 7 May 2009)

## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to discuss:

- Visual Merchandising
- Reasons why a retailer should invest in a good display
- The history and scope of Visual Merchandising

style, newness, use, trend, stock quantities, mood and lifestyle to the customers. While in today's challenging economy, retailers may avoid employing designers/visual merchandisers for the fear of unmanageable costs, in reality, visual merchandisers can help economies by avoiding costly mistakes. Guided by a professional, retailers can eliminate errors, saving time and money. E.g a VM will indicate lot of areas to be included before the store set-up; like how to innovatively store display materials/POS material/Hangers/Broken Mannequins, etc. Also, how much space to be utilized for window display v/s the new arrivals display near entrance and planning the number of display points before hand without compromising the retail/merchandise area, and so on. It is important to understand that the visual merchandiser is not there to impose ideas, but to help clients articulate their own personal style. So, think of a visual merchandiser as an 'idea person' who is at the disposal of both the retailer and the customer.

VM is the art of implementing effective design ideas to increase store traffic and volume of sales. Creating an attractive product display can draw the customer in, promote a slow-moving item, announce a sale, or welcome a season. VM is the art and science of displaying merchandise on the shop floor to enable maximum sale.



**Visual Merchandising is the way one displays 'goods for sale' in the most attractive manner with the end purpose of making a sale.**

VM is a tool to achieve sales and targets, a tool to enhance merchandise on the floor, and a mechanism to communicate to a customer and influence his decision to buy. VM uses season based displays to introduce new arrivals to customers, and thus increase conversions through a planned and systematic approach by displaying stocks available.

Visual Merchandising is:

- A tool to achieve sales and targets.
- A tool to enhance merchandise on the floor.
- A mechanism to communicate to a customer and influence his/her decision to buy.
- Use season based displays to introduce new arrivals to customers.
- To increase conversions through a planned and systematic approach by displaying stocks available.
- Educating the customers about the product/service in an effective and creative way.
- Establishing a creative medium to present merchandise in 3D environment, thereby enabling long lasting impact and recall value.
- Setting the company apart in an exclusive position.
- Establishing linkage among fashion, product design, and marketing by keeping the product in prime focus.
- Combining the creative, technical and operational aspects of a product and the business.

Visual Merchandising is everything the customer sees, both in the exterior and the interior of a store, that creates a positive image of the business and results in getting the attention of the customer – creating interest and desire, convincing the customer of the value of the products – and finally leads to a sale.

A visual merchandiser determines what a customer sees. It is said that 80 per cent of our impressions are created by sight – and that is why a picture is worth a thousand words! In a store both interior and exterior need to be coordinated using the store's theme.

## Significance of a Display

Retail stores make a display to enhance the shopping experience by making it more comfortable, convenient and customer-friendly. This can be achieved by:

- Making it easier for the shopper to locate the desired category and merchandise;
- Making it easier for the shopper to self-select;
- Making it possible for the shopper to co-ordinate and accessorise;
- Providing information on sizes, colours and prices; and
- Informing about the latest fashion trends by highlighting them at strategic locations.

The purpose of VM is to attract customers to the merchandise for closer examination. A retailer should invest in the talents of a Visual Merchandiser because he/she can benefit the retailer by:

- Making efforts that result in increased sales, especially add-on sales;
- Increasing operational efficiencies in the store;
- Saving both sales person's and shopper's time;
- Increasing efficiencies of the sales persons; and
- Being a 'silent salesperson' – giving information and doing suggestive selling.



**A neat display attracts customers and engages him with the merchandise displayed!**

### What are the biggest challenges for VM? Survey respondents told DDI<sup>2</sup>

- Rising costs of materials
- Shakeout from the merger consolidation of major retailers; lots of displaced talent
- Staffing – attracting creative talent
- Developing meaningful content for the digital medium
- Evaluating the viability of technology
- Budgets, especially for technology
- Properly trained personnel
- Lack of available talent
- Price wars via signs
- Being creative within budget confines
- Narrowing field of vendors

<sup>2</sup>'The VM Industry Survey', conducted by Display, Design and Ideas (DDI) ([www.ddimagazine.com](http://www.ddimagazine.com))



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There are various aspects to Visual Merchandising – colour, signage, merchandise presentation and window display to name a few. VM is an ongoing process; it starts from the day a store is conceptualised and lasts till the store is functional. The process is never over.

Visual merchandisers create ‘miniature worlds’<sup>3</sup> for merchandise in an effort to attract the attention of customers, draw them into the store and keep them coming back in the future. Despite the advanced techniques seen in visual displays, visual merchandising is not a new concept or art. VM has been around since the dawn of civilization, since merchants started selling merchandise to customers. When vendors first arranged their goods to make them more attractive to customers or, when vendors placed the biggest and ripest apples at the very top of their baskets for consumers to see and touch – that is visual merchandising.

The Departmental Store (refer to inset picture of a departmental store), is a one-man-shop. All the merchandise (on the raised platform) is at a hand’s distance for the storekeeper, so as to enable quick service to customers. Everything is kept in a tiered format so that even the last product is very clearly visible. (Interestingly, the man sitting at the foot of the platform could be selling impulse items!)



**A departmental store, 1883<sup>4</sup>**

Let us see how it all started.

‘Retail’ is derived from the French word *retailier*, which refers to ‘cut off, clip and divide’ in terms of tailoring (1365). It was first recorded as a French noun with the meaning, ‘sale in small quantities’ in 1433. The literal meaning of retail was to ‘cut off, shred, pare’. As in French, ‘retail’ in Dutch and German – *detailhandel* and *einzelhandel* respectively – also refers to the sale of small quantities of items.

## HISTORY OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING

Around the 18th century, when contemporary methods of visual merchandising began to evolve, store owners and managers cared little for the appearance of their stores and the presentation of merchandise. Very little merchandise was displayed within the store. Rather, a customer would enter the store and speak with the retailer, who would then present merchandise that was kept in a back room. What was more important was ‘sales talk’ – the store owner/manager’s ability to persuade – in convincing a customer of the quality of a product and making a sale. The evolution in store design brought about a new ‘process’ of shopping. It was not longer a verbal engagement between retailers and customers, but now a ‘sensory experience’.

<sup>3</sup>‘A History of Visual Merchandising in Retail Stores’ by Sara Marie (<http://hubpages.com/hub/A-History-of-Visual-Merchandising-in-Retail-Stores>)

<sup>4</sup>Source: <http://akssara.blogspot.com/2008/05/rare-photos-of-india.html>



The first step in the evolution of store design occurred when small stores began to display their merchandise openly to the public, instead of keeping it stored in backrooms.

Eventually, the deliberate displaying of goods became an important tool for retailers. Unattractive stores, that had little or no visual appeal for customers, slowly became exciting shopping venues.

The VM revolution started in the early 19th century, as retailers understood that visual displays of goods were necessary to attract retail customers. Store windows no longer simply allowed natural light into the building or act as storage space for stock; they became important venues to attractively display the store's merchandise.

Gradually, the design aesthetic used in window displays moved indoors and became part of the overall interior store design, eventually displacing the importance windows altogether in suburban malls.



**The first self-service grocery store  
'Piggly Wiggly', Memphis, USA; 1916<sup>5</sup>**

## Aisles

An aisle is, in general, space made available for walking (refer to inset picture of supermarket in Sweden). It has rows of seats on either side, or a row of seats on one side and a wall on the other. Aisles can be seen in buildings such as churches, cathedrals, synagogues, meeting halls, parliaments and legislatures, courtrooms, theatres, and in certain types of passenger vehicles.



**A Supermarket in Sweden; 1941<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>5</sup>Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piggly\\_Wiggly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piggly_Wiggly)

<sup>6</sup>Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supermarket> accessed on 7 May 2009

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In the last quarter of the 19th century, both museums and department stores in America were known for their product displays. Be it world fairs, departmental stores or museums, everything was crowded together on shelves or in showcases. Today museum displays are individually called exhibits, while in-store displays are referred to as visual merchandising. Essentially, visual merchandising is the selling of a store's goods through visual means, incorporating advertising (the store's advertising campaign themes), window displays, and interior sales floor designs and displays.

Through the 20th century, even well-known artists like Salvador Dali and Andy Warhol created window displays, while other lesser known artists were commissioned to design unique objects (props) for the specific purpose of visual merchandising.

## UNDERSTANDING RETAIL IN INDIA

India's retail industry can be broadly classified into two segments: the informal (or unorganised) retail sector which comprises small retailers; and the formal (or organised) retail sector which includes large retailers. While it is very difficult to regulate tax and/or labour laws in the former segment, stringent tax and labour laws are implemented in the organised segment of India's retail sector.

If the retail industry is divided on the basis of retail formats, then it can be further classified into the modern format retailers and the traditional format retailers. The modern format retailers include supermarkets, hypermarkets, departmental stores, specialty chains and company owned and operated retail stores. The traditional format retailers comprise kirana stores, kiosks, street markets as well as multiple brand outlets.

'Unorganised retailing' is defined as an outlet run locally by the owner or caretaker of a shop that lacks **technical** and **accounting standardisation**. Here, the sourcing and the supply chain are also implemented locally in order to meet the local needs of customers. Organised retailing, on the other hand, may not procure its supplies from local sources.

The retail sector is presently undergoing a transition in India. Till only a few years ago, customers would go to family-owned kirana stores to purchase their necessities. This then changed to bigger shops, run by one man with a few employees. Here, all the work was done manually, none of the staff being professionally trained. Gradually, more sophistication seeped into this sector and departmental stores came into being.

Beginning with the mid-1990s, however, there was an explosion of shopping malls and plazas where customers interacted not just with one single person – the owner, but with professional store owners and other staff. Significantly, customer requirements were now being catered to by trained staff. Today, organised retailing has become an experience characterised by ease, style and swiftness. It offers customers a more convenient environment, and many more choices along with an enjoyable shopping experience.

## The Scope of Retail in India

The organised retail sector occupies only about 3 per cent of the aggregate retail industry in India. But FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in the retail sector is expected to shrink the employment in the organised sector and expand that in the unorganised one.

Retail sector is a sunrise industry in India. The industry is marked by huge growth prospects, and is stimulated by an increasing number of malls and shopping centres. Some of the factors for this growth are as follows:

- Rise in the purchasing power of Indians: 20 Indian cities account for 10 per cent of India's population, but generate 31 per cent of the country's disposable income!
- Changing age profile and disintegration of the joint family system: India's population is believed to have an average age of 24 years – as against 36 years in the USA and 30 years in China. A younger population tends to have higher aspirations and spends more as it enters the earning phase.
- Use of credit: A typical Indian is now more conversant with using credit cards than carrying money. This has led to a shift of the consumer base towards supermarkets and of the payments in the form of credit.

According to a special report on retailing in India conducted by Fitch, a leading global rating agency, the country's organised retail industry will continue to grow rapidly, particularly through increased levels of penetration in larger towns and metros and also as it begins to spread to smaller cities and B class towns. Fuelling this growth is the growth in development of retail-specific properties and malls. Fitch also expects organised retail to capture up to 20 per cent market share by 2010<sup>7</sup>. ASSOCHAM (The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India) estimates that, by 2010, the organised retail segment will see an additional investment of US\$ 70 billion, and the contribution of India's retail sector to its GDP will also rise to 22 per cent.

### TIP: If They Try It, They'll probably Buy It<sup>8</sup>

Demonstrating a product lets your customers feel what it would be like to own the item ...and makes the purchasing almost irresistible!

Increase sales by thinking of interesting ways to **Demonstrate Your Product**.

Most merchandise can be demonstrated in some way  
– even if it doesn't seem obvious at first.

Does your merchandise have...

- Outstanding aroma? Give them a sniff.
- Gorgeous texture? Put it in their hands.
- Lovely colour? Hold it up to the light.
- Playability? Play it with them.
- Unusual movement? Get it going.
- Delicious taste? You sample, you sell!
- Silly sound? Let them hear it.
- A feature they can't see? Ask them try it out.
- Incredible comfort? Get it on them.
- Super slipperiness? Let it slide.
- Fizz, melt, float, or change colour in water? Bring out the bucket.
- Fly through the air? Let them toss it.
- Assembly required? Build it.

Have fun with your products and your customers will too.

<sup>7</sup>Report on the Indian Retail Industry, Fitch Ratings. Source: <http://www.fitchindia.com>

<sup>8</sup>Tips from WhizBang! Training, Bob and Susan Negen; Source: <http://www.whizbangtraining.com/sb/tips.aspx>

## IN SUMMARY

- Visual Merchandising is the presentation of the merchandise at its best – colour coordinated, accessorised and self explanatory.
- VM is the way one displays ‘goods for sale’ in the most attractive manner with the end purpose of making a sale. ‘If it does not sell, it is not Visual Merchandising.’
- Why do we display? The customer’s perspective:
  - Make it easier for the shopper to locate the desired category and merchandise.
  - Make it easier for the shopper to self-select.
  - Make it possible for the shopper to coordinate and accessorise.
  - Provide information on sizes, colours and prices.
  - Inform about the latest fashion trends by highlighting them at strategic locations.
- Why do we display? The retailer’s perspective:
  - Make efforts that result in increased sales, especially add-on sales;
  - Increase operational efficiencies in the store;
  - Save both salesperson’s and shopper’s time;
  - Increase efficiencies of the salespersons; and
  - Be a ‘silent salesperson’ – give information and do suggestive selling.

## Exercises

1. Define Visual Merchandising.
2. Discuss the past, present and future of VM in India.
3. Discuss the reasons why a retailer should invest in Visual Merchandising.
4. Why do we display (customer's perspective)?
5. Visual Merchandising is the presentation of the merchandise at its best; colour coordinated, accessorised and:  
(a) Well-designed (b) Self explanatory (c) Sales driven
6. True or False:  
(a) VM is an instrument to achieve sales targets.  
(b) VM makes it easier for the shopper to self-select.  
(c) VM results in increased sales, especially add-on sales.
7. Visit public places like bus stop, railway station, cinema hall, etc. Observe:  
(a) The aisle width  
(b) The shops and displays
8. Recall the best display you have noticed so far. It could be in a museum or on the street. Describe the qualities of the display and what made it memorable.
9. Visit your local and most popular market. Photograph the best window displays and submit along with the story behind each display.

## VM Speaks



**Name:** Vandana Verdia

**Present designation:** Marketing Manager

**Company:** Microsoft with Corestaff Services

**Location:** Redmond, USA.

She is a graduate in Interior Designing from Rachana Sansad, and a graduate of Fashion Designing from NIFT (Mumbai). She brings to the table over 13 years of experience in retail and designing in India as well as abroad. Very few know that she is also a trained reflexologist with a gold medal to her credit. Apart from a passion for her line of work, she loves to travel and explore the world.

### What led you to pursue a career in visual merchandising?

**Vandana:** Coming from an Interior Design and Fashion Design background, Visual Merchandising seemed the perfect blend of my skills for this line of profession. I must admit, I was offered my first VM job through campus placements at NIFT among other designing and merchandising jobs. This was over 10 years ago and I am happy with the choice I made. Since then, there has been no looking back.

### What is the typical process you go through for implementing a window display?

**Vandana:** Inception to Implementation is a process where your design becomes a reality. While designing a window display, we must keep in mind that it should be an effective tool for marketing a product or strategy. If/when executed well, this display can be attention grabbing and will draw customers into your store. Simplicity is the key – sometimes, less is more!

### Where does India stand today when one talks of displays, and where do you see the future of window display going?

**Vandana:** Like I have always maintained, retail is a sunrise industry in India and with India's rising economy, retail and visual merchandising has achieved a lot, but has lots more to achieve on international standards. And, I think, India is ready to make that leap to the next level in visual merchandising.



# Image Mix

## 3 CHAPTER

### RETAIL STORE – SITE AND DESIGN

To recap what was discussed in Chapter One, the three most important success factors in retailing are – location, location and location. Retailers should know that good store sites are critical to ensuring a healthy revenue stream. Even the most unique, creative and different store on the planet, offering the best available quality of merchandise, is of no value if the store doesn't conform to what its customers want and expect.

Retail has always been, and will always be, about the customer. The entire concept of the store – location, interior layout, etc. – must be designed around its target customers. Succeed at satisfying the target shopper and the retail game is won. Build a store that looks beautiful but does not fit into the marketplace, and the only people who will be happy are the architect and contractors.

Before finalising anything about the retail outlet, a retailer must:

- Know which locations offer the most **long-term profit potential** – and which don't;
- Arrange products to **increase multi-product purchases**;
- Understand how store layout and flow **shape the overall shopping experience**; and
- Change product location or store layout in order to **reduce retail theft and loss**.



## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- Significance of choosing the right location and design for the retail store
- Arriving at the right image mix for the retail store
- The six important retail store elements that effect its Image Mix

## IMAGE MIX: THE TOP SIX ELEMENTS

A successful retailing business requires that a distinct (discrete) and consistent (constant) image be created in the customer's mind that covers all products and services offered. The image of a store should be different to what the image of the competition is. The retailer should also make a conscience effort to be consistent with the created image. Being consistent increases the recall value of a brand.

VM can help a retailer create that positive customer image which leads to successful sales. Store image refers to the idea of a store in the minds of the people. Store image is created by visual merchandisers through the design and décor of the store.

A retailer and a visual merchandiser should clearly understand the target market. All decisions made by a visual merchandiser are based on what image of the store the retailer wants to maintain. In this decision-making process, what helps a visual merchandiser the most is an understanding of consumer behaviour. VM is the science and art of selling more. Since it is a science, everything we do, every decision we make has a reason, a logical approach and an aim!

Keeping the store's image in mind, all other aspects of retail are defined. Yet, what are the elements that define a store's image? There are many aspects of retail, all of them influence the

## **32 Visual Merchandising**

way a consumer thinks of the brand. The top six elements that influence a store's image the most are:

1. Employee
2. Merchandise
3. Fixtures
4. Sound
5. Odour
6. Visual

All these six elements of image mix are specific to the kind of retailer a customer goes to. The expectations and needs of a customer who goes to a local grocer are different from those who visit a speciality goods retail outlet or a department store.

Let us discuss the elements individually. Each element is explained from the perspective of Catchments Grocer, Speciality Store, Supermarket and Department Store – all these retail formats have different customers with different expectations from the retail outlets. Different retail formats are illustrated as follows:



**A Catchments Grocer**



**A Speciality Store**



**A Supermarket**



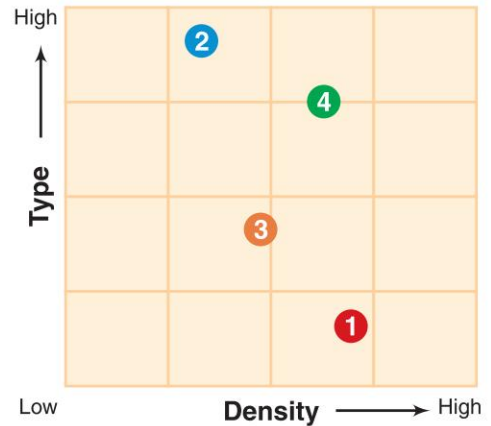
**A Department Store**

## 1st Element: Employee

Key: 1. Catchments Grocer; 2. Speciality Store;  
3. Supermarket; 4. Department Store

### Type of Employee and Density

The retailer employs sales staff to match the selling and image needs of his store. A specialty store – like a BMW showroom or a designer boutique – will have a lower density of staff – about one person per 500 sq ft. Moreover, the salesperson would speak well and be very presentable, in order to best cater to the needs of the customer(s). In contrast, in a large department store, the density of staff would be one per 300 sq ft. They would be well educated and suitably dressed (in most cases, in western clothing as this also comprises a major chunk of the store-offering).



### Survey respondents told DDI what they saw as the top trends in V.M.<sup>1</sup>

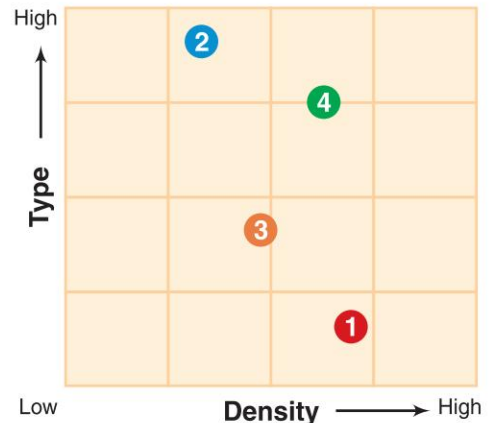
- Colour and lots of it
- Return to realistic mannequins
- Return to propping
- Clean lines, less clutter
- Electronic technology: interactive, digital
- Sustainability
- Return to drama and theatre
- Customer-centric store environments
- Less is more; simplicity
- More theme-oriented promotion

## 2nd Element: Merchandise

Key: 1. Catchments Grocer; 2. Speciality Store;  
3. Supermarket; 4. Department Store

### Type of Merchandise and Density

The type of merchandise determines its density in a store. A supermarket is very dense and averages about 8000 pieces/items per 100 sq ft, whereas a large departmental store would have about 750 pieces/items per 100 sq ft. An exclusive store for designer-wear, a boutique, or a furniture retailer would have



<sup>1</sup>2005 Industry Survey by Display, Design and Ideas (DDI) ([www.ddimagazine.com](http://www.ddimagazine.com))

### 34 Visual Merchandising

low density so as to make the merchandise appear exclusive. The density of merchandise also determines the margins (for profit) planned on the merchandise. Lower the density, the higher the margins.

#### Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)

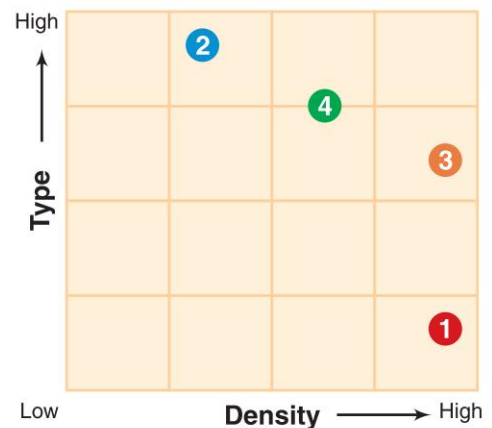
These are products that are sold quickly and at relatively low cost. Though the absolute profit made on FMCG products is relatively small, they generally sell in large quantities, so the cumulative profit on such products can be large. Examples of FMCG generally include a wide range of frequently purchased consumer products such as toiletries, soap, cosmetics, teeth cleaning products, shaving products and detergents, as well as other non-durables such as glassware, light bulbs, batteries, paper products and plastic goods. FMCG may also include pharmaceuticals, consumer electronics, packaged food products and drinks, although these are often categorised separately.

### 3rd Element: Fixture

Key: 1. Catchments Grocer; 2. Speciality Store; 3. Supermarket; 4. Department Store

#### Type of Fixture and Density

The fixtures have to complement the value of the merchandise. A jeweller uses a lot of expensive woodwork and stones like marble and granite to add value to his/her merchandise, whereas a sportswear goods store uses more of metal and plastic. The density of fixtures is measured as the number of fixtures per 100 sq ft of store space. This would complement the density of the merchandise as it has a big impact on the convenience of shopping.



#### First Department Store<sup>2</sup>

Aristide Boucicaut founded Le Bon Marché in Paris in 1838. By 1852, it offered a wide variety of goods in 'departments' inside one building. Goods were sold at fixed prices, with guarantees allowing exchanges and refunds. By the end of the 19th century, Georges Dufayel, a French credit merchant, had served up to three million customers and was affiliated with La Samaritaine, a large French department store established in 1870 by a former Bon Marché executive.



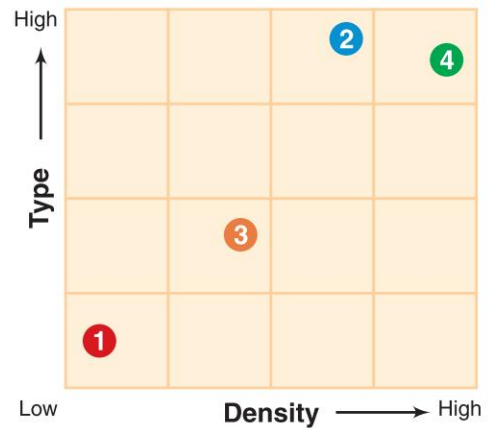
<sup>2</sup>Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Department\\_store](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Department_store) accessed on 7 May 2009

## 4th Element: Sound

Key: 1. Catchments Grocer; 2. Speciality Store;  
3. Supermarket; 4. Department Store

### Type of Sound and Density

Sound can be pleasant or unpleasant and it can have a direct impact on the atmosphere of the store. A pleasant sound, like music in a departmental store, or the sound of the balls rolling and pins falling in a bowling alley adds to the intensity of the experience. An unpleasant sound like motor traffic, on the other hand, can have a negative effect. Departmental stores play music based on the category of merchandise. The category of the merchandise determines the type and density of sound. Soft instrumental music is generally used in jewellery and cosmetics while contemporary soundtracks complement the casual and youth fashion-wear segments.



## Music Policy

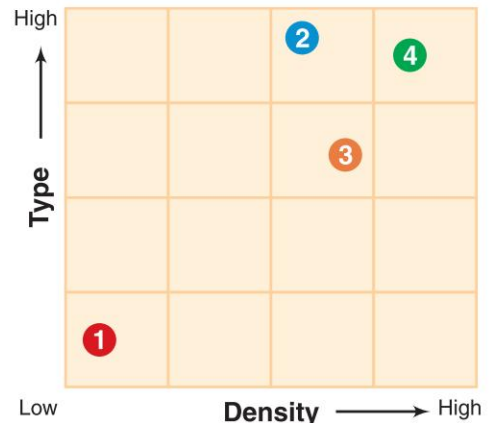
Every retail shop should have a music policy as the universal language – music – provides a non-stop, entertaining retail experience to customers. Sound enhances a store's environment. It can be used as a mood setter, an attention grabber, and an informer. Often music is used in retail stores to promote buying, to set stage for a particular shopping theme, or to remind consumers of a special season or holiday, such as Christmas. Shoppers reported themselves (perception) as shopping longer when exposed to familiar music, but actually shopped longer when exposed to unfamiliar music. Environmental factors like music influence the time spent in the store, propensity to make a purchase, and satisfaction with the experience. Music also reduces monetary and psychic costs in terms of shoppers' perceptions.

## 5th Element: Odour

Key: 1. Catchments Grocer; 2. Speciality Store;  
3. Supermarket; 4. Department Store

### Type of Odour and Density

Like sound, odour too has a positive or negative effect on the atmosphere of a store. Positive odours, like that of fresh coffee beans or flowers, add to the shopping experience in the menswear and cosmetics departments of the store. Negative odours, like that of a musty carpet or cigarette smoke, can drive customers



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away. While the strength of an odour is also important, often even the right odour can have a negative effect if it is too strong.

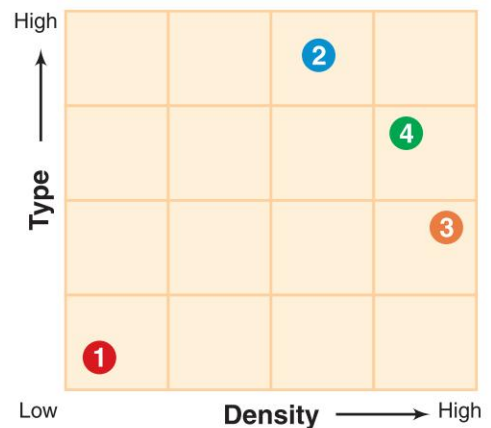
An **odour** is a volatilised chemical compound, generally at a very low concentration, that humans or other animals perceive by the sense of olfaction. Odours are also called **smells**, which can be pleasant or unpleasant. The terms **fragrance**, **scent** and **aroma** are used primarily by the food and cosmetic industry to describe a pleasant odour, and are sometimes used to refer to perfumes. In contrast, **malodorous**, **raunch**, **stench**, **reek** and **stink** are used specifically to describe unpleasant odours. Odour intensity can be divided into the following categories according to intensity: 0 – no odour, 1 – very weak (odour threshold), 2 – weak, 3 – distinct, 4 – strong, 5 – very strong, and 6 – intolerable. This method is most often applied through a dilution series tested by a panel of independent observers who have been trained to differentiate intensity.

## 6th Element: Visual

Key: 1. Catchments Grocer; 2. Speciality Store;  
3. Supermarket; 4. Department Store

### Type of Visual Factors

These are as a result of the overall store presentation – the interior design, display and visual merchandising. Elements like lighting and colour can be controlled to make customers buy more. Warm yellow shades of light compliment gold jewellery as they add richness. Natural shades (daylight colours) are good for garments as they bring out the true colour of the merchandise. Bright colours like bright red or yellow are said to increase the pulse rate in human beings and trigger impulse purchases (FMCG goods use this effectively). Softer colours like pastels keep the pulse rate comfortable and are used in merchandise backdrops that need a longer time for inspection and selection (like watches and jewellery).



## Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is defined as the study of the buying units and the exchange processes involved in acquiring, consuming and disposing of goods, services, experiences and ideas.

Individuals have their own little pet peeves – what may turn off one customer may not bother another. Retailers, however, cannot afford to turn off a single customer and the image is everything. Keeping the stores neat and clean (hygienic) is not only easy to do, it is generally an inexpensive way of attracting customers and creating a pleasant store atmosphere.



The atmosphere of a store is made up of the physical characteristics and surrounding influences, that are used to create an image in order to attract customers. Ideally, it should reflect the store's image.

Take a look around any retail store. Many situations, though not obvious, tend to offend customers. If one were to look harder, some of the following offences might be observed:

## 10 WAYS A STORE CAN TURN OFF ITS CUSTOMERS

### 1. Dirty Toilets/Washrooms

Customers are fussy about toilets and thus it is the number one spot on this list. Retail store restrooms should always be sparkling clean, whether they are open for public use or not. Plenty of paper towels, soap, and trash receptacles should be stocked in the bathrooms, which should be cleaned multiple times daily.

### 2. Messy Trial Rooms

Keeping the trial room area free of discarded hangers, tags and empty packaging, goes beyond creating a neat store appearance. It is also a good step towards loss prevention. A trial/dressing room should be rid of out of place items after each customer uses it. Basic necessities – a small stool to sit, 3–4 hooks to hang, size charts, etc. – should also be provided in these rooms.

### 3. Loud Music

Playing music in a retail store can help create a certain atmosphere for shoppers. Music that is too loud, inappropriate or of poor quality can ruin a positive shopping experience.

### 4. Handwritten Signs

In this era of technology, there is no excuse for displaying handwritten signage – it is best to use computer printed or pre-printed signs. Quite simply, printed signs look more professional whereas signs with hard-to-read handwriting can turn off a customer.

### 5. Stained Floor or Ceiling Tiles

It is true, accidents happen. However, customers do not have to be exposed to the same. Dirty carpets, stained flooring and ugly ceiling tiles can turn off many shoppers. Sweeping, vacuuming and mopping should be done on a regular basis; more so in larger stores. Consider hiring a professional cleaning crew to polish tile floors. Replace stained portions of carpets and ceiling tiles where possible.

### 6. Poor Lighting

Ample lighting should be ensured in all customer areas of the store, taking into consideration shoppers with aging or less than perfect eyesight. Burned out light bulbs should be replaced as soon as possible. Stores should be well illuminated at all times—many stores keep the lights off during the day and are lit only when a customer enters the respective section/shop.

## 7. Unpleasant Odours

Customers understand that if they visit a lawn and garden centre they may have to deal with the smell of fertilizer. The same goes for shoppers of a feed supply store. Certain odours are understandable and may even appeal to the customer's sense of smell. However, shoppers do not want to smell an employee's lunch drifting across the store. Neutralizers should be used to combat any such offensive odours.

## 8. Crowded Aisles

Consumers like a selection but not if it means sacrificing comfort while shopping. Store should be designed to allow adequate space between aisles and between the fixtures; walkways should be kept free of merchandise. Cramped spaces can ruin a shopping experience and turn off customers.

## 9. Disorganised Cash Counters

A stack of hangers, returned merchandise, and sloppy work areas behind the cash counter are huge customer turn-offs. This particular area where a customer's financial transaction is taking place should not show any signs of disorganisation. Like messy trial rooms, a disorganised cash counter can also increase the probability of theft. Register areas should be neat and tidy at all times; cashiering should be quick and accurate.

## 10. Lack of Shopping Carts/Baskets

Some retail stores may not require shopping carts or may be too small, but there is not a single type of retailer that would not need at least some sort of shopping baskets. If customers are to purchase more than one item from a store, an adequate supply of shopping carts or baskets should be conveniently on hand. The sizes, however, may vary.

### Turban Museum<sup>3</sup>

Turban museum, located in Jaipur, houses the largest collection of turbans in the world. The turban is known to be a must for the men of Rajasthan. There are two categories of turbans. The ten-metre long 'safe' is tied everyday, and is said to be the symbol of a man's personality, his position and ancestry. The 22-metre long 'pag' is tied once and worn till it needs a wash. The Jaipur turban museum has all kinds of turbans in thousands of colour combinations. Made from a variety of fabrics, different turbans are used for different occasions and are gracefully displayed on mannequin heads along with signs.

<sup>3</sup>The museum is next to the famous Surabhi restaurant, near Subhash Chowk, within walled Jaipur.



## IN SUMMARY

- A successful retailing business requires that a distinct (discrete) and consistent (constant) image be created in the customers' minds, one that covers all product and service offerings.
- All decisions made by a Visual Merchandiser are based on what image a retailer wants to maintain of a store. In this decision making process, what helps a visual merchandiser the most is his/her understanding of consumer behaviour.
- The retailer employs sales staff to match the sales requirements and image needs of the store. A retailer needs to decide whether the sales people speak in English or in the local language. Or if they should be dressed formally?
- The type of merchandise determines its density in a store. The density of merchandise also determines the margins planned on the merchandise. The lower the density, the higher the margins.
- Types of fixtures have to complement the value of the merchandise.
- Sound can be pleasant or unpleasant and can have a direct impact on the store atmosphere. A pleasant sound, like music in a department store or the sound of the balls rolling and pins falling in a bowling alley adds to the intensity of the experience.
- Like sound, odour too has a positive or negative effect on the store atmosphere. Positive odours like that of fresh coffee beans or flowers add to the shopping experience.
- Visual factors are as a result of the overall store presentation – the interior design, display and visual merchandising. Elements like lighting and colour can be controlled to make customers buy more.

## Exercises

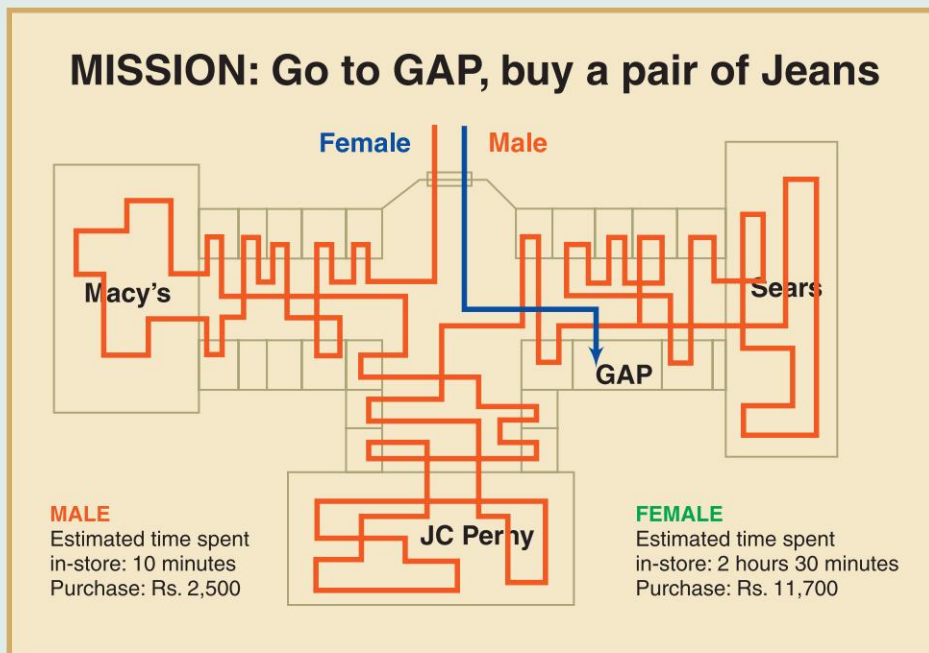
1. Define Image Mix.
2. What are the elements of Image Mix? Explain.
3. How do sound and odour influence the image of a store? Give examples.
4. Discuss employees and merchandise as elements of Image Mix.
5. Do lighting and wall colours have a bearing on the image of a store? If yes, explain how?
6. What kind of material (wood, metal, plastic, etc.) should the following stores use for their fixtures:
  - (a) Dior
  - (b) Un-branded footwear store at a local weekly market
  - (c) Exclusive toy outlet for Fun School
  - (d) Jewellery store (selling precious stores)
  - (e) Fashion jewellery store
7. What turns off a customer in a store? Make a list of the factors, if any.
8. True or false:
  - (a) Loud music helps in selling
  - (b) Print signage's look better than a handwritten sign
  - (c) Foul smell can turn off a customer
9. Visit your local market, pick four types of stores mentioned in Chapter Three and prepare an 'Image Mix' grid for each of the six elements explained herein.

## Case Study

### MEN BUY, WOMEN SHOP\*

Men, who have often been accused of being mere replacement shoppers, tend to be more utilitarian when they hit the malls and shopping centres. It's a mission: Get in. Get what's needed. Get out. Quickly.

Women, on the other hand, generally like to look around, talk to sales associates and experience the shopping. They walk around, smell perfume, touch clothes, dab on cosmetics. They want attention and they want direction.



Recently, many leading brands for men's formalwear have also introduced the women's range for formal clothing, and stand-alone stores. However, display and design of these stores is very different from their masculine counterparts. In a typical men's formal section, shirts are stacked properly, and if the visual merchandising norms are religiously followed, displays are 'size' wise and well colour blocked. Whereas, in a women's formal section, 95 per cent of the merchandise is on 'hang', usually front facing, rather than in the usual stacks. Also, the matching trousers/bottoms/skirts are displayed right alongside or, if possible, on the same fixtures. Matching bags, scarves or footwear can be found within the respective areas.

\*Studio Atomium; RVG News Vision Pvt. Ltd., Mail: [vinodkaul@newsvision.in](mailto:vinodkaul@newsvision.in), Visit: [www.newsvision.in](http://www.newsvision.in)

The stacking in these women shops is generally 5 per cent. Stacks usually comprise 2–3 items (single piece of S, M & L sizes each) of a similar design and in the same colour. The others items are on hang-rods. On the other hand, men's stacks carry up to 8 pieces, featuring just 4 sizes – one in size 38, two of size 40, three in size 42, and two again of size 44. In 99 per cent women's wear shops, the store contains only hang-rods only; front facing options/fixtures are not available. This is because more garments can be displayed on hang-rods as they come under capacity fixture.

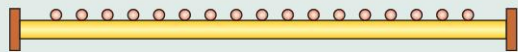
Boutiques have hang-rods as women find these very easy to browse through. Surprisingly, even stores like Mango, CK Jeans and Guess have hang-rods. Herein, merchandise is well colour blocked and coordinated. One hang-rod carries only greens, whereas another has the entire collection in, say, pinks, with 3–4 tops and 3–4 bottoms, and then different prints in the same colour are repeated in the same fashion display area.

Not surprisingly, there is no stopping on innovation. Fixture designers have now turned the hang-rods into a featured fixture (Figure 2.1). This offers more scope for very calculative stocks which women want. Moreover, each fixture carries more merchandise than a front-facing straight arm, and looks neat too. New stores like Ruh and Kimaya carry these featured hang-rods throughout the store. Alternately, there are stores which make their displays using metal hang-rods with the nods (Figure 2.2).

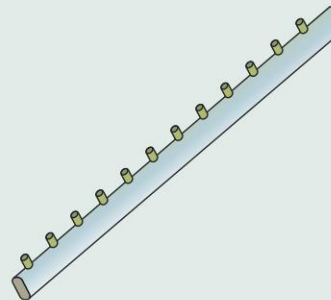
Waterfall arms (Figure 2.3) and straight arms are also seen in women's formal stores. Surveyors have been told by women shoppers that they find straight arms little uncomfortable as the displays do not come up well. On the other hand, the waterfall arms are more preferred as the entire colour range displayed on the arm can be seen. Besides stores like Aftershock and Zapp, department stores like Shoppers' Stop and Pantaloons also use these waterfalls in their many sections. In fact, even the popular music store, Planet M, uses a waterfall arm to display Tee Shirts.



**Figure 2.1** Wooden Hang-rod with grooves for hangers



**Figure 2.2** Metal Hang-rod with nods



**Figure 2.3**

Women do not like it when sales associates show them the different styles and new items. 'I told him what I was looking for and why, and he set out to find me the right suit,' said one woman. 'I didn't have to do anything.' Apparently, the sales associate killed the joy of shopping by not allowing the female customer to browse through the store's offerings.

To summarise, store designers and retailers have to understand consumer shopping behaviour, especially in the case of women, when it comes to display of merchandise and store layout. As they say, **men shop as hunters, women shop as gatherers.**

## EXERCISE

1. Why do most women stores display merchandise on hang-rods rather than in stacks? Elaborate.
2. Visit the popular mall or shopping complex in your city/town and see the various types and lengths of hand-rods. Support your observation notes with sketches and details of the type and number of pieces displayed.
3. A woman's shopping experience is different from a man shopping behaviour. Discuss.

# PART 2

## Display Basics

Store exterior, façade and the main store sign are what customers or passers-by notice or come across at first. Even while visiting a favourite or routine market, the 'new' shop is often noticeable from a distance because of its huge signboard, the vibrant colours and decoration at its entrance, or the lights placed at its façade. In Chapter Four these elements are discussed along with their importance. Also covered in this chapter are in-store displays and the various communication points inside a shop. The store is laid out with lot of focus on the categories of merchandise as much as on its target customers. In fact, if the shop is laid out cleverly, it will guide customers from its very entrance and through to the different categories, leading them to what they came in to shop. This is done by creating different displays and communication in-store, which guide customers and make shopping more convenient. Customers also save time and, more significantly, prefer to come back again to the same store.

The mantra of a successful display will be disclosed in Chapter Five. If followed with care, it can turn a non-profit shop or section into one of the most profitable. The tried and tested AIDCS mantra will be discussed with each of its elements – A-I-D-C-S – in detail, along with photographs and indigenous examples that convey the message.

Chapter Six, the last in this section, offers thorough design basics. While most students may understand 'design' in general, in retail, the key focus is on merchandise and design is used somewhere in the backdrop to highlight the hero – the product. These basics will help shape visual thoughts. Different types of lines, shapes and textures stimulate customer imagination and feelings as well. These elements and principles of design are the building blocks used to create a work of art referred to as in-store display.

Colour plays the most vital role in our daily lives and more so in displays. People buy colours before they decide on the style or price or brand. Colour-wise display of the merchandise or product helps customers make their selection easily. Also discussed in this chapter are various techniques of colour-mixing and signage which further help visual merchandisers to create a good display. Different types of signage at different locations guide customers to the entire store or even inside a mall. From 'parking' to 'exit' or 'washrooms' to 'please pay here' – a signage is at every retail point.

Explained at the very end of this chapter are some of the materials that are very frequently used by visual merchandisers for the purpose of display and communication.



# Industry Insight

## Displays

*By Rahul Rajamuthiah, Chief – Business Development, Future Axiom Telecom Limited*

Displays in a retail store are an excellent low cost tool available to operational managers to increase footfall and make conversions. In fact, in any highly competitive environment, displays are the only way to distinguish a store from its competitor(s).

The word 'display' means to showcase products which a retailer offers customers walking through the street. This function of retail provides the maximum scope for creativity and lets the visual merchandiser use customer-specific insights, cultural tags, popular topics, and plenty of cognitive psychology to impact buying behaviour.

The impact of a store display starts from the point where the customer has an unhindered view of a store. This means that a store signage with its clearly visible name and/or tag line is the starting point for smaller stores, whereas for larger stores, along with the signage, external display windows play an important role in drawing customers inside. Once the customer starts walking towards the store the window displays – displaying the seasonal theme, a new product or the latest festival range – provides the customer with an overview of what lies inside the store. For this purpose, in-store signage, props and display elements are considered under the same name of 'display'.

The Visual Merchandiser and the Store Planner have to be cognizant of the fact that the customer's senses are being worked upon – starting from a distance of 10 metres to even 100 metres, depending on the store location and size. Learning and applying the impact of visual merchandising on the sub-conscious mind of a potential customer is the skill which makes for brilliant Visual Merchandisers.

Every Visual Merchandiser should be equipped with a map highlighting key locations in a customer's line of sight. It should be based on the distance and direction from which a view will be established. This map could be broken up into the following blocks:

1. 50 metres from the store – Signage
2. 10 metres from the store – Show window
3. Point of entry – Store directory
4. Display on merchandise fixtures – Category signage
5. Staircases/escalators/lifts – Captive viewpoints
6. Mood windows – Windows which display a new arrival or theme
7. Focal points – Category specific themes highlighting the salient features
8. Highpoints – Props within the merchandise display shelf highlighting a particular SKU
9. Colour blocking – Laying out merchandise with colour blocks to highlight shades
10. Shelf talkers – On shelf product detailing and descriptions

Each of these elements either attracts the customer or cues her/him towards a category or a product. Displays can be structured according to the tasks they adopt, which may be to:

1. Attract footfall,
2. Cue products and
3. Create theme

Any display has to take into account various parameters that decide the kind of display element to be used. If, for example, these elements are to be used in a large street-facing, window then the size of the prop has to be large enough to be visible to a passer-by. The colour of the prop has to ensure that the elements are visible both during the day when there is sunlight (sometimes sunlight falling directly on the window hinders visibility) and when it is lit up at night. The following parameters need to be constantly measured to ensure that a display will deliver the objective which it has been created with.

1. Prop size – Based on the viewing distance and the largest object in the front;
2. Colour – Visibility basis backdrop and contrast;
3. Balance – More product centric than prop centric;
4. Lighting – Should highlight the display; and
5. Location of the display point.

**Financials:** At the end, as is the case with any business, all efforts have to be measured for their financial viability. The rationale for deciding this will be based on the cost of the display element and its effect on the retail sales.

Many a time, Visual Merchandisers are faced with the challenge of justifying the expenditure on props and execution. The obvious way to justify these spends is to monitor the growth in sales that is happening as a result of the display. Often, it is difficult to correlate sales impact to VM spends. So, a Visual Merchandiser has to work in close association with the operation teams to identify the right theme, the right product to display, and, once the display has been implemented, to meticulously monitor the sales performance of those products that are highlighted.

# Store Exteriors and Interiors: Elements of Display

## 4 CHAPTER

### STORE EXTERIORS

Customers may be influenced by the physical nature of the retail environment. Just like the product packaging is referred to as ‘the silent salesman’, similarly the physical aspects of a retail outlet – size, design, cleanliness, etc. – have the same effect. Important aspects of the physical nature of a store comprise the design and appearance of both, the exterior and the interior.

Exterior design features include the architecture, signage and appearance maintenance play an important role in the formation and development of the store quality perception and whether it draws the customers in. Understandably, a customer may decide not to visit the store at all if the perception of the store exterior is of poor quality.

Simply put, the exterior appearance of a store silently announces what to expect inside and, if done desirably, invites the customers in. The quality of a store-front is a major determinant for a customer, particularly a first-time customer, and should not be underestimated. Some important aspects to be considered while designing the store-front are as follows:

- How will the customers locate the store from a distance?
- Are the sidewalks, leading to the store, clear and accessible?
- Are the exterior signs clear and clean? Do they need painting or a touch up?
- Is the window glass clean? More importantly, is it presentable?



## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- The various aspects to consider while designing the exterior of a store
- The interior of a store
- Elements of store interiors and exteriors
- Store areas which, if used well, can communicate effectively with customers



Store with interesting store exterior-in shape of sports-wear sun glasses!

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The most important function of a store's exterior is to attract customers. Based on the exteriors of a store, the customers will form an opinion on the positioning and personality of the retail brand. And, on this basis, some customers will pass by and others will enter. That is why, the store's exterior has to differentiate itself from competition, and effectively communicate what it stands for, so as to attract customers. Let us discuss the exterior of a store under the following headings:

- Store signs and the façade
- Banners planter's and awnings

### Store Signs and the Façade

A store signage not only highlights the name of the store, but also adds visual beauty to the street and streetscape. Signage should be clear, bold and reflect the point of difference of the retail store. It should be used as a tool for customers walking down the street, motorists (or people travelling in public transport) who may stop for a few seconds in the traffic, and may scan the line of shops on the street.



**A store façade with prominent signage/branding**

The store sign outside the building makes for the first impression when it comes to the shopper. It sets the look and the image of the store. Some of the aspects that create the look are: colour, styling, material used, lighting, and the comparative scale and size of the sign. The store sign is its signature – personal, original and recognisable. It is believed that 75 per cent of first-time customers can recall the store's entrance, which provides the first and last view of its interiors.

Store façade is the face or front of a building (any side of a building facing a public walkway or roadway); there is a lot that can be done to maximise its impact. For example, extra lighting could be used at night to highlight the store. Or, for that matter, the very design of the façade may be created in a way that emphasises the image of the store.

## Banners, Planters and Awnings/Canopies



Awnings/canopies (left) and banners/flags (right) used in a store façade

Banners can be used on the store façade or pillars. It is an inexpensive way of promotion. The fluttering makes them eye-catching. Planters add to the general ambiance. Artificial plants are common but the real ones always look so much better! Awning adds another gracious touch to the façade. They don't just add colour to the façade but also cut down the glare on the window glass.

### Borrow Your Customers' Eyes<sup>1</sup>

In our town one of the most popular lunch spots is right next to a really fine independent bookstore. I love bookstores and so recently after lunch I decided to stop in, browse around, and pick up a magazine or two. As soon as I hit the lease line between the restaurant and the bookstore the sidewalks turned treacherous and icy. Clearly they hadn't been shovelled for quite some time. Argggghh. Even more annoying, the doorway to the store WAS shovelled and dry. They just hadn't bothered to shovel the sidewalk. You see, they were paying attention to what happens inside the store, but they forgot that a customer's experience starts well before they hit the door. **STAND OUTSIDE AND LOOK AT YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH YOUR CUSTOMERS EYES.** It's easy to miss the obvious when we see it everyday. We don't see how dirty the windows have become, how many cigarette butts are scattered around the parking lot, how badly the paint is peeling on the sign, how the canopy has faded, or notice the burned out light bulbs in the rear of the store. Just like it's surprising to look at a picture from a year ago and see how much your children have grown. But just because you don't see the icy sidewalk that is a hazard to your customer doesn't mean your customer isn't noticing—and reacting emotionally to it.

**Bottom line:** Retail (any business for that matter) is detail. Doing lots of little things well creates big time customer loyalty, which in turn creates big time bank accounts for you.

<sup>1</sup>Tips from WhizBang! Training, Bob and Susan Negen (<http://www.whizbangtraining.com/sb/tips.aspx>)

## STORE INTERIORS

Although the percentage of in-store decision-making may vary according to the type of store and product, the information provided by the Point-of-Purchase-Advertising Institute indicates that nothing influences a customer's decision-making as much as advertising used at the point of decision-making – the point-of-purchase (POP). It is believed that 64.8 per cent decisions are made in the supermarket (this includes impulse buying, and covers items that were planned for purchase – that is, the customer had an item in mind but not the particular brand).

A store interior is usually divided into two sections: the selling area and the sales support area. The selling area is where the merchandise is presented to the customer: shelves, racks holding merchandise, displays, cash registers, etc. The sales support area contains amenities for customers: restrooms, lounges, cafes, and the like. The latter also includes staff areas and space for merchandise receiving and storage.

### Display Points: Where all can We Display?

A visual merchandiser should make the maximum use of some basic areas, which are common to many different types of stores, for communication with the stores' customers. These areas are:

#### 1. Windows

A window is like your visiting card, it must tell the customer who you are. Since it is at the entrance, it can be used to provide vital information to the customers. Communication and messages pertaining to events, offers, festivals, etc. can be very effective from a store window. The main function of the window is to promote the store's image and, thus, help maximise the sales of its merchandise.



An interesting window display, communicating 'what's new' in-store.



When it comes to window display, the first consideration should be the merchandise 'story' that is to be promoted. And, while doing so, the following aspects should be kept in mind:

- Keep it simple. Don't try to put in everything at once.
- Keep it clean.
- Change displays frequently to keep the look fresh.
- Bright lighting is crucial, both during the day and at night. Use lights to highlight individual items or signs. (Movable track lights work well.)
- Use repetition of shapes and colours to attract attention.
- Cluster items in groups of three or five. Odd numbers are most pleasing to the eye.
- Vary height and depth of items to carry the eye throughout the display. A pyramid or triangle is a pleasing shape.
- Use motion to catch the customer's eye.
- Use light, bright colours.
- Continue the theme of the window display with other displays inside the store.

*Note:* Chapter Eleven of this book further discusses 'window displays' in detail.

## 2. Highpoints

Customers are surrounded by merchandise. A visual break is needed not just to create interest in certain goods but also to create a beautiful store. A high point refers to that space in the store which is provided for a display on the wall. It also breaks the monotony of a wall.



**A highpoint; merchandise displayed on a highpoint should be available nearby for easy access and selection.**

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A wall could have multiple highpoints. There could be just a visual or a complete display at a highpoint. Most brands use this space to promote their latest collection.

### 3. Focal points

Similar to a highpoint, a focal point is also meant to add interest to the floor. It also acts as a cue, cuing customers to a section, new arrivals, etc.

Unlike a highpoint which is mounted on or against a wall, a focal point is created on the floor of a store.

### 4. Nesting tables

This display comprises a set of 3–4 tables placed at different levels (height) to create a cluster. This fixture is most commonly used to highlight new arrivals. It can be of wood or metal or any other material. If appointed well, nesting tables can be treated as a focal point as well. It can display a range of new merchandise – the latest collection of shirts by a brand, different types of candles for gifting during Diwali, etc.

A nesting table can also be effectively used for cross merchandising; for example, a bathrobe can be coordinated with bathroom slippers and towels of different sizes. It can be used for cosmetics to display the (new) range now available in the store.



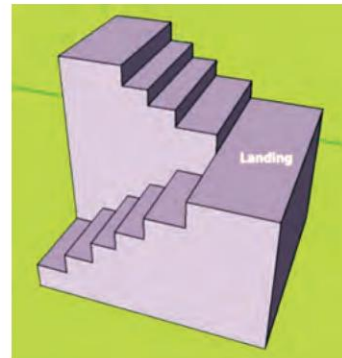
**A focal point; merchandise displayed on focal points should be available nearby for easy access and selection.**



**A set of nesting tables**

## 5. Staircase Landings

Staircase landings are referred to the space between two flights of stairs. While this space is kept empty in most stores, it can be used to give a lot of information to customers. For example, this space can be used to communicate, to those customers climbing up, what they can expect on the next floor. It can be used very effectively to communicate offers, events, discounts, or festival specific merchandise.



**Staircase landing used to promote the latest collection of ethnic wear (left);  
An Illustration of a staircase landing (right).**

## 6. Step Raisers

The space between two steps is called the step raiser. This space is around 6 inches to 8 inches. Step raisers can be put together to create a visual or an interesting message, or to simply 'get the attention' of passers-by.



**Step raisers used at a mall entrance to promote the brand and direct traffic to the store**

## 7. Lift Area

This is the area inside and outside lifts, where customers spend some time, either waiting for the lift or before getting into one. This (waiting) time can be utilised to the fullest to communicate customers about offers, promotions, store directory, etc.

## 8. Pennants/Danglers

This refers to that communication (printed material) which is suspended from the ceiling of the store. It informs about offers, new launches, etc. Such danglers are easily noticed at grocery shops or departmental stores. When designing a dangler, a visual merchandiser should always remember that the written text is viewed from a minimum distance of about 7' to 8' – and, therefore, the message should be printed in a large font.



**Lift areas used to promote the running event; also note the 'store directory' between two lifts.**



**Pennants/danglers used to communicate the running event.**



## 9. Cash Counters

Customers reach the cash counter only after they have been through the store; it is here that they make the payment. By now, it is probably too late to give information regarding the running offers in the store as the customer has done his shopping. This is a good location to give information regarding upcoming events, exchange policy and loyalty programme.



**A cash counter with detailed information on the store's loyalty programme and exchange policy.**

## Space on Hire (SOH)

This is space let out to brands (for a rental) to be used by them for promotions (visual only). It does not include retail space, i.e., a pillar let out to a brand for a visual. An SOH is a non-retail area, i.e., the brand cannot use this area for selling merchandise; it is strictly for visual purposes.

## 10. Pillars

Pillars can be used to display merchandise by adding shelves or placing bins against them. Displays and communication can also be customised to fit around pillars for in-store communication and, at times, even for sales.

## 11. Entrances

Window glass and façade, doors, steps, etc. at the store entrance can be used to communicate with passers-by (customers).



**Pillars used to launch a new product range.**



Store entrance of 'One Mobile' at a high street location

### Store Entrances<sup>2</sup>

Store entrances are the best possible spot to communicate the offer or what's new or what's available inside. Various POS materials are being used here, like, Glow sign board, Standee, Offer signage, Posters, etc. You may visit [www.retails.co.in](http://www.retails.co.in) for more information on the various display and POS materials.

They are dedicated to create state of the art design solutions for Mall Signage's, Indoor displays, POP display, exhibitions & outdoor signage's. Their mission is to combine artistry with the latest in cutting edge technology to produce signature effects that go beyond industry expectation and also to provide top quality products and services.

With over ten years of experience, they firmly believe Customer Service is the #1 priority, and to deliver the highest quality of work to their clients in this field.

<sup>2</sup>Tips from WhizBang! Training, Bob and Susan Negen (<http://www.whizbangtraining.com/sb/tips.aspx>)

## IN SUMMARY

- The exterior of a store can be discussed under the following headings: store signs, store façade, and banners, planters and awnings.
- The most important function of a store exterior is to attract customers. Based on the exterior of the store, a customer will form an opinion about the retail brand's positioning and personality. On the basis of that, some customers will pass by and others will enter.
- A few aspects that contribute to creating the signage are colour, styling, material used, lighting, and the comparative scale and size of it. The store sign is its signature – personal, original and recognisable.
- At night, extra lighting could be used to highlight a store. The very design of the façade may be such as to emphasise the image of the store.
- A store interior is usually divided into two sections: the selling area and the sales support area. The former is where the merchandise is presented to the customers; it includes shelves, racks holding merchandise, displays, cash registers, etc. The sales support area contains amenities for customers, such as restrooms, lounges, and cafes. It also includes staff areas and space for merchandise receiving and storage.
- Where all can we display? Answer: windows; high points; focal points; nesting tables; landings; lifts; danglers; cash counters; and pillars.

## Exercises

1. Why are store exteriors so important?
2. When designing a window display, the first consideration is the merchandise 'story' that is to be promoted. What else needs to be considered?
3. Where all can we display in a store (interior)?
4. What sort of displays (new arrivals/combo packs, or latest collection) are best suited for the following:
  - (a) Focal points
  - (b) Nesting tables
  - (c) Highpoints
5. True or false:
  - (a) A dangler should always have communication material printed in a small font.
  - (b) Merchandise displayed on a highpoint or a focal point should always be available nearby for easy access and selection.
  - (c) A focal point is a part of a store's exterior.
6. A set of 3–4 tables kept at different levels (heights) to create a cluster. This fixture is most commonly used to highlight new arrivals. Name the fixture.
  - (a) Hang rod
  - (b) Nesting table
  - (c) Highpoint
  - (d) Step raisers
7. Fill in the blanks:
  - (a) Store façade is the \_\_\_\_\_ of a building.
  - (b) A store interior is usually divided into two sections: the \_\_\_\_\_ area and the sales support area.
  - (c) \_\_\_\_\_ is the in-store space provided for a display on the wall. It also helps in breaking the monotony of a wall.
  - (d) The space between 2 steps is known as Step \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Visit the most famous market/mall in your locality city/town. Observe different types of store exteriors. Make a report on all that you can do to improve the same.
9. Visit the popular department store in your locality/city and observe the various 'display points' in-store (inside the shop). Make a list.
10. Design the main signage for a hi-end electronic store located inside a mall. Define the colour, fonts, and media. Try making it an attention grabbing device. (Assume any size.)

## VM Speaks



**Name:** Vandana Cardoz

**Present Designation:** Manager Visual Merchandising | Westside

**Company's name:** Trent Limited

**Location:** Santacruz, Mumbai

A BA graduate, she grabbed a diploma in Graphic Design from South Delhi Polytechnic. She has work experience of over 16 years in retail and VM. Before joining the field of retail, Vandana was a Graphic Designer at Aptech. She started her career as a Visualizer designing cards for Archies Gifts and Greetings.

### What led you to pursue a career in visual merchandising?

**Vandana:** In India VM was at infancy stage ten years ago. I happened to spot an advertisement for the post of Visual Merchandiser, in the newspaper. Since I was a Visualiser/Graphic Designer, I applied and got appointed. It was the beginning of a creative journey called VM which still continues to enthrall and enchant me!!

### What is the typical process you go through for implementing a window display?

**Vandana:** First and foremost, the theme of the window is the most important aspect to be kept in mind.

- A minimum of 3 options of designs for the window need to be created, keeping both cost and transportation in mind.
- Planning – Prop Quantity Calculation and Material Quantity Calculation
- Ordering and sourcing of props and materials – best quality at best rates
- Fabrication of props
- Packing and dispatch of props and materials to the right locations
- Installation/execution notes to the various stores
- Window implementation with photographs

### Where does India stand today when one talks of displays? Where do you see the future of window display going?

**Vandana:** India has lot of talent and potential. But the only constant is change. We need to tirelessly strive to upgrade our VM standards to match International VM. We need to constantly innovate, create and learn in the process. Only then we will be able to set benchmarks!

The sky is the limit for the future of window displays. Since a window is the face of the store, it can upgrade the store image and create brand identity. Windows displays will become more and more spectacular in the future; they will elevate and enhance the look of the store to the optimum. We are slowly but steadily inching close to international VM standards!.

# All I Do Can Sell (AIDCS)

## 5 CHAPTER

### AIDCS: IS MY DISPLAY GOOD OR NOT?

A display is created with an objective to increase sales. As per the very definition of visual merchandising, any steps that are taken by a Visual Merchandiser must be done with an intension to increase sales (refer Chapter Two). To see to it that this very objective of retail is met, the questions a Visual Merchandiser asks once a display is complete, are as follows:

1. Does my display attract the attention of my customers?
2. Does my display arouse interest of my target customers?
3. Does my display create desire for the products in the minds of the customers?
4. Does my display signage contain all the information my customers need to be convinced about the product?
5. Will my display bring about sales?

**‘All I Do Can Sell’ stands for:**

**A**ttention

**I**nterest

**D**esire

**C**onvince

**S**ale

## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- The meaning and significance of AIDCS – ‘All I Do Can Sell’
- The importance of analysing a display
- A display analysed on the basis of Attention, Interest, Desire and Convincing the customer, so as to finally lead to sales

## How to Attract the Attention of the Customers?

Ideally, VM must attract – and hold – the attention of passers-by until interest is aroused. Although a display may attract attention from over a block away, it may fail to arouse buying-interest when it comes to the displayed merchandise. If a display is sufficiently surprising and unusual, a potential customer will cross the street to view it more closely. It makes no difference whether movement, colour, lighting, form, or lettering achieves this result. Contrast especially can be relied upon to attract the attention of as many passers-by as can be. For the same, any method is employed as long as it does not evoke any disapproval or conflict in the minds of the observers.

Simply put, we can catch the attention of the customer by:

- (a) Arranging the display on a podium (for focal points). A podium is a platform raised above its surroundings to lend prominence to the mannequin/products displayed on it.
- (b) Creating a contrasting backdrop (for highpoints wall, window displays, etc.).



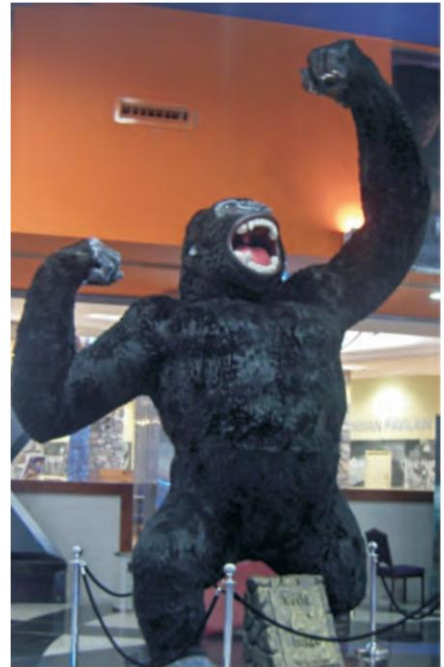
## 62 Visual Merchandising

- (c) Highlighting the display with accent lighting (ensuring that the focus is on the focal points of the display).
- (d) Displaying anything 'larger than life' which passers-by are sure not to ignore.

### How to Make the Display 'Interest' the Customers?

A display needs to be interesting lest the customer loses interest! For the most part, passers-by approach store windows without much purpose. Attention is arrested by something positive, some striking point that we call 'focus' or optical centre (also referred to as 'eye of the window') of the display. Lighting, movement, colour or the merchandise itself may help create this focus. The best displays often have the merchandise at their centre (focus). If the focus of the display does not showcase the merchandise, a visual merchandiser makes sure that the eye of the observer moves through the display. This can be done with the use of devices such as arrows (subtle or defined), lines, lighting, colour, etc., that lead to the saleable merchandise.

A display story with props that complement and are relevant to the target segment creates 'interest'. For instance, while antique furniture may not interest an MTV buff, a denim customer may be very interested in a BMW motorcycle.



**A large 15 feet high prop created to promote movie merchandise**



**Mannequins interacting with each other; an interesting display with colour coordinated merchandise**



## How to Create 'Desire' in the Minds of the Customers?

The consumer may be made to 'desire' the merchandise/product being featured when its qualities, uses and benefits are demonstrated. What is required is to sell the idea to the customer that the item in the display is exactly what he/she needs and that owning it will bring complete satisfaction. Enabling customers to relate to the display and having them imagine using the displayed merchandise generates desire. Just like a good advertisement sells dreams, good VM sells personality...

Ensure that the mannequin is dressed and displayed in a way that flatters the store merchandise. Showcase features and uses of the merchandise and always check whether its usability/wearability is displayed in an appropriate setting.



**'Unique by design, selected by those in love' creates desire and cues the customer to buy the product for their loved one. Such a display helps promote gifting during Valentine's Day.**

## How to 'Convince' the Customers?

Tell the truth about the product, bringing out the positive characteristics of both the store and the merchandise being offered. Customer conviction can be achieved through:

- Correct and concise ticketing;
- Highlighting the salient features of the product and price point; and
- Keeping the displayed merchandise at close and visible proximity so that customers can touch, feel and try the product.

What the sign includes (the content of the sign) will depend on the type of store. If, for example, it is a value format store, it will concentrate on the 'value' aspect in its signage.



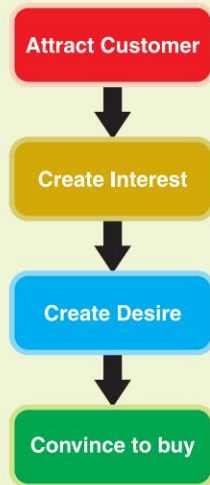
**Clear information about the value of merchandise helps convince customers**

## 64 Visual Merchandising

At Big Bazaar, most signs highlight information about offers or discounts. This is mainly because it is a value format store. Whereas in luxury stores like Dior and Gucci, the signs make the product seem more special. This is done by highlighting product features... For example: 'This coat is made with wool sourced from the hills of Kashmir'.

### How to make a display that brings about 'sales'?

By simply following the four main principles of display, namely:



If a visual merchandiser has done his/her job well up to this point and, in doing so, has successfully managed to impress the potential customer, the sale will happen automatically.

## We Show in Order to Sell

VM is the presentation of the merchandise at its best: colour coordinated, accessorised and self-explanatory. It is one of the final stages in setting up a store that customers will find equally attractive and appealing. Significantly, the store should follow and reflect the principles that underpin the store's image.

Display or visual merchandising is 'showing' the merchandise and its concept at their very best, and with the purpose of making a sale. It may not actually sell the object displayed or the idea promoted, but it does attempt to convince the viewers of the value of the merchandise, the store-promoting object, or the organisation behind the concept. In other words, a cash register may not ring right away because of a particular display, but the impression made on the viewer will be sure to impact future sales.

### AIDCS: The Indian Context

The common street vendor, seen selling handkerchiefs in local Indian markets, typically displays all the varieties and colour options on his arm (wrist-to-elbow length).

At first he shouts aloud about the handkerchief he is selling, "*Rumaal, bees rupay ke do! Sirf bees rupay ke do!*" ("Handkerchiefs; two for only rupees twenty!"). In doing so repeatedly, he is actually trying to get the 'attention' of the passers-by.

Once he has their attention, he then tries to create 'interest' in his products by showing the various designs and colours displayed on his arms. Handkerchiefs for men on the right arm, for ladies on the left arm, and for children, he will display a range pinned on his shirt up to his waist.

Then he typically tries to create 'desire', "*Madam ke liye le-lo, Saabji!*" ("Sir, buy for the madam!"). "*Garmi bahut hai, kaam aayega!*" ("It's too hot, it'll be of use to you!").

Finally, he starts 'convincing': "*Ek jodi ke saath doosari jodi free!*" ("Buy 1 set and get another free!") "*Bees rupay ke char le-lo!*" ("Take four for rupees twenty!") And he goes on to highlight the quality of the product – 'it is pure cotton', 'colours will never fade', 'it is good for your soft skin', and so on. If customers are convinced, they will surely buy the set and get a good deal as well!

The handkerchief seller may be following the AIDCS principle only unwittingly, but that's how even retailers actually bring about sales!!

~ As told by Mr. Surender Gnanaolivue, VP – Store Development, Mahindra Retail

### IN SUMMARY

- 'All I Do Can Sell' stands for: Attention; Interest; Desire; Convince; and Sell.
- Attention: Placing the display on a podium (for focal points); arranging a contrasting backdrop (for highpoints on a wall, display window, etc.); highlighting the display with accent lighting (to ensure that focal points of the displays are focussed on).
- Interest: Creating a display 'story' with relevant props that not only complement each other but are also relevant to the target customers.
- Desire: Just like a good advertisement sells dreams, good VM sells personality/image.
- Convince: Correct and concise ticketing, highlighting the salient features of the product and price point.
- Sell: By following the four main principles of display, in the following order: Attract – Create Interest – Create Desire – Convince.

## Exercises

1. What does AIDCS stand for?
2. How to grab a customer's attention? Discuss.
3. Interest and desire are related, but are not the same. How do we make a customer interested in, and then desire the product?
4. Can we convince a customer – without getting into a dialogue – simply by using the science of visual merchandising? Discuss.
5. Elaborate on the following statement: If a display is sufficiently surprising and unusual, a potential customer will cross the street to view it more closely. It makes no difference whether movement, colour, lighting, form, or lettering achieves this result.
6. In AIDCS, A stands for:
  - a. Attention
  - b. Awareness
  - c. Award
  - d. Apply
7. True or false:
  - a. The content of the sign will depend on the type of store
  - b. Putting the display on a podium does not help in any way
  - c. It helps to put correct and concise sign, highlighting the salient features of the product and price point.
8. Fill in the blanks:
  - a. Attention is arrested by something positive, some striking point that we call focus or \_\_\_\_\_ centre of the display.
  - b. All I Do Can Sell: Attention. Interest. Desire. \_\_\_\_\_. Sell.
  - c. The consumer may be made to \_\_\_\_\_ the product being featured when you demonstrate the qualities, use and benefits of the product.
9. Visit your local market, then try and analyse the displays on the basis of AIDCS.

## VM Speaks



**Name:** K. Harshzad

**Present Designation:** Sr. Manager | Experience Design

**Company's name:** Pantaloon Retail India Limited

**Location:** Kolkata, West Bengal

An Arts graduate from Osmania, he has studied Fashion Design at NIFT. His work experience spans almost half his age, given that at the age of 15 years he started working as a freelance designer and consultant. He has worked with reputed stores/institutions such as Lexicon School of Fashion, IOD, Royal School of Fashion, Histyle, Kempfort, NIFT, Wigan & Leigue, AIFT, SM Apparels, Ebony and Khadims.

### What led you to pursue a career in visual merchandising?

**Harshzad:** I started browsing the international trends on the Internet and learned so much by studying world trends. In this journey, I came across the term 'Visual Merchandising' and then I stepped into retail. With self-learning and experience, visual merchandising for me has come to be purely the aesthetics of science. I understood that in retail it is not the merchandise but the concept that sells. Visual merchandising is the backbone of the retail industry. Offering freelance visual merchandising skills, and teaching at leading institutes of Fashion Design and Visual Merchandising, has further added brand value to my professional life.

### What is the typical process you go through to implement a display?

**Harshzad:** Primarily, the VM team needs to plan an Annual Visual Merchandising calendar that is in sync with the store's Marketing Calendar – with coordinating among the marketing, B&M and the operation teams. Before starting to design a display docket, we first need to understand the size of the event and the projected sales. Based on the projected sales, the budget needs to be calculated. Only then can we plan a display docket that includes all the elements needed to support the marketing/advertising campaign. A VM schedule/plan includes editorial displays and merchandise presentation; selection of props and mannequins; and signs that tie directly with the theme. Next, window displays with relevant props are designed as per plan.

The merchandise displayed should have enough stock in-store. For a more holistic store experience, touch points are created in the store to interact with the customer at three levels:

- Product – fresh and trendy, availability of size/style, price, etc.
- Service – knowledge of product and current trends; interactivity; conversion into sales; building customer loyalty; etc.
- Ambience – tangible and intangible interactions which become the key drivers of the decision to buy the merchandise.

All these do the magic of selling... and the cycle is repeated.

### Where does India stand today when one talks of displays & where do you see the future of visual merchandising going?

**Harshzad:** Starting from store front and windows, traffic patterns and layouts, adjacencies and creating impulse, fixture density, and merchandise density, to visual, colour, lighting, and signage – all the elements of

visual merchandising can be seen day in and day out in rare, somewhat mature stores in India. Though much talked about, what the total concept necessitates has not been fully understood and is certainly not being implemented in many stores. Even generously stated, the impact can be estimated at 15–20 per cent of retail area as opposed to the desired 100 per cent. The Indian retail market is poised to become the largest market in the world in the coming years; it has drastically changed in the past five years. Domestic competition has increased, with both national and international brands spreading across the country.

The future of VM in India will come to be what it is now in the US, as it evolves to become a key player in retail. Yet, there is an absolute need to establish consistent standards of VM, and can be addressed within the organisation as a vital role from top management to the executive level. Visual merchandising supports sales, retail strategies and retail trends and communicates the brand image to customers.

A Visual Merchandiser should be a Core Design Strategist. He/she can add to the basic design a concept known to retail practitioners as atmospherics. It is a strategic tool, which – when used effectively – gives the retail operation personality and brand image.





# The Basics of Visual Merchandising

## 6 CHAPTER

### DISPLAY BASICS

A good display is the result of planning, coordination and cooperation. A display professional should ideally have the knowledge about what is available and where, and what is in stock. He/she should also be aware about the goings on – in the particular community, in the city, in the country and in the world – and, then, be able to draw on that awareness to create attention-getting, image-building and merchandise-selling displays.

#### Themes

Before starting to plan a display, one needs to arrive at a theme or an idea that will not only stimulate sales, but also stimulate the display person to create an exciting, eye-catching display based on that theme/idea.

Themes are the easiest way to approach a display. Is the theme new or timely? For example, in December, the default theme across the world would be 'Christmas'. Themes can be merchandise-based as well – such as 'Denim Festival', 'Cotton Carnival', etc.

## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- The basic elements of a display
- The elements and principles of design (in a display)
- The psychology of colour
- The importance and process of colour blocking
- The need and types of signage in a store



**Display theme: Christmas; Colour theme: Green**

## Key Copy

Ideally, the whole idea/theme of the display should be summed up in a copy card (signage) or reader that is generally placed somewhere in the display area. This is the 'key' copy (text), the catch phrase that tells-and-sells the story.

This key message is told in the fewest words and in the most memorable way. It is like a message on a poster: simple and direct.



Note the key copy in the signage: 'New Arrivals'

## Image Promotion

How does the display reinforce the image of a store? Is it possible to enhance the store's reputation while promoting the merchandise? Today, some of the noteworthy stores show only the image-promoting window displays, assuming that shoppers will be fascinated enough to want to enter the store – with the lure of being transformed into what was promised outside, in the store's display window.



Both the displays promote the store's image of being 'fashion forward'.

## Clarity

Should the presentation of the promotion or display be limited to a single garment; a single classification of garments or merchandise; a single pattern, colour, or featured theme? The answer: the simpler and more direct the approach, the easier it will be for the shopper to comprehend the message. Too many ideas, too many 'stories', and/or too many items or unrelated colours, can end up confusing the customers – not to mention creating clutter in the display.

## DESIGN BASICS

Have you ever looked at a picture you like and wondered why you like it? Have you ever wanted to make your art more dramatic and eye catching? The elements and principles of design are the building blocks used to create a work of art. The elements of design can be thought of in terms of those things that make up a painting, drawing, design, etc.

**Design elements and principles** describe fundamental ideas about the practice of good visual design that are assumed to be the basis of all intentional visual design strategies. The elements form the 'vocabulary' of the design, while the principles constitute the broader structural aspects of its composition. These elements of design include:

- Point
- Line
- Form, shape and space
- Texture
- Colour

## Point

A point is an element that has position, but no extension. It is a single mark in space with a precise – but limited – location.

Alone, a point can provide a powerful relation between negative and positive space. Yet, when grouped with other points, the brain compulsively connects the points together – true to the Gestalt grouping principle of closure. A line or form is the natural result of multiple points in space.



## Line

A line is an element characterised by both, length and direction. Lines create form. They are often used to convey a specific kind of feeling, or to point to an important feature in a design. Lines are also used to create perspective; and dominant directional lines are often adopted to create a sense of continuance in a composition.

In addition, lines that are grouped together often create a sense of value, density or texture. It is an enormously useful and versatile graphic device that is made to function in both visual

## 74 Visual Merchandising

and verbal ways. It can act as a symbolic language, or it can communicate emotion through its character and direction.



**Different types of lines communicate different emotions.  
A curved line can symbolise 'flow' whereas an angular line can mean 'resistance'.**

Characteristics of a line are:

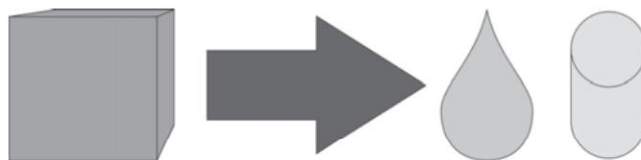
- Width – thick, thin, tapering, uneven
- Length – long, short, continuous, broken
- Direction – horizontal, vertical, diagonal, curving, perpendicular, oblique, parallel, radial, zigzag
- Focus – sharp, blurry, fuzzy, choppy
- Feeling – sharp, jagged, graceful, smooth

Types of line:

- Horizontal line suggests a feeling of rest or repose.
- Vertical lines communicate a feeling of loftiness and spirituality.
- Diagonal lines suggest a feeling of movement or direction.
- Horizontal and vertical lines in combination communicate stability and solidity.
- Deep, acute curves, on the other hand, suggest confusion, turbulence, even frenzy, as in the violence of waves in a storm, the chaos of a tangled thread, or the turmoil of lines suggested by the forms of a crowd.

## Form, Shape and Space

The simplest definition of shape is a closed contour, an element defined by its perimeter. The three basic shapes are: circle, rectangle (square) and triangle. Form is the shape and structure of a dimensional element within a given composition. Form can be both two-dimensional and three-dimensional and can be realistic, abstract or somewhere in between. The terms form and shape are often used synonymously. Form is derived from the combination of point, line and shape.



**Different shapes can be used to create different effects, like movement (arrow) or depth (three-dimensional shapes).**

Shape is one of the basic elements of design. Alone or in combination with other shapes or lines they can convey universal meanings as well as guide the eye or organize information. The three basic types of shapes are geometric, natural, and abstract. Everyone has used shapes to organise or grab attention (like bold lines, stars or arrows). We often use certain shapes to symbolize an idea or convey a mood or emotion (like a start or a smiley). Shapes can be used to create movement (or stillness), or provide texture (by shading).

## Texture

Texture is the surface quality of an object. A rock may be rough and jagged. A piece of silk may be soft and smooth and your desk may feel hard and smooth. Texture is used to create surface appearance, and relates to the physical make-up of a given form. Texture often refers to the material that something is made of, and can be created using any of the elements previously discussed.

## Colour

Colour is not essential to a good design. Black and white and shades of grey can create 'colour' that is just as effective as reds, blues, and greens. However, colour is an added dimension that can evoke moods and make powerful statements when used wisely. Value is present in all design. Value is the lightness or darkness of an object, regardless of colour. Value is relative to the background colour and other items in the design like texture and shape. *(Colour has been dealt in detail ahead in this chapter)*

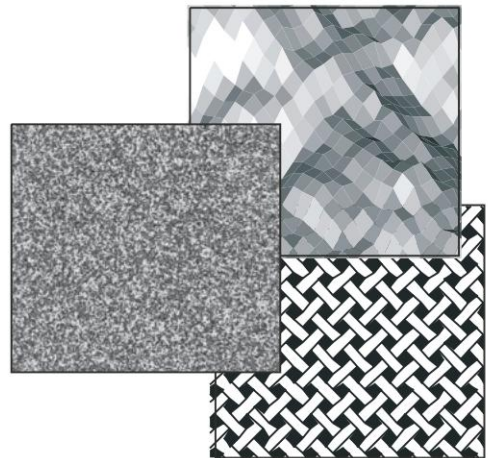
There are three main components of colour:

- Hue: Where the colour is positioned on the colour wheel. Terms such as red, blue-green, and mauve all define the hue of a given colour.
- Value: The general lightness or darkness of a colour. In general, how close to black or white a given colour is.
- Saturation: The intensity, or level of chrome, of a colour. The greyer a colour has in it, the less chrome it has.

## PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

The elements of design are building blocks that can be manipulated to create an effect. The principles of design are guidelines that can help you use the elements effectively. The principles of design can be thought of as what we do to the elements of design.

Other than contrast and harmony, the basic principles of design include Balance, Rhythm, Proportion and Dominance.



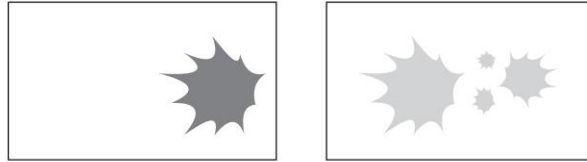
**Simple lines, dots or shapes can be used to create different types of textures.**



## Balance

Balance is an equilibrium that results from looking at images and judging them against our ideas of physical structure (such as mass, gravity or the sides of a page). It is the arrangement of the objects in a given design as it relates to their visual weight within a composition.

There are two types of balance: Symmetrical and Asymmetrical balance. Symmetrical means that the balance on either side is close to perfect. Most buildings are Symmetrically Balanced.

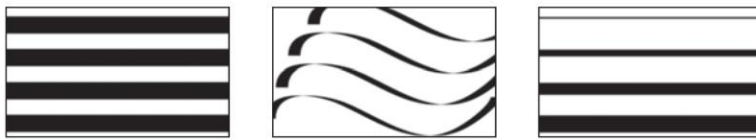


**Balance in a design can be created with repetition of shape or colour.**

## Rhythm

Rhythm is the repetition or alternation of elements, often with defined intervals between them. Rhythm can create a sense of movement, and can establish pattern and texture. There are many different kinds of rhythm, often defined by the feeling it evokes when looking at it.

- **Regular:** A regular rhythm occurs when the intervals between the elements, and often the elements themselves, are similar in size or length.
- **Flowing:** A flowing rhythm gives a sense of movement, and is often more organic in nature.
- **Progressive:** A progressive rhythm shows a sequence of forms through a progression of steps.



**Without variation repetition can become monotonous (as seen in the first design), whereas repetition with variation can be very interesting (as seen in the last two designs).**

## Proportion

Proportion is the comparison of dimensions or distribution of forms. It is the relationship in scale between one element and another, or between a whole object and one of its parts. Differing proportions within a composition can relate to different kinds of balance or symmetry, and can help establish visual weight and depth. In the below examples, notice how the smaller elements seem to recede into the background while the larger elements come to the front.



**Proportion is the comparison of dimensions.**



## Dominance

Dominance relates to varying degrees of emphasis in design. It determines the visual weight of a composition, establishes space and perspective, and often resolves where the eye goes first when looking at a design. There are three stages of dominance, each relating to the weight of a particular object within a composition.



**Dominance can be by any way like by colour, by size, or texture.**

- **Dominant:** The object given the most visual weight, the element of primary emphasis that advances to the foreground in the composition.
- **Sub-dominant:** The element of secondary emphasis, the elements in the middle ground of the composition.
- **Subordinate:** The object given the least visual weight, the element of tertiary emphasis that recedes to the background of the composition.

## COLOUR BLOCKING – PEOPLE BUY COLOURS!

Colour is the biggest motivation for shopping. Colour psychology is very important in Visual Merchandising. Many theories have been espoused concerning the effects of colour on people and their moods while shopping. Colour can immediately create a mood. Most of us have colours that tend to cheer us up when we are feeling down and colours that calm us. Each of us also has colours that can make us physically feel hotter or cooler. The problem for the Visual Merchandiser lies in the fact that each person may have a distinct reaction to the same colour. In our vast and global marketplace, there are cultural and regional differences in colour preference. Also, public taste in colour changes, sometimes dramatically overtime. However, in trying to predict the effects of colour on the public in general, many Visual Merchandisers rely on these widely researched colour responses.

Medical science has proven that different colours have definite and various effects upon our nervous system and that they act quite independently of our eyes or minds. Colours are of the deepest significance to us throughout all phases of our life. They have more influence on us than we can possibly imagine. If we use them intelligently, they can help us by strengthening, soothing, and inspiring us. Colours are also associated with human emotions (emotions are very individualistic, the list below is a general feeling on seeing a particular colour).

**Yellow:** Caution, cowardice, treachery, madness

**Red:** Passion, love

**Orange:** Knowledge, warmth, energy, force

**Violet:** Royalty, depression

**Blue:** Fidelity, sobriety, fear

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**Green:** Wealth, outdoors, luck, nature

**Brown:** Maturity, humility

**White:** Purity, truth

**Black:** Death, depression, sorrow

Colour is a key element in all aspects of retailing; the merchandising, the interior decoration of the store, the lighting and the way the displays are composed. It is what the shopper sees first and for many is more important than the size or the price tag. One of the most important elements of merchandise presentation that can be used to draw the customers in to a Department/Section is Colour Blocking. A simple way to colour co-ordinate for setting up the fixtures is to divide the colours in to 2 groups: Warm colours and Cool colours.



**Colour blocking is the very basic way of displaying merchandise as per colour.** One of the most important elements of merchandise presentation that can be used to draw the customers in to a Dept/Section is Colour Blocking. But putting colours can be done in many ways, Dark to Light? Light to Dark? Bright to Dark? What shall we follow that would actually help us sell more. What can be done to enhance the look of the merchandise, make shopping easier for customers and thus improve sales? There are many approaches to colour blocking. The most common and widely accepted is the VIBGYOR.

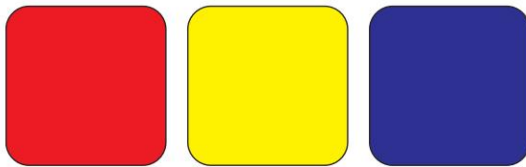
**As per the VIBGYOR method: When white light splits through a prism, it splits into the seven colours (spectrum) based on their wavelengths. Violet Indigo Blue Green Yellow Orange and Red. We take this natural progression of colour to display merchandise.**

To further understand colour, let us study the colour wheel. The colour wheel is a standard arrangement of 12 colours in a wheel that shows the relationships among the colours.

- The primary colours are red, blue, and yellow.
- The secondary colours are green, violet, and orange.
- The intermediate colours are yellow-orange, yellow-green, blue-green, blue-violet, red-violet, and red-orange.
- Black, white, and grey are neutral colours.



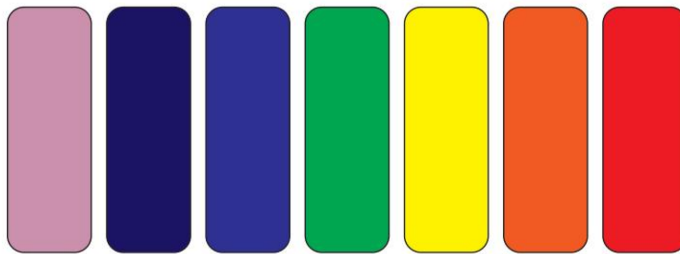
Colour Wheel



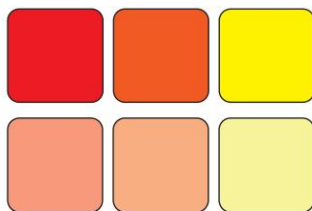
Primary Colours



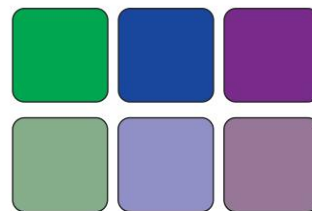
Secondary Colours



VIBGYOR

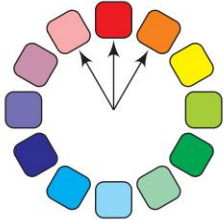


Warm Colours

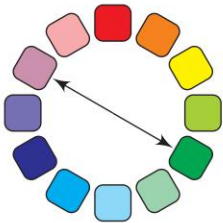


Cool Colours

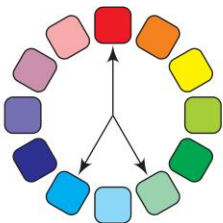
**Colour scheme** refers to the choice of colours used in a design. For example: Black text on a white background is the default colour scheme is MS Word & the black text on white page of this book!!!



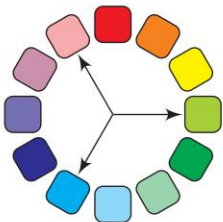
**Analogue Colours:** Any 3 colours next to each other



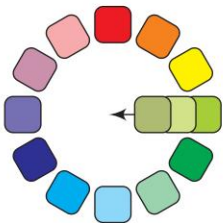
**Complementary Colours:** 2 colours opposite to each other



**Split Complementary Colours:** Choose one colour, add 2 colours on the either side of the complementary colour



**Triad Colours:** 3 colours at equal distance to each other



**Monochromatic Colours:** Shades of the same colour

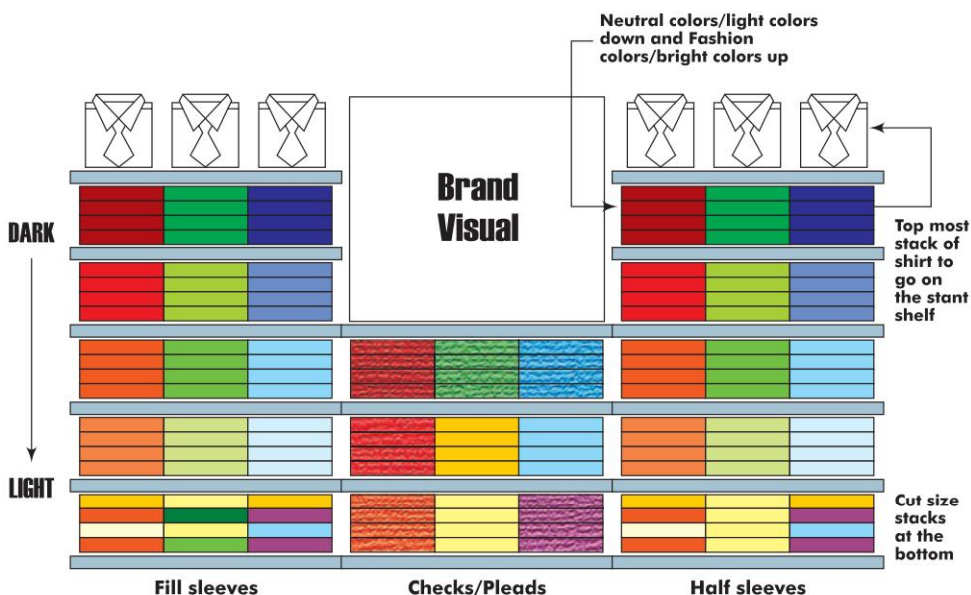
## Let Us first Discuss How to do up a Wall (Ready-to-wear)

1. Never mix categories like full sleeves and half sleeves; formals and casuals, stripes checks and solids...only once you have separated the basic categories in a section, start colour

blocking! Use a disciplined way of grouping merchandise mix at different levels (from highest-lowest level grouping).

- a. Division (apparel or non-apparel)
  - b. Department (ladies, men's, kids, etc.)
  - c. Category (ladies formals, ladies casuals, etc.)
  - d. Sub-category (ladies formal suits, ladies formal trousers, etc.)
  - e. Brand (Allen Solley, Park Avenue, etc.)
  - f. Style (Suits: Single button, etc.)
  - g. Options (Colours, sizes, etc.)
2. Always keep merchandise as per size sets (small, medium, large, and extra large). The last row has least visibility (below eye level) and thus is meant for cut sizes/broken sizes (merchandise always comes in size sets, but are sold as individual pieces, very often all pieces are sold but one is left, this is referred to as a cut/broken size)
  3. Not all colours will be available at a given point of time. A Visual Merchandising tries his best to put the given colours as per the VIBGYOR
  4. Vertical colour blocking: The typical starting point is the right side of the wall, top end corner. All colours should be kept dark to light from top to bottom, and starting with cool colours, ending with warm colours.
  5. Follow the VIBGYO (violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange). This way you will find colours will fit in as per the warm colours and cool colours. There is a lot of merchandise and fixtures in all stores. Once a customer enters a store, there is so much to see. This makes merchandise presentation very important. A good display of merchandise would make customers feel more comfortable in the store.

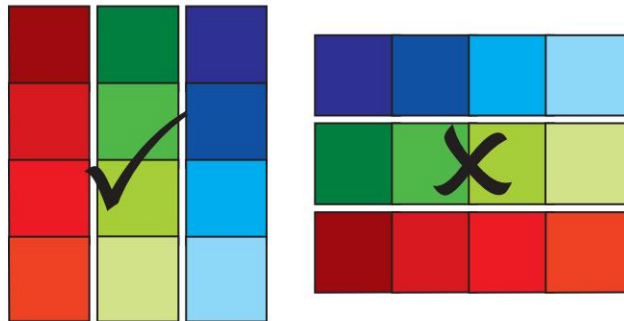
## An Illustration of Shirts Display in a Typical Departmental Shop



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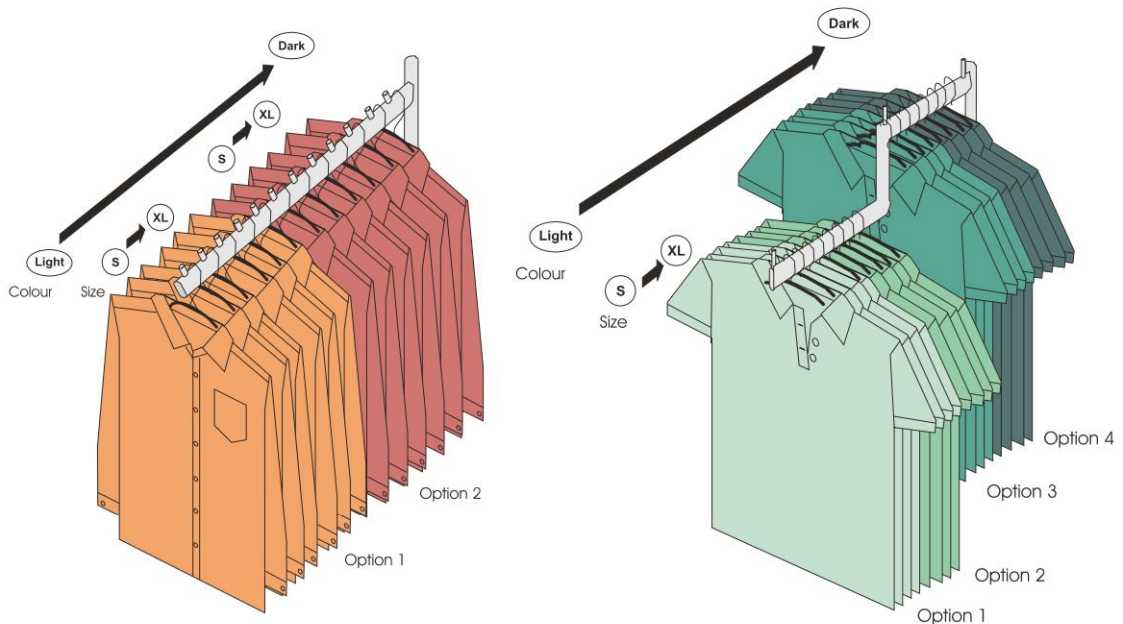
### Note

1. Always put VIBGYOR to use. From Left to Right or from Right to Left.
2. Always put darker colours on the top. Lighter shades get lost with the back wall and thus don't shine out from a distance. The darker shades look better on top.
3. For Ready-to-Wear don't take VIBGYOR from top to bottom, i.e., all shades of violet on top shelf then blue, etc. Only the first 2 rows are visible from a distance. We need to show an array of colours.



## Let Us Now Discuss How to do up the Floor Fixtures

1. Never mix categories like full sleeves and half sleeves; formals and casuals, stripes checks and solids...only once you have separated the basic categories in a section, start colour blocking!
2. Within a category, sub-divide them as per brands.
3. Light colours come in front, dark one go behind (see illustration above)



4. Keep merchandise as per size sets, always! (see illustration above)
5. Make a separate browser for cut/broken sizes. This is displayed at the end/corner of a section.

Merchandise can be put as coordinates as well (as shown above). This can help sell more! On any given rod, straight-arm, step arm (as shown below), merchandise should always be displayed size wise i.e. S (small) to XL (Extra Large), Light colour garments to be in the front and dark colour merchandise right at the back.

The front of a section is meant for new arrivals. The latest merchandise is displayed near the aisle. All the discounted/cut sizes go towards the back of a section.

## Guidelines for Colour Mixing

- a. For coordinated colour displays, never mix colours between groups (bright and pastels) e.g. yellow top and peach skirt.
- b. Select colours from within a group—warm and cool—and these can be coordinated, e.g.: yellow top and blue skirt.
- c. Each colour group can be combined with Neutral Colours. E.g.: yellow top with a blue skirt and a black belt.
- d. Colours can be used to communicate moods in displays. (viz. Warm bright for happy like on Children's day and pastels for mellow feel like for Autumn-Winter display, etc...)

Colour blocking can be either vertical or horizontal. Vertical colour blocking allows greater exposure to merchandise than the horizontal approach. Colour blocking also organizes the colour palette, which increases visual impact and thus increases sale.

## SIGNAGE

Signs, labels, shelf tags, and other identification signs to provide directions, prices, or information on merchandise or policies is referred as a Signage. We come across many signages in our everyday life. From a road signage 'STOP, LOOK & GO' or 'NO PARKING' to 'Lifts' or 'Fire Exit' signage in office or cinema hall, we see signages everywhere.

### 'C' in A-I-D-C-S

As explained in Chapter Five, the content of the sign will depend on the type of store.

If, for example, it is a value format store, it will concentrate on the 'value' aspect in its signage. At Big Bazaar, most signs highlight information about offers or discounts.

This is mainly because it is a value format store. Whereas in luxury stores like Dior and Gucci, the signs make the product seem more special.

This is done by highlighting product features...

For example: 'This coat is made with wool sourced from the hills of Kashmir'.



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### Types of signage

- Directional Signage
- Departmental Signage
- Category Signage
- Point-of-Sale (POS) Signage/Product Signage/Ticketing

### Directional Signage

These are located at strategic locations, like store entrance, lifts, etc. They help customers decide where to go next. In the following store directory, a customer can easily understand what's available in which floor. Like in the Ground floor (marked as 'G') non-apparels are available. It also makes the location of Customer Service desk, Alteration room, Toilets, etc.

STORE DIRECTORY		
G	Cosmetics Perfumes Jewellery Watches	Sunglasses & Bags Ladies Footwear Home Collection
	Customer Service Desk First Citizen Desk Alterations Gift Wrapping Toilets	
1	Men's Wear Suits & Jackets Men's Accessories	
2	Toy's Kid's Wear Ladies Western wear Ladies Ethnic wear	Sarees Lingerie Toilets
3	T-Shirts Denims Casual Wear	Sports Wear Sports Equipment Caps & Belts

Directional Signage

### Departmental Signage

Such signages are large, usually placed fairly high, so that they can be seen clearly from a distance. Refer snap below, the font size of 'Customer Services' is purposely BIG so that it's easily readable for a customer from a distance.



Customer Service desk

### Category Signage

These help consumers negotiate throughout the store to find the product categories they are looking for. The size of category signage varies widely from a lettering that is a few feet in height to merely inches.



**'Infants' signage is hanging from the ceiling to intimate the customers regarding the respective category**

## POS, Product Signage, Tickets

Tickets/Signages are for information and ease of customers. Its relatively small signage that is placed very close to the merchandise and is intended to give details about specific items. Signages include:

1. Headers (on top of gondolas and browsers to lead customers through the departments by signalling what is on each fixture)
2. Price tickets (are used when merchandise needs no explanation)
3. Descriptive tickets (they are silent selling assistants. They have information like brand, price, fabric in case of clothes and other details of the merchandise)
4. Information tickets (give some special extra information like wash care instructions, security warnings, etc.)
5. "Offer" tickets (are for special promotions)



**Offer Signage is displayed with the mobiles- "Buy a handset and get a bluetooth FREE"**

**Signages should be clear and concise, telling the customers**

- Merchandise
- Value of the store

## 86 Visual Merchandising

- Information about the services
- About offers and promotions.

Signage's norms should be standardised for a brand/store:

- Font and Font size should be standardised to maintain uniformity
- Language – e.g. Rs. 1599/- only or just for Rs. 1599
- Colour of the signage paper/base
- Size of the ticket/signage – should be standard so that can be replicated easily



Acrylic sandwich with base



With adjustable base



T frame



For perforated walls



With magnetic base

**Different types of signage holder for printed signages.**

## New Trends

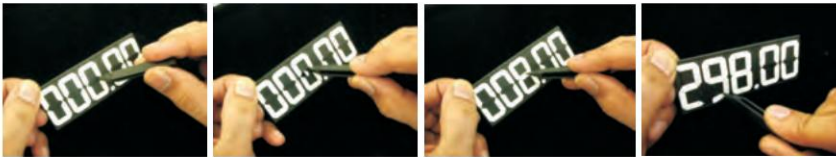
Traditional signages are computer printouts. But many companies are working on various types of new signages. From a 3D hologram signage to a digital signage; to a handwritten one for quick price change and manual price change signs, soon they might be seen in the shops at the neighbourhood. Some of them are shown below:

### A Handwritten Price Sign



Another handwritten price sign, with digital figures



**A digital scrolling sign****A changeable manual price sign (by Pivot Prices)****How to Write 'A HOT SIGNAGE'<sup>1</sup>**

This week's classic marketing MUST represents a shift in thinking for most people. It can be hard to do at first, but the results are dramatic and you'll see your marketing efforts start to really pay off. The Signages in your store must...

**FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER.** The headline should not focus on you, your company, or the features of your product/service. Crazy you say? How will they know who I am and what I do? You'll tell them all that, just not in the signage. In your signage, you want to make the customer feel the **BENEFIT** of owning your product or using your services so that they will want to read more about the features. Here are three made-up signage examples:

Example #1

**Not so great:** New Hoover 750 E Has 40 Horsepower Motor

**Better:** Get Your Carpets Cleaner, Faster With The Most Powerful Vacuum Ever Made.

Example #2

**Not so great:** Chiropractic Care Since 1983

**Better:** Got Back Pain? Get Relief Today!

Example #3

**Not so great:** SRQ. Inc. Offers Honest, Efficient Bookkeeping Services for Small Businesses

**Better:** Spend Your Valuable Time Making More Money, Not Filing Your Bills!

**Get the idea?** Refer the 'Not so great' vs. 'Better' signage below!!!

New Hoover 750 E  
with 40 Horsepower Motor

Rs. 1299 only

**Get Your Carpets Cleaner,  
Faster With The Most Powerful  
Vaccum Ever Made**

**New Hoover 750 E**  
for Rs. 1299 only



<sup>1</sup>Tips from WhizBang! Training, Bob and Susan Negen (<http://www.whizbangtraining.com/sb/tips.aspx>)

## UNDERSTANDING MATERIALS

It is very important to know the materials, which are most commonly used during displays and in everyday Visual Merchandising. There are 5 major materials, viz.

- (a) **Acrylics:** There are various types of acrylics available in the market and with the local vendors. You may find a variety of these in any of the retail shops. For displaying prices, shelf talkers, donation boxes, mobile recharging units, and much more could be seen and departmental stores. They come in various thicknesses, from 1 mm to 12 mm or even more. From clear acrylic to semi-transparent in red, blue, green or even in black opaque colour or even in frosted.

(<http://www.acrylicsindia.com/products/acrylicsheets.htm>)

- (b) **Vinyl Stickers:** These are stickers available in huge sizes/rolls and in number of colours. The most popularly are manufactured by Mactac or by LG. This is a good tool to change the colour of laminate (temporarily), acrylic risers, podiums, window glass/backdrops, etc. These are also used for lettering on vehicle number plates, etc., which are easy to peel off.

(<http://www.speedysigns.com/>)

- (c) **Digital Prints:** Digital printing is the reproduction of digital images on physical surface, such as common or photographic paper, film, cloth, plastic, etc. We see them everywhere. Hoardings, Visuals, Graphics in Malls, Market, streets, highways, etc. They are usually large in size. They are self adhesive from one side thus easy to apply on any flat and clean surface.

(<http://www.magicvinylprinting.com/>)

- (d) **Translites:** These are also digital prints but are lit from the back. To display these kind of visuals you need a box in which lights are fixed thus, it becomes a 'Backlit'.

(<http://www.pegasusassociates.com/products/LightBoxes/LightBoxes.html>)

- (e) **Sunboard:** It's the most commonly used base for pasting vinyl and digital prints. They also come in various thicknesses.

(<http://www.interlabs-has.com/sunboard-kapa.html>)

You may visit the websites mentioned above or use any search engines on Internet to get to know more about the materials and respective suppliers present in your own city.

As a visual merchandiser, it's always advisable to have the samples of all the above said material for ready reference. It's easily available with the suppliers and vendors who supply these materials.



## IN SUMMARY

- Some noted stores today show only the image-promoting window displays, assuming that shoppers will be fascinated enough to want to enter the store in order to be transformed into what was promised outside—in the windows.
- Too many ideas, too many “stories”, too many items or unrelated colours, can end up in confusion as well as clutter.
- The elements of design include: Colour, Texture, Line, Light, Shape & Motion.
- The principles of design are: Emphasis, Movement, Balance & Proportion.
- Colour can immediately create a mood. Most of us have colours that tend to cheer us up when we are feeling down and colours that calm us. Colours are also associated with human emotions.
- A simple way to colour co-ordinate for setting up the fixtures is to divide the colours in to 2 groups: Warm colours and Cool colours.
- Warm Colours: Red Orange Yellow
- Cool Colours: Blue Green Violet
- The primary colours are red, blue, and yellow
- VIBGYOR: Violet Indigo Blue Green Yellow Orange and Red
- Never mix categories like full sleeves and half sleeves; formals and casuals, stripes checks and solids
- Always keep merchandise as per size sets
- Put the given colours as per the VIBGYOR: This way you will find colours will fit in as per the warm colours and cool colours.
- Always put VIBGYOR to use. From Left to Right or from Right to Left.
- Always put darker colours on the top. Lighter shades get lost with the back wall and thus don't shine out from a distance. The darker shades look better on top.
- Types of Signage: Directional Signage, Departmental Signage, Category Signage, Point-of-Sale (POS) Signage/Product Signage/Ticketing
- Tickets should be clear and concise, telling the customers
  - Merchandise
  - Value of the store
  - Information about the services
  - About offers & promotions.
- 5 main materials used are: Acrylics, Sunboard, Vinyl, Translite & Digital prints.

## Exercises

1. What is colour blocking?
2. Classify colours and explain the colour wheel.
3. How do we follow the VIBGYOR in colour blocking?
4. How is colour blocking done on the wall and floor?
5. Explain the different types of Signages.
6. What all should be mentioned on a ticket?
7. Analogue colours are:
  - a. any 3 colours next to each other
  - b. shades of the same colour
  - c. 3 colours at equal distance to each other
8. True or False:
  - a. The elements form the 'vocabulary' of the design, while the principles constitute the broader structural aspects of its composition.
  - b. A point is an element that has position and extension.
  - c. Texture is the surface quality of an object.
  - d. Always put darker colours on the top. Lighter shades get lost with the back wall and thus don't shine out from a distance. The darker shades look better on top.
  - e. Signs, labels, shelf tags, and other identification signs to provide directions, prices, or information on merchandise or policies is referred as a Signage.
9. Fill in the blanks:
  - a. In a window display, this is the "—————" copy, the catch phrase that tells-and sells-the story.
  - b. The elements of design include: Point, Line, Form, Shape and Space, Texture and —————
  - c. Some noted stores today show only the ————promoting window displays, assuming that shoppers will be fascinated enough to want to enter the store in order to be transformed into what was promised outside—in the windows.
  - d. VIBGYOR: Violet ————— Blue Green Yellow Orange Red.
10. Visit your local market and note how you can improve colour blocking in the displayed merchandise. Observe the colour. (e.g. Visit a 'blouse-piece' shop or a 'bangle' shop)
11. Cut from fashion magazines various kinds of merchandise and try creating an appropriate background with respect to colours.



## Case Study\*

### IT DID HAPPEN IN INDIA

Albert Einstein once quoted, “If at first the idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it”. Not many people can think of opening a Supermart on a second or a higher floor. But it happened in India. No matter how tedious it is for the consumer to carry the loaded trolleys way-back to the parking at basements, lower basements or to the Taxi stand across the road. The big story of Big Bazaar was recently narrated by none other than Mr. Kishore Biyani (Managing Director of Pantaloon Retail (India) Limited and the Group Chief Executive Officer of Future Group) himself with Dipayan Baishya in the title ‘**It Happened in India**’.

“Many people find the Big Bazaars over crowded. But few realize that it is consciously designed to look just like that” is quoted by Hans Udeshi who was a part of the initial team of Big Bazaar and served as the Chief-Category Management of Big Bazaar. He adds on, “As Indians, we like bumping into people, chat, gossip and eat all while we shop. Shopping is a form of entertainment for us.” Mr. Kishore Biyani believes that Indian consumer wants a shopping environment which is much similar to his neighbourhood market and thus is entirely comfortable with. He follows the Indian consumer with passion and for him retail is all about appealing to the heart.

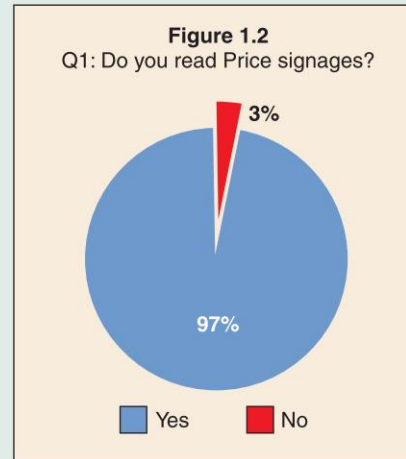
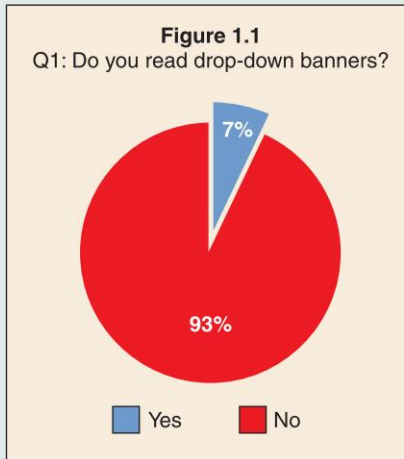
From visual merchandising and store design perspective, the Big Bazaar formats are not as per the international standards. But that’s exactly not what the Indian consumer wants. He believes more in ‘Value’. Americans famous quote ‘A penny saved is a penny earned’ but it actually goes with the Big Bazaar consumer’s behaviour. They perceive Big Bazaar as ‘Value’ store, even if the much better looking and up-market next door Hypermarket offers the same merchandise at lower price. And it’s simply because of a very ‘organizes chaos’ kind of layout and look.

We remember last summer at Big Bazaar situated at Gazipur, there was a mango seller standing at the entrance area, inside the store, with a mango ‘*peti*’ (wooden box) hanging around his neck and yelling, “*Aam lelo*” (Buy Mangoes). A very Indian way of selling fruits, but, was a hit!

Team ThinkTank (Online newsletter on visual merchandising) conducted a survey with 30 odd consumers who visited Big Bazaar, Sahara Mall, Gurgaon (situated on a second floor) on a week day, to find out there views and experience. Surprisingly, they all had been to the a better looking Supermart ‘Spencer’s’, located at basement of MGF Mega City, which right next to Sahara Mall. But they feel more comfortable shopping at Big Bazaar because of the schemes and value offered. The Figures 1.1 & 1.2 show the shoppers views on Drop down banners and Price signage’s displayed in-store.

Mr. Sanjeev Jain was shopping with his family at Big Bazaar and quoted, “We come here for the great deals. Layout doesn’t matter as we are more concerned about the products and the value.” He further added, “We have been to Spencer’s next door, but we feel

\*Studio Atomium; Courtesy: RVG News Vision Pvt. Ltd., ([www.newsvision.in](http://www.newsvision.in)); Reproduced with permission.



comfortable here.” He also pointed out that the signage’s at Big Bazaar should have the ‘Price’ and ‘Onwards’ in the similar font size as few times they feel cheated. Refer Signage 1, which is presently used at Big Bazaar & Signage 2 is what consumer would prefer.



Hi-end brand like Olay sells a lot if placed strategically near cash counters, as the people in queue get enough time to get introduced to the product and know the benefits. Even Nokia N-Series sells a lot from MBazaar, mobile counter at Big Bazaar, averaging Rs. 16000 and even SonyP1i worth Rs. 23000 (approx.) as customer gets a value deal. The bins do wonders in this format. People actually seek for them and shop a lot from these bins.

Another shopper Mr.Shobhit says “Cluttered *hai*, but still feels good”. Mr.Gurpal Singh was pushing a fully loaded trolley and said, “*Sub kuch mil jata hai*” (we get everything here). He gets the most preferred brands at Big Bazaar as compared to next door Super-Mart or a grocery shop. Moreover the home delivery system is very convenient. No other retailer delivers groceries ANYWHERE in Gurgaon within 24 hours.

Nevertheless, many people still feel that Cash Counters should be increased & cashiering should be much faster. A non Big Bazaar customer, Mr.Manu says, “I would love to shop at Big Bazaar if the merchandise clutter is reduced by 15-20%. I’m OK with the layout although.”



We are sure too, with better access to cash-points & just 20% less merchandise clutter, which can easily happen by taking care of excess stock & by sticking to merchandise presentation norms set by the Visual Merchandising team, no one is stopping Big Bazaar to become the most favourite shopping destination for many more consumers and it CAN happen in India again & again!

## EXERCISE

1. What is more important for the customers; store layout or the value offered in-store or both? Discuss.
2. What communication should ideally be on a signage?
3. Visit Big Bazaar or an equivalent hyper-mart/supermarket in your city, and check-out the average time taken by each customer at the cash-point. Also, try to 'time' the cashier—How much time does he take (average) for clearing one customers billing?

# PART 3

## Store Planning and Fixtures

A visual merchandiser needs to ensure that the fixtures in a store are placed in a pattern that allows for maximum flow of customer traffic. The store layout largely determines the movement of customers, once they are inside the store. In the three chapters that follow, let us discuss five circulation plans – including three of the most popular: Free flow layout, Race track layout and Grid layout.

However, notwithstanding the store layout, it is the location of cash counters or check-out counters that have a *bigger* impact on the business. These counters should, therefore, provide enough space for customers to complete their transactions with ease. In addition to quicker cashiers, there should be adequate spaces for shopping carts/carry bags. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Six, cash counters offer good scope for the sale of ‘impulse’ merchandise. From key-chains to chocolates, stationary items to caps, a lot of products – with prices ranging from Rs. 10 to Rs. 100 – can be placed and sold from here. Last but definitely not the least, make sure that the cash counter area abounds with interesting displays and information about the latest offers, ‘exchange policy’, etc. so that customers are thinking about the merchandise being sold in the store – even as they are preparing to make the payment and leave!

To lay out a good in-store plan, also explained in this chapter are the types of fixtures and their usage. The right merchandise mix along with the right fixtures – both important aspects of a store layout – will always draw the customers to the merchandise.

The entrance as well as the façade should be clean and should communicate the inside story, effectively and interestingly. Speaking of which, the wall on the right-side in the entrance area is referred to as the ‘power wall’. Many a time, when the store is not too deep, the front wall becomes the power wall. Visual merchandisers should use this wall to promote ‘new arrivals’ or that merchandise which has the highest margins. The last chapter of this section comprises a discussion on ‘plano grams’, which play a very important role in bringing business to a store. A plano gram is basically a graphic arrangement of the respective range of plans/models displayed inside the store. A plano gram allows for better planning of the arrangement of merchandise on a given fixture configuration to support sales through proper placement of merchandise with price points, ranking, styles, variance, etc. The main purpose is always to enhance the ease of selection and the display of merchandise (in a neat and organised manner).

All said, a layout done right does not necessarily add up the sales... The visual merchandiser should also try and see the store from a customer’s point-of-view. How a customer perceives a store could be very different from the visual merchandiser’s perspective, and it is important to incorporate these aspects while planning the store.

It is said that the first few seconds inside the store are enough for a customer to make up his/her mind about the store. If the display is badly laid out or the merchandise is untidily stacked up, or if the environment is dusty and smelly, customers may simply decide not to come to the store again.



# Industry Insight

## Store Planning and Fixtures

By Sharat Kumar B. Arch., PMP; Design Manager at Majid Al Futtaim, Dubai, UAE

Brooks Brothers, Lord & Taylor, Macy's, A & P, Bloomingdales, Saks Fifth Avenue, Barnes & Noble, Sears, Belk, Abercrombie & Fitch... So what is common among these names? Yes, they are all American brands. More importantly, they are names that represent some of the oldest names in retail – dating all the way back to the 19th century. And, in almost 150 years of their operation, these brands and others have paved the way for 'organised retailing'. The term not only offers insight into how retailing is practised now, but also gives way to combined micro and macro research on consumer behaviour, trends and purchasing psychology. All, tools which the merchandise analysts use to plan for the future. Buyers travel across time zones and buy some of the best products based on these forecasts and requirements. Logistics teams then ship these products across various regions, countries and continents to retail them and they are on display in the stores, just like at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue\*, or at any department store in India like Shoppers' Stop, Lifestyle, Westside, Pantalons, Big Bazaars, etc.

Store planning in this context forms one of the integral parts of organised retail. Importantly for the consumer, this is the touch-point – the very culmination of strategies, research, forecasts, needs and desires. How a product or service is presented makes all the difference between success and failure. Marketing strategy may bring the consumer till the door-step... But how the store is presented, how the merchandise is displayed, and how the experience is managed determine whether the cash registers will ring. Retail gurus now believe that human psychology plays a large role in store design and planning. It couldn't be more true. Then again, this has been the case since time immemorial. It takes commonsense to show how people approach stores, how they enter, where they look, how they move, what they see and what they pick. Isn't it peculiar, then, how so many retailers still get it wrong? Human anthropometry will indicate the correct signage mounting heights and angles. Still, they are often sighted at vague locations.

High street stores in the US and Europe are fine examples of good, traditional signage heights. This however has evolved with the change of traffic modes and heights. High-speed traffic may call for greater use of blade signs. And, in shopping malls, this may be presented differently. Malls are creating and updating their own design guidelines based on new retailing standards and appeal. Ease of viewing signage, clarity and location are being pre-determined. While some would view this as monotonous, others believe it creates harmony and order. The new retail – which has a lot to do with in-mall stores – is slowly eliminating barriers between public and private areas. The opening of store-fronts is increasingly giving the 'feel' of airports or departmental stores. On the other hand, it is helping in completely eliminating the scope for a consumer making the decision whether to enter a store. More and more retail examples show how the extension of public area flooring onto the front of the stores is increasing footfall and, thereby, conversion.

In line with this, greater transparency is also the norm. In allowing the consumer to 'see' more is helping reduce the distance between the product and its user. The influence of high street retailing has led to malls being designed with tall store fronts. Shop fronts ranging from 8 m to even 12 m high are not uncommon anymore. In particular, emerging markets of China and the Middle East – the new centres of global retail – are good examples of this. Functional areas such as cash counters are being pushed towards the rear. Better security systems have played a key role in this. Front ends of the stores, with their precious retailing locations, are now being kept for faster moving, impulse purchase products. It's not uncommon to see fashion stores display accessories as a result of this. Another feature instrumental, in determining how customers move within the store, is the direction of the traffic flow in that city/country. The direction of a display must be incidental to the consumer as they approach it. A combination of display and dispense techniques makes it easy for the shopper to browse and select.

It is here that a good retailing system makes the difference, as retail chains, volumes and economies of scale take effect. As part of standardisation, and to reduce the store setup time, intelligent plug-and-play retail display systems (commonly referred to as 'fixtures') become central to achieving flexibility in the common retail identity. As part of their modernisation, retail stores are getting leaner and self-dependent in carrying out modifications with various product lines and season lines, and in shorter durations. Retail systems are now self-contained units which are flexible in terms of the size and kind of display. They cater to static and dynamic media as support for product display. Ability to adapt to various brackets, hooks, shelves and lighting is now a given. Wood is now being replaced by extruded metal systems, which are faster to manufacture, transport and assemble. Colour is finding its way into fixtures, to act as highlighting zones or defining brands.

Advances in display techniques and technology are now helping consumers to become self-reliant in stores. Better product information, standardisation across the retail chain, easier product access, simpler and user-friendly pricing information, and smoother self-check-out mechanisms are helping retailers increase their margins. Not surprisingly then, store planning and intelligent fixture systems remain the centre of this refined retail.

\*Fifth Avenue is a major thoroughfare in the center of the borough of Manhattan in New York City, USA. The section of Fifth Avenue between 34th Street and 59th Street is one of the premier shopping streets in the world, similar to Oxford Street in London, the Champs-Élysées in Paris, Via Montenapoleone in Milan, Causeway Bay in Hong Kong, and the Ginza district in Tokyo.

# Store Planning and Fixtures

## 7 CHAPTER

### WHAT IS STORE PLANNING?

Store planning includes exterior and interior building design, the allocation of space to each department, and the arrangement and location of departments within the store. In short, it includes space allocating, floor plan and circulation plan – while also taking into consideration shrinkage<sup>1</sup> prevention.

Store planning deals with questions like: Where should merchandise be displayed? How much space should be allocated to each category/item? How many items of each SKU should be displayed?

### Criteria for Space Planning

- Profitability of merchandise
- Customer buying considerations
  - Impulse products at/near the front area
  - Demand/destination areas off the beaten path

<sup>1</sup>Retail shrinkage is a reduction or loss in the store's inventory due to shoplifting, employee theft, damages, paperwork errors, supplier fraud, etc.

## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- Store planning and the related considerations
- Concept of space design and the various types of store layouts
- Importance of store planning
- Types of fixtures, and tips for selecting and planning the same

- Physical characteristics of products
- Complementary products should be adjacent
- Sales rate: More units of faster selling merchandise need to be displayed

### Store Design

It refers to the style or atmosphere of a store that helps project or enhance its image in the market.

### Floor Plan or Store Layout

A floor plan is basically the internal arrangement of selling and sales-supporting departments. It includes deciding on the space allocated to each department – the selling and sales support areas are indicated, as are the permanent fixtures such as shelves, racks, counters, lights and other furnishings. Consequently, the placement of all such items and fixtures has a major role in building the image of a store.



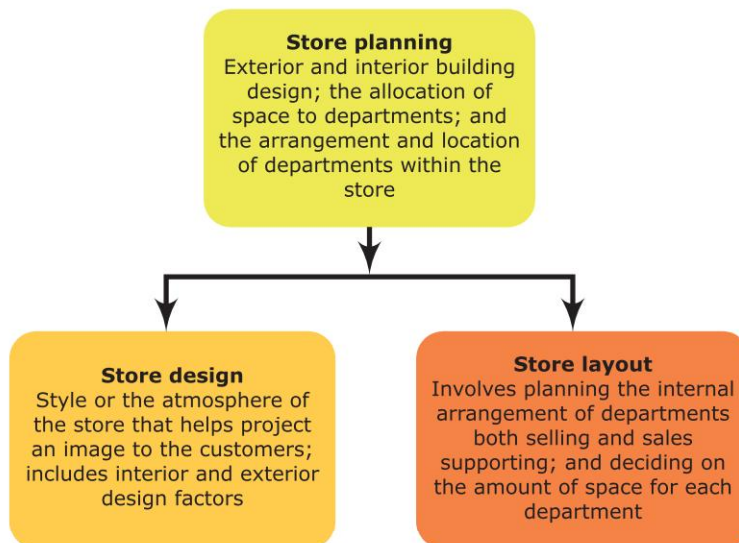
## 98 Visual Merchandising

Store décor, on the other hand, refers to the way a store is decorated. Generally, it refers to the more permanent items inside the store – floor and wall coverings, lighting and store fixtures, and seasonal items (banners, signs, props, etc.).

## Space Productivity Index

This is the ratio that compares the percentage of the store's total gross margin that a particular merchandise category generates to its percentage of total store selling space used. E.g.

Category	MENS
Total Sales (Mens)	751,604.00
Sale as % total	11.30
Total Sq.ft. (Mens Area)	3,591.00
Sq.ft. % total (A)	6.50
Sales per sq.ft	209.30
Total Gross Margin	603,330.00
Gross Margin % (B)	13.05
<b>Space Productivity Index (B/A)</b>	<b>2.01</b>



Prior to setting up a new store or remodelling an existing store, a retailer should take stock of the site and analyse the business potential.

Ideally, a store should be designed with the intention of maximising the profit-per-square-foot potential. It should offer profitability in conjunction with customer convenience. A retailer can achieve this by working hand-in-hand with distributors, as they are able to provide an analysis of the potential mix of equipment and services that the store will be offered.

## Other Considerations for Store Design

1. **Doors:** Make it as easy and convenient as possible for customers to get into the place of business. Make sure that entrances/doors are of adequate size and in sufficient numbers.
2. **Aisle space:** Always make sure that the aisle spaces are wide enough for customer access with shopping carts – yet not excessively wide so as to lose valuable floor space.
3. **Workflow:** Remember that this is a business – the basic idea is to get customers in the door, served and out the door – following suit for the next customer. A store with a smooth workflow design is always more enticing to customers.
4. **Folding/Utility:** Provide sufficient folding area for garments or to sort them out near trial rooms.
5. **Lighting:** Install appropriate lighting in order to make the store as bright and inviting as possible.
6. **Equipment:** Work closely with the administration department in order to select proper types of equipments and its placement in order to make the store as presentable & convenient for the customers as well as sales staff, as possible.

### Tips for Planning a Laundry Store

- If possible, design the laundry so as to allow unobstructed visibility from the front to the back.
- Use mirrors to make the area appear larger than it is.
- Install floors that are durable and non-slippery. Remember, this is a laundry and there will be spills.
- During the construction period, display signage – ‘opening soon’, ‘being renovated’, etc.

## THE PURPOSE OF PLANNING FIXTURES

Going the extra mile when it comes to the display and the merchandising of products throughout a store not only impacts immediate sales but also helps a retailer create an identity and ambience that works to build a loyal customer base.

In addition to creating visual excitement, a store planner needs to keep the five senses in mind when laying out a store. For instance, music related to the store’s concept and its merchandise selection creates an overall mood. Aromatherapy also work wonders, introduce a fragrance with perfume or potpourri (keep the scent light, a heavy odour can drive customers away). And, wherever possible and appropriate, allow customers to touch and ‘experience’ the merchandise as it helps to sell more.



**'Lifestyle' store, Landmark Group, Dubai: the first 8-10 feet are clear; customers can get accustomed to the store environment and temperature**

Before a store planner begins working on the design, display and merchandise of the store, it is necessary to first have a clear understanding of the image that the respective retailer wishes to project. For the same, he/she should understand the demographics of the community which the store will cater to: What are the age groups represented? What is the average income? What is the lifestyle, or aspiration? What are the interests pursued?

The retailer should then identify those individuals within that community whom he/she seeks to appeal to and gauge whether the target-base can support/bring about the sales volume needed to succeed. It also helps to look at competitors within that market to see if there is a void that can be filled. Whatever the approach may be, a better understanding of both, the target customers and the target communication will make the displays and the store more focused, more effective and easier to create.

## TYPES OF FIXTURES

Fixtures are the extension of the store image. The finishes, materials, textures and scale of fixtures must enhance the merchandise.

	WALL FIXTURES	FLOOR FIXTURES
FEATURE FIXTURES	Waterfall	2-Way
	Straight Arm	3-Way
	Step Arm	4-Way
		8-Way
CAPACITY FIXTURES	Garment Rod	Bin
	Shelf	Gondola
		Nesting Table
		Tired Rack
		Crucifix

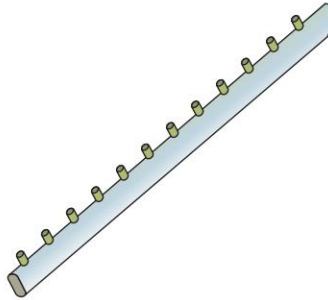
Fixturing can either be simple and functional or it can be designed to have exposure and personality.

### Guidelines for Using Feature Fixtures

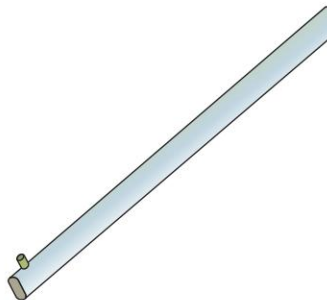
1. Feature fixtures should sport the newest/fashion items – and not the basic items in stock.
2. Presentation is best when each feature fixture shows just one colour group. e.g. All bright on one, pastels in another.
3. Each feature fixture should make one single statement – casual, dressy, etc.
4. Waterfalls and Straight arms should feature only one style of garment per arm; Step arms are best for displaying coordinates.

### Feature – Wall Fixtures

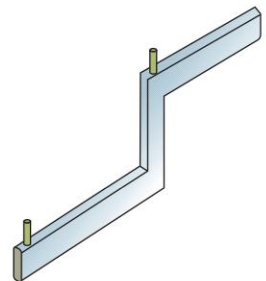
**Waterfall:** It is a slanted arm with 6-15 knobs used to face-out the garments so that full front is visible used best for tops, dresses, suits, etc. Face-out presentation has proven to attract customers' attention and increase sales. Capacity: 1 item per knob.



**Straight-arm:** It is used to face-out garments full front, can be used for tops or bottoms. Capacity: 1 item per  $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 inch, depending on the thickness of the merchandise or the hanger.



**Step-arm:** It is used to face-out garments full front, can be used for tops or bottoms. It is good to display coordinated clothes, like that in western wear, shirts and trousers, etc. Capacity: 1 item per  $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 inch, depending on the thickness of the merchandise or the hanger.

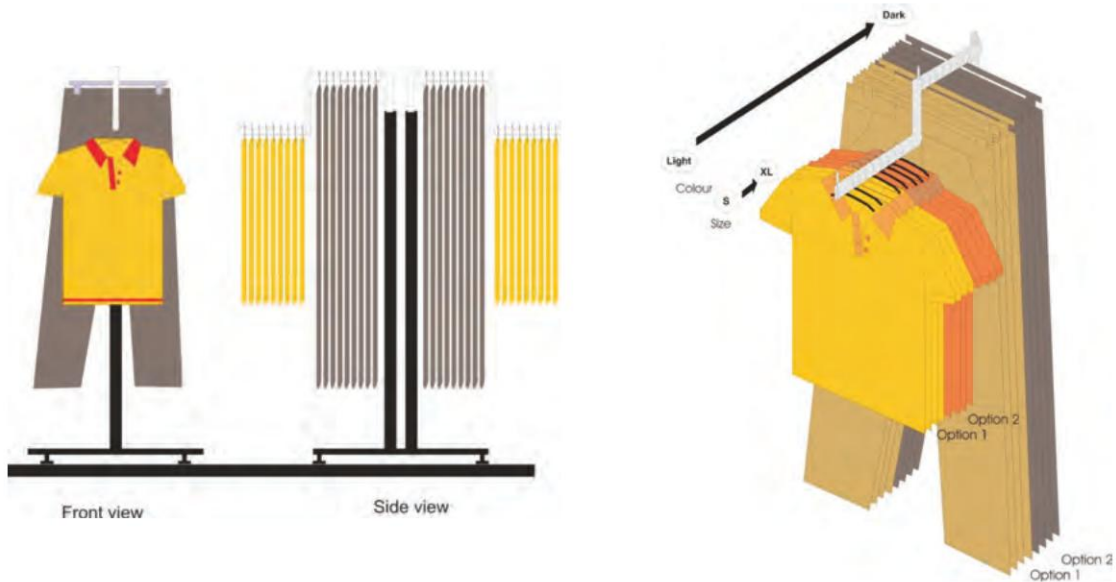


## Feature – Floor Fixtures

### 2-way/4-way browser

These types of browsers are especially used to test merchandise or to launch a new collection – since they are introduced in smaller quantities. While using these, please note:

- Never mix garment types (full sleeves and half sleeves, etc.) on the same arm.
- On one arm, hang the same styling and colour in different sizes – do not mix colours.
- Hang coordinates on different arms of the same fixture (2/4/8-way) to ease selection.
- The height of each garment end, from the floor, should be at least 3 inches.



**Display of merchandise on a 2-way step (left); Coordinated merchandise on a step-arm (right)**  
**All colour coordinated; light to dark; small to large (end at least 3" above floor level)**

## Capacity – Floor fixtures

### Hang rods/Crossbars

A large amount of merchandise can be hung on a garment rod. It is the most used fixture in every house e.g. inside an *almirah*. To maintain appealing wall areas, rods are generally used in 2, 3, 4 or 6 feet lengths depending on the size of the wall. Rods over 6 ft in length give a heavy, mass-merchandise look, which can be a turn off for customers.

Hang rods are often used during a 'Sale' so as to adjust excess stock on the floor. Hang rods can also be attached to walls, with brackets and clamps. End caps are snapped to the ends of the rod to prevent the merchandise from falling off.



**Capacity:** One item per inch for shirts or trousers. Their capacity decreases as the item thickness increases (e.g. winter-wear jackets, blazers, etc.)

### Bins

These are often used in stores to house bath collections, shirts, knits, winter wear, stuffed toys, etc. Bins should not be kept at the floor level as it is uncomfortable for customers to bend and pick/select the merchandise. Instead, they should be raised with the help of a podium for customer convenience.

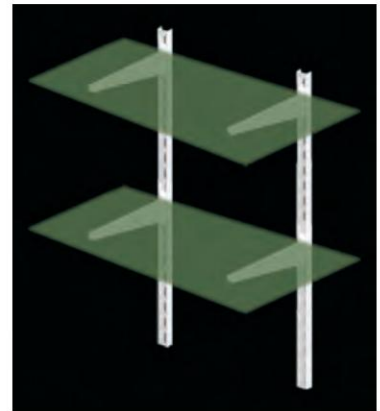
**Capacity:** The capacity of bins varies widely depending on the dimensions and thickness of the merchandise/items. A store can use spectrum colourisation in vertical direction. And, if the stock quantities are too low to fill an entire group of bins, the method of colorisation can be used in at least the top 3 rows, which are most visible.



### Shelves

All cupboards have shelves. Wall shelves are made of wood or glass, normally 15-18 inches in depth, and are attached with brackets. However, glass shelves are more common nowadays as compared to wooden shelves, as the former allow light to pass through – and merchandise in lower shelves is made prominent.

**Capacity:** The capacity of shelves varies widely depending on the dimensions and thickness of the merchandise. On an average, one stack is 1' wide. The capacity of each stack depends on the thickness of the merchandise. For example, while a shelf can store up to 12 items of kids' wear, the capacities reduce due to bulkier merchandise during winter.



### Guidelines for Using Shelves

1. Merchandise options to be displayed style wise.
2. Each option to be displayed by size.
3. Stacking height to be same on all the levels.
4. Colour blocking to be done vertically...Dark to light, top to bottom.
5. Follow VIBGYOR. Starting from violet on right-hand top corner.
6. Assorted merchandise (Cut sizes) to be kept on last 2 shelves

### Gondolas

Mostly used for trousers (formal and cottons), shirts, home collections, ladies bags, knits, etc., gondolas are very modular in nature. Merchandise can be hung or stacked on them, by altering the fittings.

A gondola has 4 sides; the lengths are used to stack or hang merchandise whereas the width, called end-caps, is used to stack/hang merchandise or for display. End-caps are often used as display points to highlight the styles kept on the fixture.





**Trousers displayed on a Gondola**

**Capacity:** The capacity of a gondola varies, depending on the dimensions and thickness of the merchandise. For example, a gondola with 2 end-caps holds 180 formal trousers when hung, but the same fixture can carry as many as 400 cotton trousers when stacked.

### **Pegs**

Pegs are often used to display impulse items and for accessories e.g. ties, wallets, fashion jewellery, belts, socks and handkerchiefs. The merchandise displayed is not very heavy as pegs cannot bear too much weight. The average length of a peg is 6 to 8 inches. A peg comes with a 'lock', also known as a secure hook, which opens with a magnetic key.

**Capacity:** The capacity varies depending on the dimensions and thickness of the merchandise, as well as on the packaging (which again varies from brand to brand). For example: A spinner with pegs, or a crucifix, can hold 784 handkerchiefs, but the same fixture can hold only 336 pairs of socks.

### **Nesting tables**

Nesting tables are used to promote the key style currently in fashion in the respective department(s). Often, they are used as focal points in the entrance area of the section. Generally, value propositions like multi-packs, impulse items are not displayed on nesting tables. A nesting table is a feature display and, hence, only fashion merchandise is displayed on it.

**Capacity:** The capacity of nested items varies depending on the dimensions the thickness of the merchandise. For example, it averages at around 60-70 pieces of shirts with bust display(s).



**Mobile accessories displayed on metal pegs**



**Nesting tables showcasing the latest collection of shirts**



**A crucifix displaying bath accessories like soap dispensers, tissue holders, etc. (left); nesting tables (right)**

### Guidelines for using Nesting Tables

1. Stacks are aligned and colour blocked at all the times
2. Stacks to have a gap of 1" to 1.5" between each other.
3. Only single colour to be used in each stack. Always maintain with full stocks.
4. Bust to be properly positioned and carry merchandise in the stacks.
5. Lights must focus on the display.
6. The shirt put on the bust must be properly tucked in and the sleeves pinned neatly at the back & merchandise/price tags NOT to be visible on the bust.

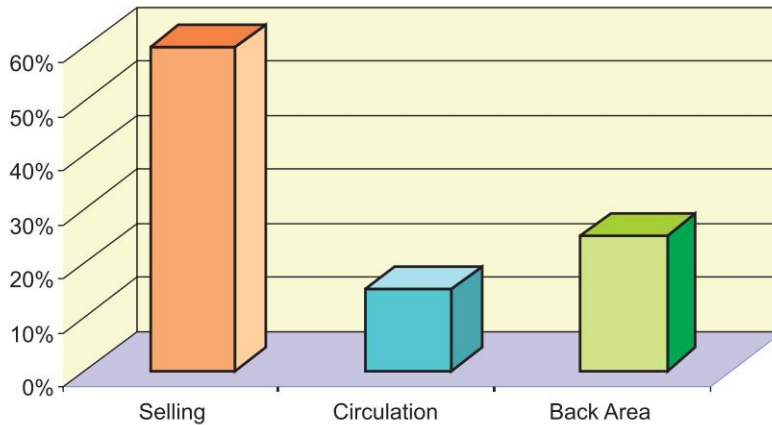
## Fixture Plan Basics

Fixtures comprise that furniture which hold and display the merchandise. This is one of the more difficult subjects to address because every store has different needs to showcase its merchandise. The style of chosen fixture should best reflect the store's image – it can include anything from hardwood custom cabinetry to inexpensive raw wood or brass and glass shelving. For example,

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the store Crate and Barrel is famous for the shipping crates in which its merchandise arrives as fixtures for display.

At times, depending on the type of products a store sells, the product itself can also serve as shelving. A retailer may sell furniture pieces that, while in the store, can act as display units. Antiques or unique pieces of furniture should not be overlooked either, as they can create a signature look for the store.



**Ideal space plan for a departmental store: Selling area – 65 per cent; Circulation – 15 per cent; Back area (stock room, etc.) – 25 per cent**

Especially in consideration of repeat customers, a retailer should change and rotate the fixtures within the store to add variety and excitement to the shopping experience. Generally, retailers change the interiors and the window displays in accordance with the return pattern of their typical customers (and within a given period of time). For example, if a customer shops at a store twice a month, the store manager might make minor changes twice a month and change the fixtures dramatically may be once a month. This adds to the shopping experience of such loyal customers. While switching key merchandise in a window or interior display can be a minor change, moving fixtures within the store or redesigning the front display window comprises a dramatic change in store layout.

The most successful fixture systems are installed to be flexible and offer a retailer the opportunity to make major display reconfigurations with little or no additional



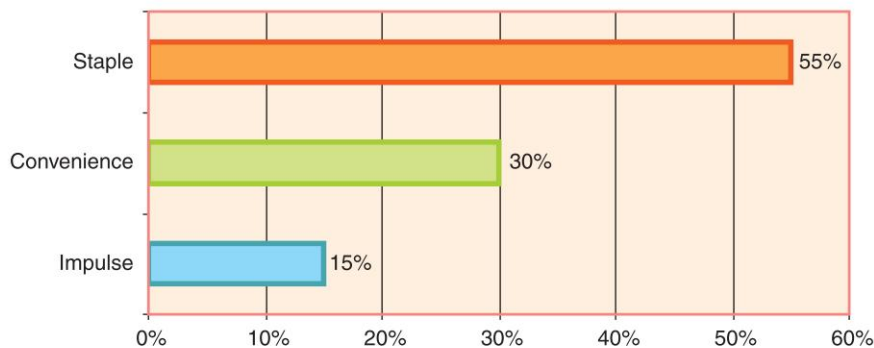
**A 'slat wall' with pegs, acrylic dispensers, glass shelves, etc. offering multiple permutations and combinations for display rearrangement, on a regular basis**

investment. A retailer uses the flexibility of these fixtures on a frequent basis to add interest and excitement to the store. For instance, fixtures such as display racks can be placed on wheels so that they can be moved with ease while reconfiguring a department. This can be done to either emphasise or de-emphasise product categories, depending on inventories, promotions and seasons.

## Tips for Selecting Fixtures

- Keep in mind the scale and size of merchandise while planning the fixtures.
- Make sure the selected fixture will physically carry the weight of the product to be displayed on it.
- Understand the merchandise to be displayed; some products have special requirements. Diamond jewellery, for instance, should be kept under lock and key for the safety of the merchandise. Not all categories call for such security features, but some hi-end products like perfumes, watches and sunglasses need to be showcased with care.
- Add costs for shipping (to retail location) while calculating overall expense of the fixtures.
- Consider the cost of the fixture vis-à-vis the possible revenue that is to be generated by it, in its space/area of real estate within the store.
- When purchasing hardware accessories for any fixture for the store, consider the different types of products that may be displayed on each unit. For instance, some units offer shelving that can be removed to make way for a hang rod. Be sure to purchase all the hardware necessary for each configuration for the respective fixture units.

## Tips for Planning Fixtures



- Staple merchandise is the core merchandise spread across the floor/store for which the customer comes to the store.
- Convenience merchandise is placed amid the staple merchandise e.g. undergarments and socks placed near the men's merchandise, etc.
- Impulse merchandise is the high velocity merchandise placed in high customer-traffic areas, besides the departments they belong to. e.g. caps, key chains around cash counters, etc.



### A Spotlight on Spotless<sup>2</sup>

I was on my way to Hillsdale, Michigan and stopped at a gas station/convenience store in the small town of Quincy. Frankly, I didn't need gas, but needed to use the facilities. I planned on going, then going.

But the bathroom changed all that. You see, the bathroom was SPOTLESS.

And it had been decorated. It wasn't exactly my style... the flowers were plastic, there were cut-out murals of big bucks shown through the cross hairs of a rifle scope, and the top of the toilet's tank had been transformed into a miniature NASCAR track, complete with match box cars.

But it was clear that someone cared enough to spend the time and put in the effort to create a bathroom that was great for their customers.

The pride those folks showed in their business MADE me go in spend money. I didn't need anything, but I ended up spending a few bucks on water, lottery ticket, (I didn't win) and a candy bar.

Remember, 67 per cent of people who stop shopping with you leave because of 'perceived indifference'... they think you don't care about them.

Now, a decked out bathroom may not work for your store, but you can...

#### Keep Your Store Spotless

It sets you apart from your competition, sets a tone of professionalism for your staff, and shows your customers that you care about them. Here are four fantastic ways to keep your store looking ship shape:

1. Create opening and closing checklists that detail everything that must be done to keep your store looking good.
2. Lead by example. If you want a clean counter let your staff see you cleaning it – often. They watch your feet, not your lips.
3. Hire someone to do the jobs that aren't getting done. For example, dirty windows give a terrible first impression. If you can't seem to get around to washing your windows, hire a service to come and do them for you.
4. Give your store a spring and fall Super Cleaning. Throw away all your junk, dust every shelf, get into the corners. A sparkling store will do wonders for everyone's outlook, including your customers.

I'll leave you with one of my favourite retail sayings—my past employees will remember it well...

**'If you've got time to lean, you've got time to clean!'**

#### Focal points

Architects, store planners and visual merchandisers often speak of locating focal points while planning traffic patterns and store layout. Also discussed earlier in Chapter Four, a 'focal point' is the generic term referring to any place in the retail setting where emphasis has been placed on attracting shoppers. This can be an area on a rear wall that has been painted a strong colour against which a well-lit armoire or fixture or furniture or furniture arrangement has been placed, and then arranged with featured merchandise. The focal point can be a mannequin or some form placed on a platform along with an unusual prop, a pool of light, or a collage of products.

<sup>2</sup>Tips from WhizBang! Training, Bob and Susan Negen (<http://www.whizbangtraining.com/sb/tips.aspx>)

### Island display

An island display, as the term denotes, is viewable from all its sides. Generally, it is found immediately upon entering the store, or in its atrium area.

Such displays are also referred to as 'clusters', as they comprise a group of mannequins and props.

### High points

A high point is again a generic term that refers to any place in the retail area where emphasis has been placed on attracting shoppers through display or visual aids. As discussed in Chapter Four, high points are placed against the wall, on a shelf, and at eye-level. A kid mannequin or a bust can be a high point. At times, merchandise can also be stacked on the high point shelf.



An island display near the store entrance

## Fixtures – Symbols/Legends

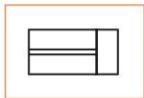
Listed here are some symbols of fixtures which help to understand a store layout.



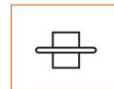
GONDOLA 38.5 Sq.Ft.



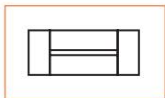
SPINNER 25 Sq.Ft.



GONDOLA with one end cap 45 Sq.Ft.



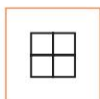
2-WAY BROWSER 24 Sq.Ft.



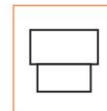
GONDOLA with two end cap 52 Sq.Ft.



4-WAY BROWSER 42 Sq.Ft.



CRUCIFIX 36 Sq.Ft.



Nesting Table 39 Sq.Ft.



PINWHEEL 20.25 Sq.Ft.

Store planners or shop designers should be equipped with a chart displaying such symbols and legends. The fixture areas mentioned herein are indicative; and change in accordance with the store concept and fixture designs. For instance, in the chart shown here, the red outline denotes the circulation area, which should be 1.5' from all sides of a fixture.



### Specific Goals to Reduce the Cost of Store Fixtures and Merchandising Programmes:

1. Improve the quality and effectiveness of the workforce;
2. Reduce errors caused by date and design changes;
3. Reduce errors and inefficiencies caused by inadequate communication both internally and throughout the supply chain;
4. Eliminate documentation errors that increase setup and construction costs;
5. Improve vendor performance through tracking and feedback mechanisms;
6. Minimise lost sales during re-merchandising activities;
7. Use technology to minimise the cost of all transactions; and
8. Reduce construction cycle times.

### IN SUMMARY

- Store planning includes exterior and interior building design, the allocation of space to departments, and the arrangement and location of departments within the store.
- Store design refers to the style or atmosphere of a store that helps project an image to the market.
- A floor plan is basically the internal arrangement of selling and sales-supporting departments. It includes deciding on the space allocated to each department – the selling and sales support areas are indicated, as are the permanent fixtures such as shelves, racks, counters, lights and other furnishings. Space productivity index is a ratio that compares the percentage of the store's total gross margin that a particular merchandise category generates to its percentage of total store selling space used.
- Fixtures are of two types – feature fixtures and capacity fixtures. Fixturing can either be simple and functional or it can be designed to have exposure and personality.
- Especially in consideration of repeat customers, a retailer should change and rotate the fixtures within the store to add variety and excitement to the shopping experience.
- The style of fixture you choose should reflect the store's image and can include anything from hardwood custom cabinetry to inexpensive raw wood or brass and glass shelving.

## Exercises

1. What is store planning?
2. What considerations should a retailer keep in mind while designing a store/shop?
3. What is the meaning of fixture planning?
4. Explain different types of fixtures (for the wall as well as for the floor).
5. What would be the ideal mix for staple, convenience and impulse merchandise?
6. Fill in the blanks:
  - a. Fixtures can be broadly classified into feature and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ is a ratio that compares the percentage of the store's total gross margin that a particular merchandise category generates to its percentage of total store selling space used.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ refers to the style or atmosphere in a store that helps project an image to the market.
7. True or False:
  - a. Nesting tables are never used to promote key items of fashion in a department.
  - b. Bins should always be raised atop a podium, for customer convenience.
  - c. 'Staple' merchandise is the core merchandise spread across the floor/store for which the customer comes to the store.
  - d. A waterfall is a capacity fixture.
8. The capacity of a waterfall is:
  - a. Always 13 items
  - b. Never more than 6 items
  - c. 1 item per knob
  - d. Only 1 item/merchandise per waterfall
9. Visit your favourite store. Name and classify the fixtures you see, classifying each as feature or capacity, along with the type of merchandise and number of items on display.
10. Design a simple feature or capacity fixture for any one of the followings:
  - a. Ties
  - b. Belts
  - c. Socks

## VM Speaks



**Name:** Ajay (Kumar) Dasari

**Present Designation:** Head – Visual Merchandising

**Company:** Levi Strauss (I) Pvt. Ltd.

**Location:** Bangalore

A commerce graduate, he has a postgraduate diploma in Interior Design and Multimedia, and over 12 years of experience in VM, store design and space planning. His interests lie in structural design, antique restoration and environmentally sustainable techniques for daily life.

### What led you to pursue a career in visual merchandising/store planning?

**Ajay:** Just out of college with a certificate each in Interior Designing and Multimedia, I was faced with very few options that would engage both my qualifications. Then, all of a sudden, a leading retailer happened to open their biggest (66k sq. ft) store in my hometown (Hyderabad). They were looking for someone technically as well as graphically sound to head their VM Department. I took that job and, ever since, it has been a great journey all through.

### What is the typical process you go through while planning a store?

**Ajay:** The simplest process that I have evolved for myself is this: 1. Know the customer; 2. Know the assortment; 3. Understand the adjacencies; and 4. Understand the business plan.

### Where does India stand today when one talks of displays and where do you see the future of visual merchandising going?

**Ajay:** There has been a considerable amount of progress in the last decade owing mainly to the entry of international brands into India and stepping up their standards. We have had fancier budgets to work with, newer materials and technologies available at affordable prices and importantly quicker conversions. However, we are far from being there reference international scenario and a lot of it is owing to trying to catch the last bus out – poor planning.

But I'm confident things will change, and that organisations will: 1. Recognise the importance of VM; 2. Integrate VM with end-to-end product lifecycle; and 3. Cease to consider VM as a mere art and not science.



# Circulation Plan

## 8 CHAPTER

### WHAT IS A CIRCULATION PLAN?

A good circulation plan delivers the customers to the merchandise. Traffic flow or circulation is vital to the shopping comfort of a customer and the ease of finding items. Shoppers should not have to think about how to move within the store, but be led through its expanse.

Aisles, which assist and influence customer circulation, occupy 12–15 per cent of the total carpet area of the store. They can actually be defined using different colours and materials, or by merchandise and fixture placement, in a way that is beneficial to the movement of shoppers inside the store.

### Rules of Circulation

- Visibility means access – people like to know where there are going and where they have been.
- Good signage is reassuring to the customers. Landmarks can create points of reference. Circulation, especially in larger stores, needs to be clear and easily accessible
- Walkways should let customers penetrate the depth of the store.

## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- Meaning of circulation plan and rules to adhere to
- Types of circulation plans; the advantages and disadvantages of each
- Circulation plans vis-à-vis different areas in the store (in terms of customer traffic and returns per-square-foot)

- Walkways should not continue in straight lines, so as not to appear never-ending and tiring.
- Dead-ends and bottlenecks should be avoided. Product areas should not look too large and overwhelming as this can make a customer feel trapped. Points of relaxations need to be created.

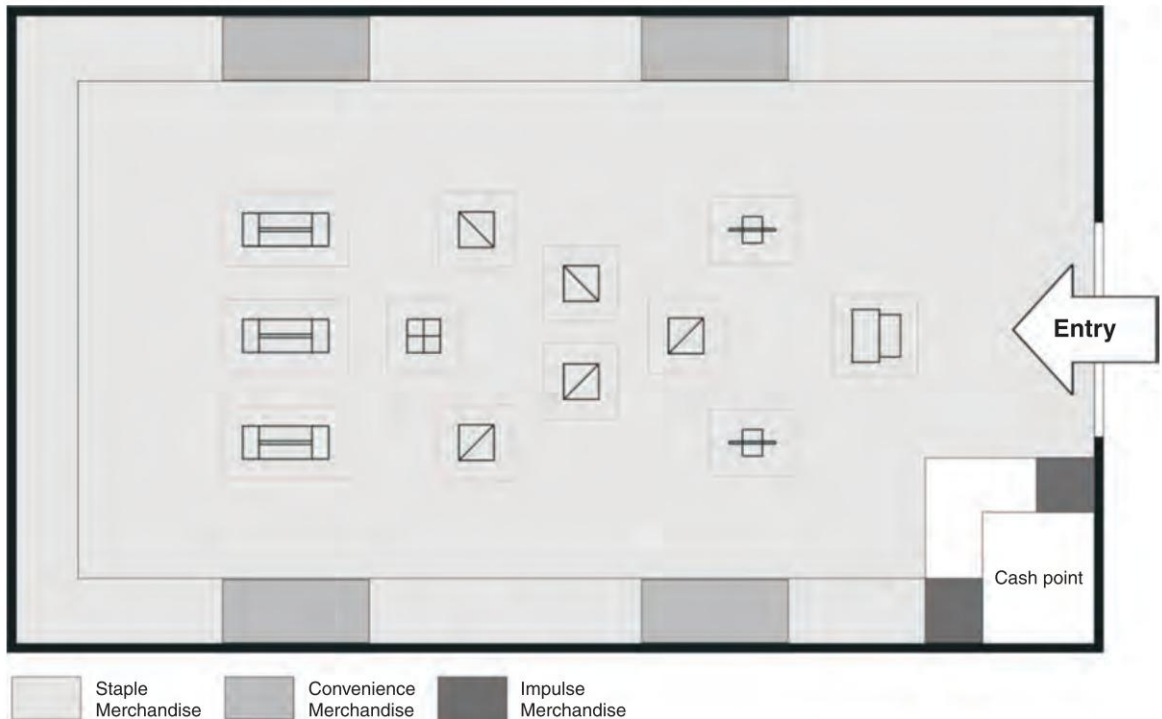
## TYPES OF CIRCULATION PLANS

- A. Free flow
- B. Grid
- C. Race track
- D. Herringbone
- E. Spin



## A. Free flow circulation

This type of circulation is used in stores where the merchandise and fixtures are grouped in clusters. For example, in a boutique, items and fixtures are grouped in patterns that allow an unstructured flow of customer traffic.



### Advantages of free flow layout

1. Allows more scope to browse and wander freely
2. Increases propensity for impulse purchase
3. Adds to visual appeal

### Disadvantages of free flow layout

1. Encourages loitering, perhaps even shoplifting
2. Increases confusion, as customers do not understand where to move next, and may miss a few sections
3. Causes wastage of floor space, thus increasing cost per square feet

### Fact file: WAL-MART

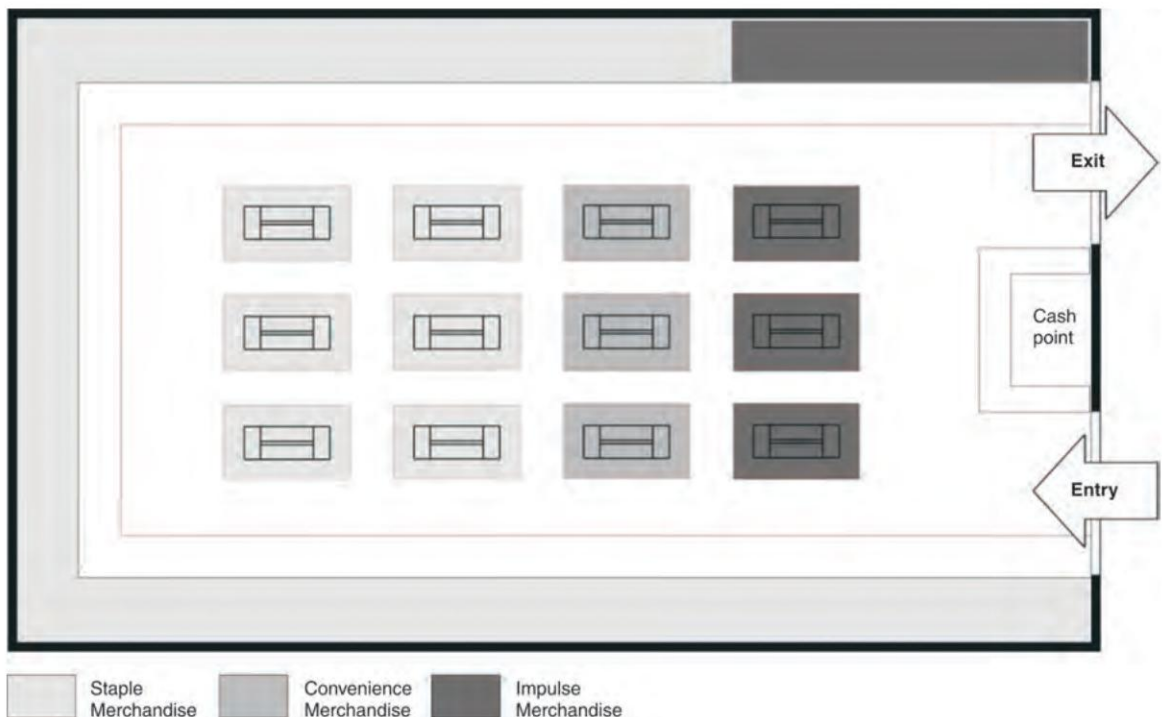
On July 2, 1962, Sam Walton opened the first Wal-Mart Discount City store located at 719 Walnut Ave. in Rogers, Arkansas. The building is now occupied by a hardware store and a pawn shop. Within five years, the company expanded to 24 stores across Arkansas and reached \$12.6 million in sales.

In 1968, it opened its first stores outside Arkansas, in Sikeston, Missouri and Claremore, Oklahoma.

## B. Grid Circulation

Typically, a grid circulation plan is used in supermarkets where aisles and fixtures are at right angles to each other. Merchandise is displayed in straight, parallel lines, with secondary aisles at right angles to these.

A grid layout has long gondolas in a repetitive pattern. This not only makes it easy to locate merchandise, but also allows for more merchandise to be displayed – making it a cost efficient layout. However, it does not encourage customers to explore the store and has limited site lines to merchandise. E.g. Stores such as Spencer's, Food Bazaar, etc.



### Advantages of grid layout

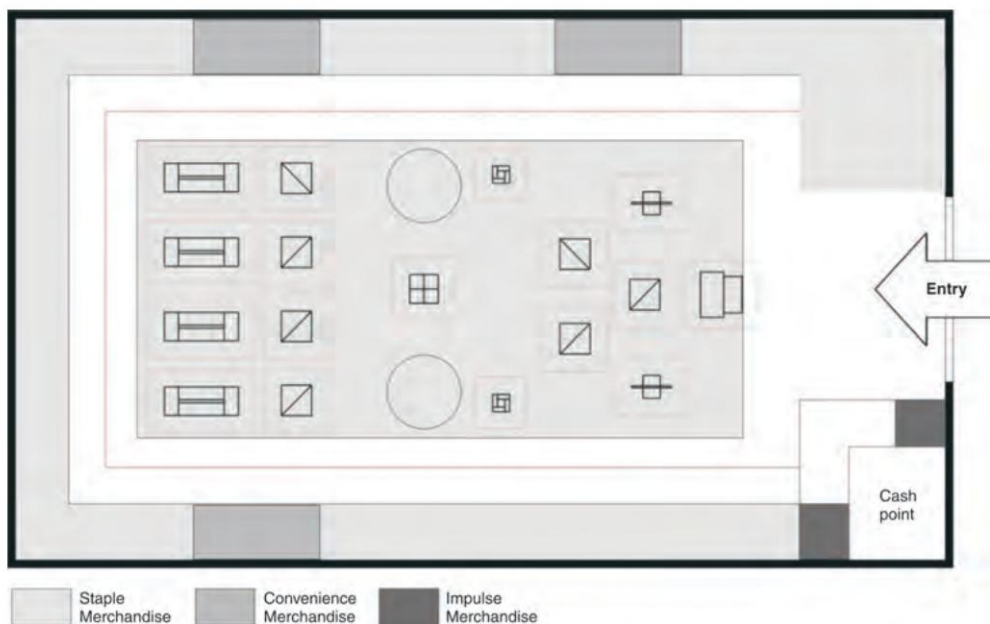
1. Low cost: Space being used to its optimum
2. Customer familiarity: Repeat customers know where to find what
3. Merchandise exposure: Depth of merchandise is clearly visible
4. Simplified security
5. Self-service

### Disadvantages of grid layout

1. Plain and uninteresting: Limited creativity in décor
2. Limited browsing
3. Stimulation of rushed shopping behaviour

## C. Racetrack/Loop Circulation

A racetrack layout is used in larger or wider stores where customers are encouraged to circle around the floor(s) and to return to where they started from – usually the lift or lobby area – to then move to the next level in the store. E.g. Shoppers Stop, Lifestyle, etc.



### Advantages of racetrack layout

1. Customer familiarity: Repeat customers know where to find what
2. Merchandise exposure: Depth of merchandise is clearly visible
3. Simplified security

**Disadvantages of racetrack layout**

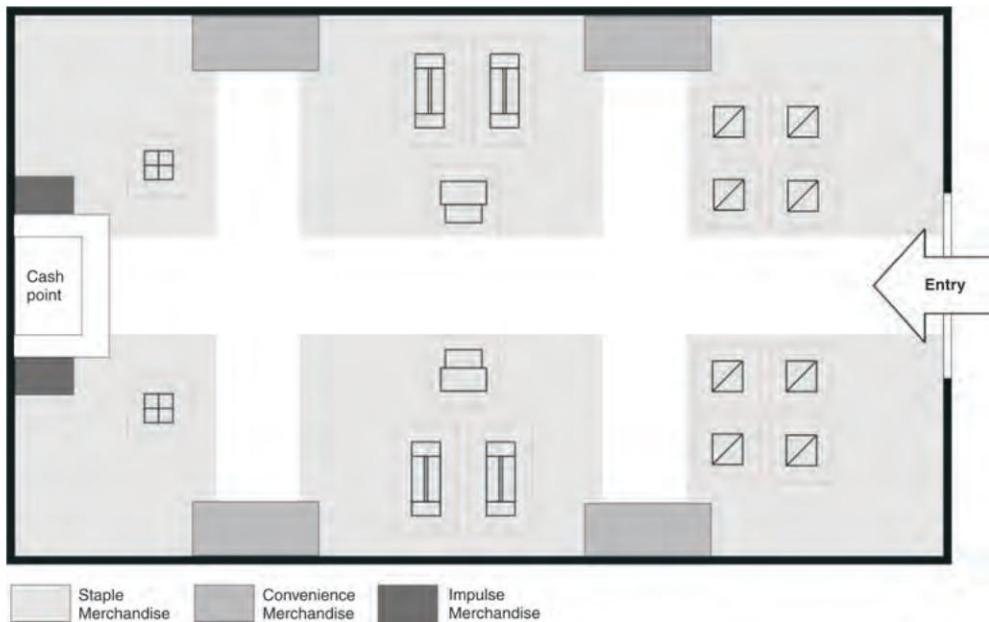
1. Plain and uninteresting: Limited creativity in décor
2. Limited browsing.

**Discount Stores**

Discount stores offer a wide range of products, although they mainly offer value goods, such as housewares, clothes, kitchenwares, gifts and health care products. These are sold at reduced prices, because many of them are either brand name or clearance products.

**D. Herringbone Circulation**

The herringbone pattern is followed in narrow stores of, say, maximum 40 ft width, wherein there is a single highway – bisecting the store along its length – with ‘side roads’ leading to the walls from it. E.g. Shops at airports, hotels, etc.

**Advantages of herringbone layout**

1. Allowance for browsing and wandering freely
2. Added visual appeal
3. Effective use of space

**Disadvantages of herringbone layout**

1. Loitering encouraged: increase in shoplifting
2. Limited scope for browsing

### Customer Service<sup>1</sup>

Customer service is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase. According to Turban et al. (2002), it is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation.

## E. Spine Circulation

A spine layout is like a herringbone layout – but without the side roads. E.g. boutique, etc.



### Advantages of spine layout

1. Very good scope for over-the-counter selling
2. Effective use of space, especially for a small store
3. Low cost: Optimum use of space

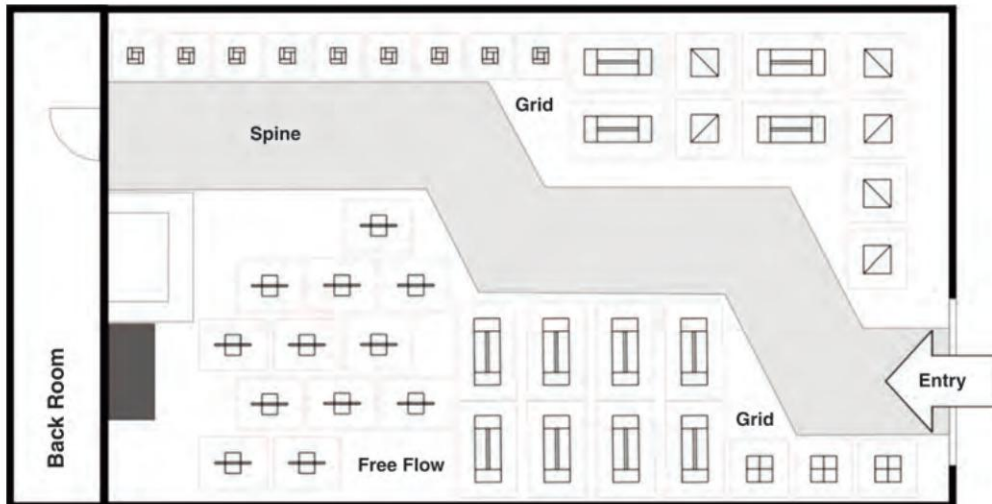
### Disadvantages of spine layout

1. Plain and uninteresting: Limited creativity in décor
2. Possibly confusing: Customers do not understand where to move next and may miss a few sections

*Most stores combine various circulation plans – to maximise the returns per square feet!*

<sup>1</sup>Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Customer\\_service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Customer_service); *Electronic Commerce: A Managerial Perspective*, Turban, Efraim (2002), Prentice Hall

Notwithstanding the circulation flow decided upon, the store aisles should be wide enough for customers to use. Too often, aisles are narrow and make it difficult to comfortably walk through a store. If the aisle size (or the 3' gap between two fixtures) is not maintained, it is inconvenient for customers to browse through the merchandise, or even share the aisle with another customer or sales associate.



In addition, lighting should be used to aid the shopper's movement through the store. This can be done easily with well-lit aisles that create focal areas, as well as brighter light to attract and move shoppers through the space.

Yet another reason for well-defined, wide aisles is the emergency exit. Customers should never be made to feel trapped or lost in the store. They should be able to focus on the merchandise, without having to worry about bumping into it.

### Store Manager

A store manager is the person ultimately responsible for the day-to-day operations (or management) of a retail store. All employees working in the store report to the store manager. A store manager reports to a regional manager or a Head of Operations.

### Angles and Sightlines

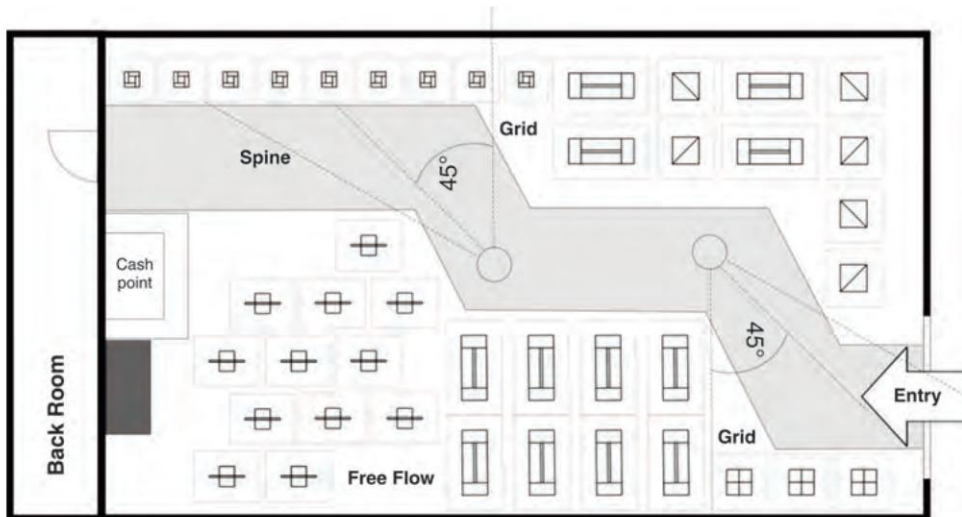
It is believed that customers tend to view products from a 45-degree-angle and at eye level. Therefore, the exact placement of a product on the shelves influences sales. Having established the aisle layout, the departments can be allocated next. For the same, adhere to the rules pertaining to the following:

- The space each section requires (for optimum returns)
- What merchandise goes on which level of the store (e.g. non-apparels on the ground floor, menswear on first floor, ladies and kid's wear on second floor, etc.)



## 122 Visual Merchandising

- Ask: Does the section need a perimeter wall for high-level display, or an island position (as done for counters selling cosmetics)?



Generally, customers walk about each floor in what is probably the most natural sequence – also referred to as the adjacencies. For example, they move from the section housing formal suits, to then see formal shirts and, after that, casual wear.

Start by taking the pulse of merchandise selection from the front to the rear of the store and follow these tips to redirect customer traffic – so as to maximise sales:

- Windows set the tone, communicate the store's image and invite customers inside.
- At the entrance, introductory displays including graphics welcome and educate the customer. The entry area is often referred to as the 'decompression zone', where customers adjust to the new environment; takes off their glasses, fold their umbrellas, and take visual stock of the entire store. Actual sales rarely occur in this zone; in fact, most sales take place after the customer passes through this area. For this reason, companies like Estee Lauder prefer their cosmetic counters to be placed a few feet within the departmental store entrance area.
- Once the customers pass through the entrance area, they look at the prices of the first lot of items, generally to their right, which is easily accessible. This initially displayed merchandise should have a price-point that does not overwhelm customers. Also called the 'strike zone', this area offers customers their first impression of the store's prices. Extensive video auditing by professional retail designers has revealed that, in Western cultures, customers usually turn right – into the strike zone – immediately upon entering a store before continuing their journey through the store. This area/zone should ideally have a compelling display of affordable products (in relation to the price point of the store's overall merchandise).
- After the strike zone, the right-wall of the store is usually the most valuable real estate. It is, generally, the area covered first and viewed thoroughly by most customers. Placed here should be the more affordable items (in relation to other products within the store). This



**Always consider placing a compelling display of affordable products (in relation to the price point of your overall merchandise) in the “strike zone”.**

could also include products that are being promoted by the store, but are not necessarily demand items. (Demand merchandise includes those items that a customer has already decided to buy – before entering the store.)

## Cash Counter Area

- Traditionally, cash counter are centrally located. It is highly recommended that a store places its cash counter to the left of its entry area – and display impulse products around it. Moreover, this area allows visibility to all parts of the store and, thus, can also serve as a security checkpoint. When designing the cash counter area, the space and plan should accordingly accommodate the many functions.

### Second Hand Retail

Some shops sell second-hand goods. In the case of a non-profit shop, the public donates goods to the shop to be sold. In give-away shops goods can be taken for free. Another form is the pawnshop, in which goods are sold that was used as collateral for loans. There are also ‘consignment’ shops, which are where a person can place an item in a store and if it sells, the person gives the shop owner a percentage of the sale price. The advantage of selling an item this way is that the established shop gives the item exposure to more potential buyers.

- Moreover, this being a high-traffic area, both add-on and impulse merchandise should be placed above, behind and near the cash counter, wherever possible. This location offers the most captive audiences (customers waiting to make payments) and is the point at which impulse sales are most often made.

## Rear Area

- High-demand products placed at the rear of the store tend to pull the customers through the entire store, increasing the visibility of other products displayed along their way. For

example, at the Hallmark store, greeting cards are often placed at the rear of the store – thus encouraging its customers to see the seasonal, collectible and other merchandise, before they reach the destination area.

Put simply, add-on merchandise and impulse products are usually placed near/around the demand merchandise in a high-traffic area to encourage further purchases. Impulse items are generally placed in the front area of a store – between the door and demand products – but outside the decompression zone. And, as discussed in the earlier chapter, store aisles should be wide and clearly defined not only for the ease of customer (and trolley/cart) movement, but also to provide for emergency exit.

## Make a Store Map<sup>2</sup>

This idea improves customer service and sales at the same time. A win-win combo!

### Make a Store Map for Your Customers

Make a simple map outlining what merchandise your customers will find in the different areas of your store. You could do it on the computer or have your second cousin, the artist, make a pretty hand drawn one for you.

Sound crazy? It's not! Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words.

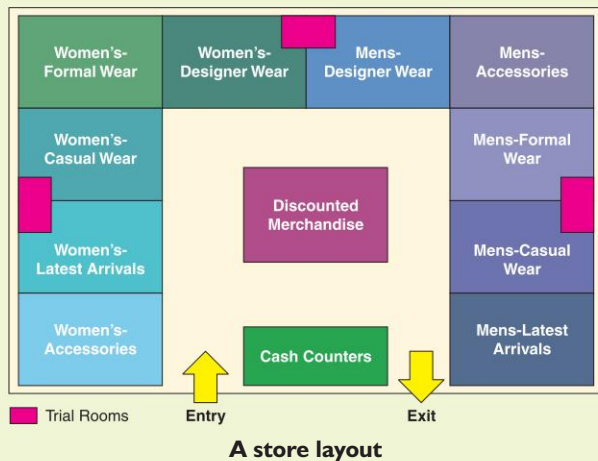
### A store map improves customer service

- Makes it easier for your customer to shop in your store. Wal-Mart and Home Depot do it with huge permanent signs; you can do it with your easy-to-update map.
- Lets your regular customers know where their favourite stuff is when you move it around.

### A store map improves sales

- Provides your sales staff with a simple, genuine reason to approach the customer and begin building a relationship – giving them the map and explaining it to them.
- Shows your customer the many things you have to offer that they might not notice by just glancing around. The map is a little bit like a surrogate sales person.
- Highlights areas that you want your customers to always check out (you know, that high margin merchandise).
- Gives your customer a tangible representation of your store and all your wonderful merchandise to take home and/or share with a friend. (Think one page catalogue)

**Be sure to include the store's name, hours, phone, fax, website, e-mail address, etc. on the map!**



<sup>2</sup>Tips from WhizBang! Training, Bob and Susan Negen (<http://www.whizbangtraining.com/sb/tips.aspx>)

## IN SUMMARY

- A good circulation plan delivers the customers to the merchandise.
- Types of circulation plans:
  - Free Flow
  - Grid
  - Race Track
  - Herringbone
  - Spin
- Free flow circulation is used in stores where the merchandise and fixtures are grouped in clusters; for example, in a boutique.
- Grid circulation is when merchandise is displayed in straight, parallel lines, with secondary aisles at right angles to the same.
- Racetrack circulation is used in larger or wider store where the customer is made to circle around the floor and get back to the beginning, usually the lift or the staircase lobby, to move to the next level of the store.
- Herringbone circulation patterns are used for narrow stores – say, a maximum of 40 ft width – where there is a single highway bisecting the store along its length with ‘side roads’ leading to the walls from it.
- Where a product is placed on shelves influences sales. It is believed that customers view products from 45 degree angle and at eye level.
- The ‘strike zone’ should ideally have a compelling display of affordable products (in relation to the price point of the store’s overall merchandise).
- Add-on and impulse merchandise should be placed above, behind and near the cash counters, as this location offers the most captive audience (customers waiting to make payment, etc.). Moreover, this area allows visibility to all parts of the store and, hence, can also serve as a security checkpoint.

## Exercises

1. Define a circulation plan.
2. Discuss the statement: A good circulation plan delivers the customers to the merchandise.
3. How is Herringbone different from a Spine circulation plan?
4. Discuss different types of circulation plans with diagrams.
5. What are the criteria to be considered while designing a circulation plan?
6. Customers view products from:
  - a. 25.5 degree
  - b. 54 degree
  - c. 45 degree
  - d. 62 degree
7. True or False:
  - a. The aisles occupy 50 per cent of the total carpet area in a store.
  - b. A grid plan is typically used in a supermarket where the aisles and fixtures are at right angles to each other.
  - c. Most stores are a combination of various circulation plans, so as to maximise the returns per-square-foot.
8. Fill in the blanks:
  - a. A \_\_\_\_\_ circulation plan is used in stores where the merchandise and fixtures are grouped in clusters; as in boutiques.
  - b. Spine layout is like a \_\_\_\_\_ layout without the side roads.
9. Draw the layout of a store (preferably a departmental store nearby) and mark the location of the following: impulse items, staple merchandise, seasonal items, new arrivals, discounted merchandise, cash counters and exit and entry points.
10. Visit different stores and approximately estimate the square-foot area of each.

## VM Speaks



**Name:** Prakash Uchil

**Present Designation:** Deputy Manager | Experience Design

**Company:** Future Group

**Location:** Mumbai

A commerce graduate with five years of experience in sales and six years in VM, he loves setting up stores and doing store display communication.

### What led you to pursue a career in visual merchandising?

**Prakash:** To explore my creativity and to be an owner to do things new and different, that will help the company to achieve target.

### What is the typical process you go through for implementing a display?

**Prakash:** Understand the needs, understand the product profile, understand the area of display and, very important Understand 'who is my Customer?' on this basis I plan my window or display setup. Once it's planned, then we go ahead with the production after taking necessary approval from the department head. Once the displays are installed, we measure it to through 'Sales Tracker'.

### Where does India stand today when one talks of retail & where do you see the future of visual merchandising going?

**Prakash:** We all know the way India is heading and expanding in retail; many big international players want to enter India's retail sector. Day by day, our retail sector is getting organised and well-planned. To sustain the same, there are some departments which regularly play a key role – one such with a big role is Visual Merchandising. It helps maintain the look of a store by ensuring the right kind of ambience and the right kind of display and communication. We need to explore the science of VM and bring it at the forefront of our country through education (VM as a specialised subject). I have felt in last six years that most people in the retail business think that VM is only about making signage(s) and doing some cutting-and-pasting. We need to change this outlook by through proper training – like recommending VM sessions, creativity workshops, exhibitions, personality development, etc.



# Planograms

## 9 CHAPTER

### MEANING AND PURPOSE OF A PLANOGRAM

A planogram is defined as the visual description, diagram or drawing of a store's layout and includes the placement of particular products and product categories. It is also referred to as plan-o-gram or POG.

A planogram allows for the planning and arrangement of merchandise on a given fixture configuration – so as to support sales through the proper placement of merchandise as per style, option, size, price point, etc. The main purpose of a planogram is to enable ease of selection and enhance the merchandise in a neat and organised manner.

Planograms not only present a flowchart for particular merchandise departments within a store layout, but also indicate where an item is located – on which aisle and on what shelf. A planogram should also illustrate the number of facings allocated for each SKU.

(FACING: The number of identical products, or same SKUs, on a shelf turned out toward the customer; SKU: Stock Keeping Unit: A number assigned to a product by a retail store to identify the price, product options and manufacturer of the merchandise)

## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- Meaning and purpose of a planogram
- Mockshop – the virtual reality tool to create planograms – and its benefits
- How to plan, implement and maintain a planogram

The complexity of a planogram may vary according to the size of the store, the software used to create it, and the need of the retailer. Planograms can be as simple as a photograph of a pre-set section, or they can be more detailed to include the number of peg holes and shelf notches to show the exact placement of each item.

### Mockshop

One of the best software, from the many available, to create a planogram, it offers complete creative freedom to fashion retailers. Mockshop is a virtual reality tool that helps build interactive 3D stores of any size, and to design perfect shop-floor layouts by simply dragging and dropping virtual fixtures, garments and graphics. A planogram created on



**Planograms are important for enhanced merchandise presentation! (Image courtesy: vrSoftware Ltd.)**

Mockshop can then communicate this vision to related professionals, who can then visualise the perfect shop-floor – from the comfort of their PCs.

Planograms provide a complete visual guide to every fixture in the virtual store, clearly showing how they should be merchandised and, at the same time, giving foolproof visual instructions that even the newest member of the staff is able to follow. Mockshop automatically generates planograms, so it is quick and easy to produce as many versions as needed to cover each and every store grade. Furthermore, working with this software is quick, easy and cost-effective. Retail clients who use Mockshop have been known to achieve double-digit sales growth and a 2000 percent increase in productivity.

### **Benefits of Mockshop**

- More effective visual merchandising that drives sales: Experiment, adapt and create store layouts that can sell; all, in a totally interactive environment.
- Improved communication: Use pictures instead of words to ensure that ideas and instructions are received loud and clear.
- Significant time saving: Halve the time it takes to lay out the shop floor with clear visual instructions.
- Significant labor saving: Let the mouse do all the dragging-and-dropping, eliminate the need for physical mock shops.
- Consistent brand identity: Create as many planograms as need be, for stores of any space grade and in any location.
- Better buying strategies: Present how the range will look in store to the buyer, providing invaluable feedback for buying decisions.

### **Mockshop for fashion retailers**

Instead of producing a 'one size fits all' merchandising directive that could be easily misinterpreted by shop-floor teams, Mockshop helps create virtual layouts for each store grade and automates the production of planograms (merchandising directives). Fashion retailers can thus achieve improved sales through better shop floor execution. The visual planogram virtually eliminates misinterpretation which, in turn, leads to correctly-presented merchandise; converts more shoppers into buyers; increases average transaction values; drives up sales; and reduces mark-downs.

Mockshop are being used by more than 200 fashion retailers and brands – including Macy's, La Senza, Adidas, Dillard's, O'Neill, Tommy Hilfiger, René Lezard and Columbia Sportswear.

## **BENEFITS OF A PLANOGRAM**

Product placement and improved sales are two of the very basic reasons why retailers should implement planograms in their shops. However, the main purpose of a planogram is to support the ease of selection and enhance the merchandise presentation in a neat, organised manner.

Other benefits of a planning the placement of merchandise with a planogram includes:

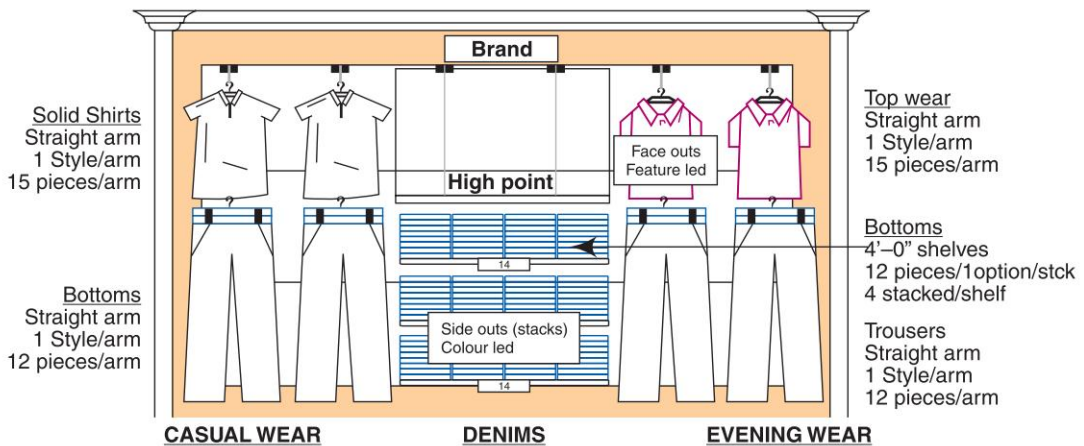
- Assigned selling potential to every square foot of store space



**A planogram showing the details of merchandise on a wall fixture (Image courtesy: vrSoftware Ltd.)**

- Customer satisfaction owing to greater visual appeal
- Tightened inventory control and reducing out-of-stock merchandise
- Ease of product replenishment for the store staff
- Enhanced product positioning
- Effective communication tool for staff-produced displays

Retailers have realised that the key to increased sales is through proper merchandising. And that, when it comes to presenting products to customers, a planogram is one of the best merchandising tools.

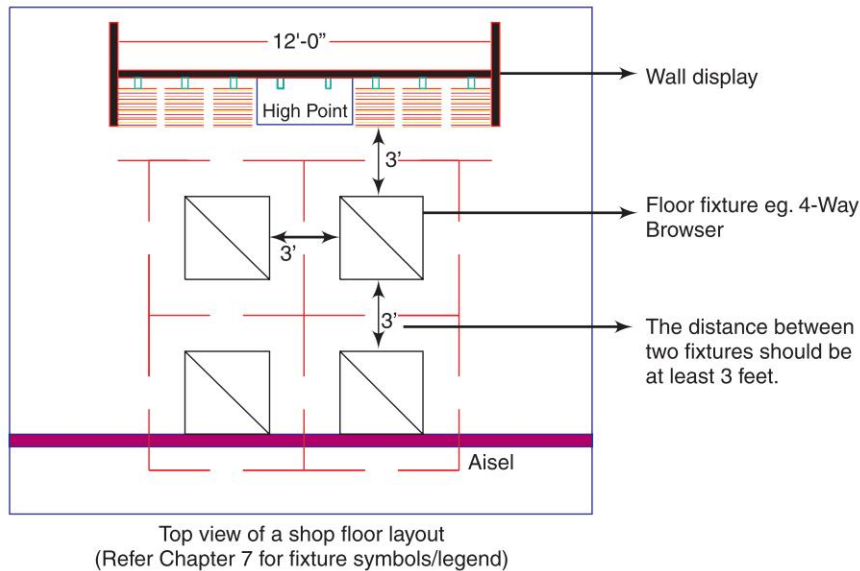


Fixture: Wall Display on channels at every 2'-0"

## Planogram

**Front view of a shop wall: A planogram giving details of the capacity**

A planogram is a blueprint<sup>1</sup> that visually communicates how merchandise and props physically fit onto a store fixture or window, to allow for proper visibility and price point options. The placement of merchandise which is to arrive at the store can be planned out on paper, in a planogram. Retailers can then plan how to mix new products with existing items or initiate entirely new displays. Especially in the case of multiple stores, this tool is an excellent way for retailers to communicate to their entire retail staff how the displays should be executed.



**Top view of a shop floor layout (Refer Chapter 7 for fixture symbols/legend)**

## IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A PLANOGRAM

Listed here are some of the steps to be followed for the implementation of a planogram:

1. Plan plenty of time to set up a new planogram without interruption; that is, either before the store opens for its customers or after store closing.
2. Gather and take cleaning supplies, additional shelving, peg hooks, signage and acrylic holders, product, planograms and other required items to the workspace.
3. Each new planogram should begin with a good cleaning of the shelves and fixtures. And this includes the base of the shelf.
4. Using the planogram, begin setting the shelving and peg hooks at required locations. Planograms are read from left to right: Shelves should be worked from bottom to top, left to right, and pegs should be worked from top to bottom, left to right.
5. If necessary, the actual product should be used while determining the exact distance needed between each facing and/or each SKU.

<sup>1</sup>A blueprint is a type of paper-based reproduction usually of a technical drawing, documenting architecture or an engineering design. More generally, the term "blueprint" has come to be used to refer to any detailed plan.



**A planogram showing details of merchandise on a wall fixture (Image courtesy: vrSoftware Ltd)**

6. Once the planogram is set, each space should be filled with the correct product. Additional merchandise should be kept in the stockroom, to be replenished when required.
7. Shelf labels and other signage (e.g. pricing) should be created for the newly set section.
8. The finished section should be zoned by bringing all items forward with labels straight and facing the customer(s).

### Maintenance Tips

1. Perform daily store recovery to keep shelves appearing neat and full.
2. Replace any worn labels or signs immediately.
3. Reorder empty spaces as soon as possible.
4. Provide general housekeeping to keep shelves and product free from dust.

And, a list of things needed to make and maintain a planogram:

1. Clean rag or duster and an all-purpose cleaner.
2. Additional shelving or peg hooks and hangers
3. Merchandise, price labels, and other signage.







Planogram showing details of merchandise on various fixtures (Image courtesy: vrSoftware Ltd.)



Planogram showing details of merchandise on various fixtures (Image courtesy: vrSoftware Ltd.)

## Visual Merchandising and Inventory Control

At retail locations, store managers are responsible for visual merchandising. Many companies communicate how to merchandise their stores using direction – such as planograms – to indicate product placement. While managers have a varying degree of autonomy in deviating from corporate direction, it is important to ensure that stores are compliant with the company's brand image. Store managers should ensure that the proper amount of inventory is displayed for customers to purchase from, by ensuring that shelves and racks remain stocked and that products are frequently rotated out of storage areas. Managers should also concern themselves with shrinkage, and must ensure that merchandising techniques and customer service skills minimise the possibility of in-store theft (shoplifting of products).

### Small Changes Lead to Big Things<sup>2</sup>

We received an e-mail from the owner of A Polished Image in New Windsor, NY with this story...

'I own a salon and when I get a client calling to ask about prices I don't like to just say \$25.00 and then hang up. Sometimes we get busy and find ourselves doing it anyway, so I began to make a conscious effort to explain why I charge what I do.'

This really paid off, a few weeks ago when a call came in. 'How much for a fill?' I took the time to explain in detail what we do and what makes us different from every other salon. We got the appointment and it turned out to be a woman that owns a local copy place. This one woman has referred more than 10 people to our salon in 3 weeks!

#### Tip:

Treat people on the phone just as you would if they were in your store... and one day they will be!

Bravo! A wonderful lesson in great selling as great customer service.

It is very important for planogram managers, executives or visual merchandisers to ensure that the respective wall, unit, fixture is 'balanced' before releasing the planogram. Mirror image is the most commonly used way to balance a planogram. Usually the category teams or merchandisers buy the merchandise keeping in mind the planogram standards and the space availability in-store. This helps the staff in understanding how to set the merchandise and ensure sufficient inventory levels on the shelf or display. It also lends to effective use of space – whether floor, page or virtual – and facilitates communication of the retailer's brand identity.

Now, let us better understand planograms (incorrect vs. correct) with a few examples:

<sup>2</sup>Tips from WhizBang! Training, Bob and Susan Negen (<http://www.whizbangtraining.com/sb/tips.aspx>)

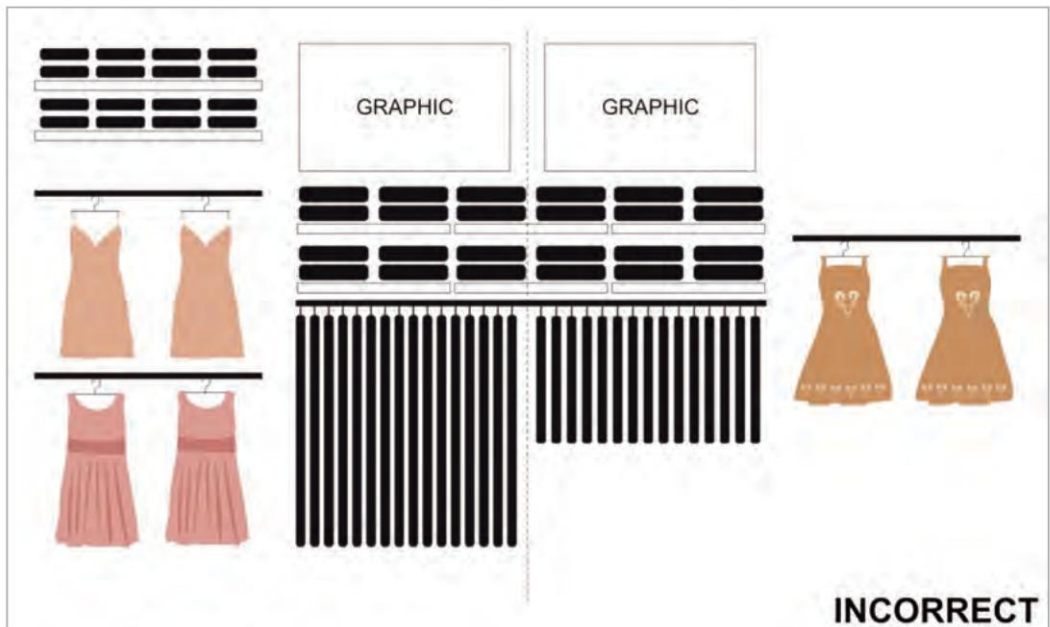


Figure 9.1

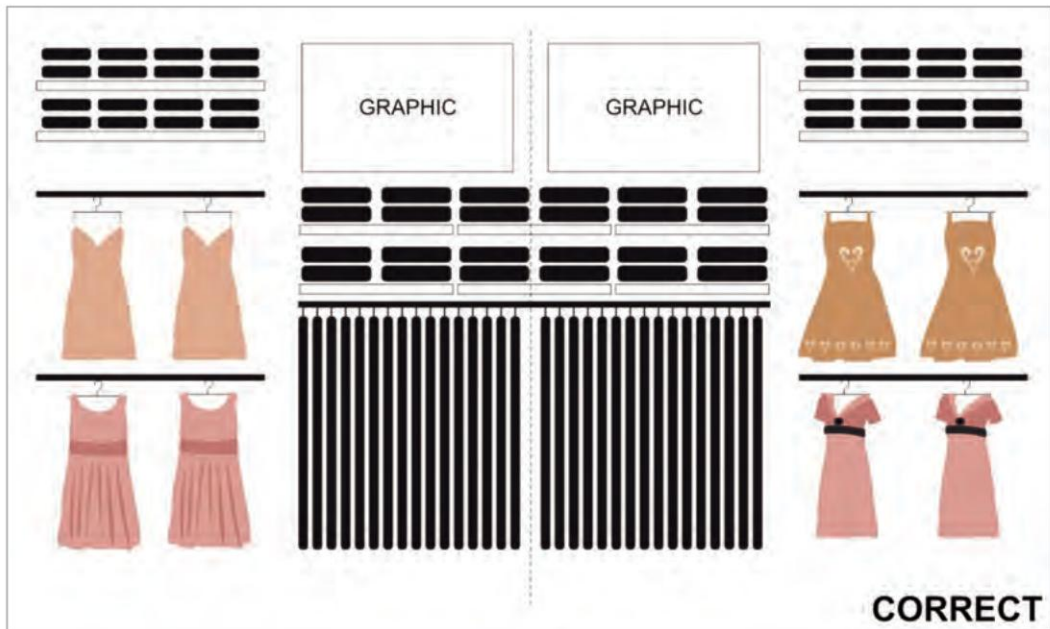


Figure 9.2

In the correct planogram (Figure 9.2), formal balance is achieved by creating a mirror image of garments on both sides of a centre line/dotted line.

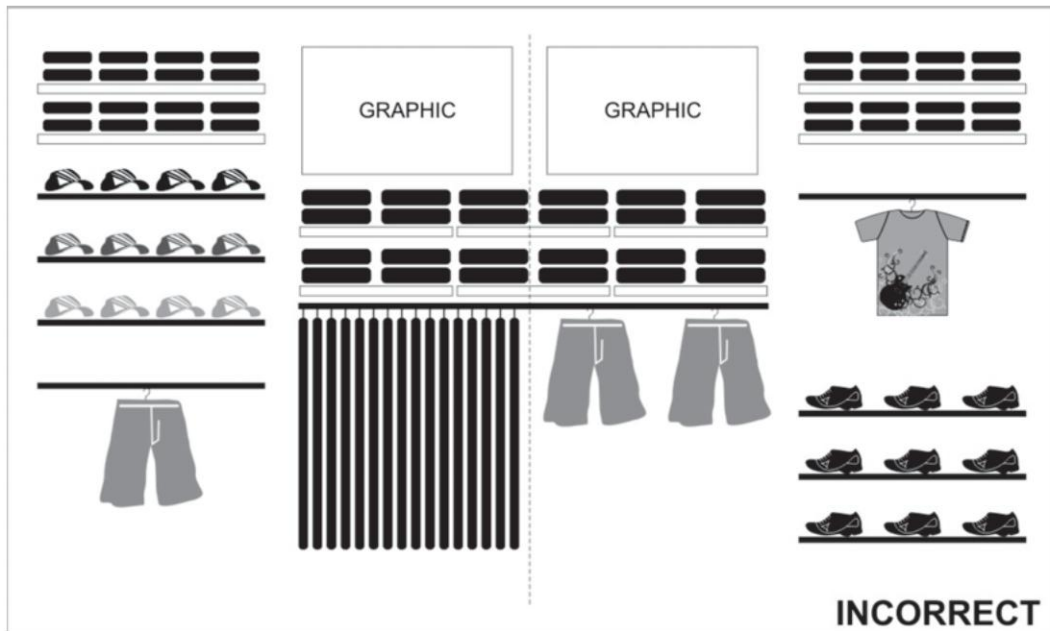


Figure 9.3

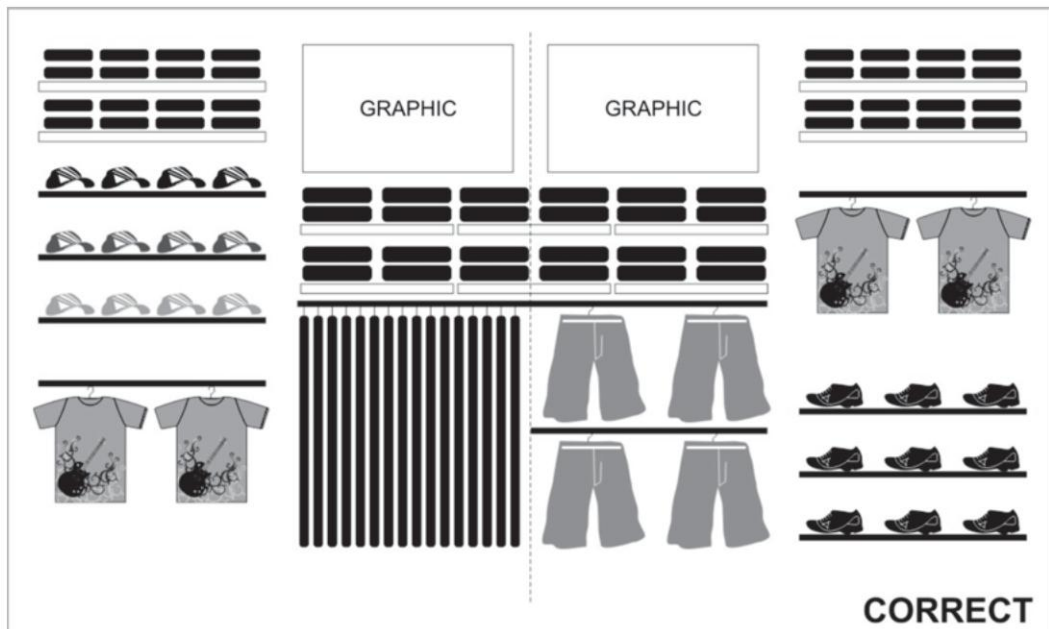


Figure 9.4

In the correct example (Figure 9.4), informal balance is achieved because an equal amount of space is filled on either side of a centre line/dotted line.





## IN SUMMARY

- Planograms are important for enhanced merchandise presentation!
- A planogram is defined as the visual description, diagram or drawing of a store's layout to include placement of particular products and product categories.
- Mockshop is a virtual reality tool that helps build interactive 3D stores of any size, and to design perfect shop-floor layouts by simply dragging and dropping virtual fixtures, garments and graphics.
- A planogram created on Mockshop can communicate the envisioned store to related VM professionals.
- Product placement and improved sales are two of the very basic reasons why a retailer should implement planograms.
- A planogram is that drawing or blueprint which a retailer uses to visually communicate how merchandise and props physically fit onto a store fixture or window to allow for proper visibility and price point options.



## Exercises

1. Define a planogram.
2. How is a planogram implemented?
3. A planogram is a retailer's drawing (blueprint), which visually communicates how merchandise and props physically fit onto a store fixture or window to allow for proper visibility and price point options. Explain the statement.
4. What is the purpose of a planogram?
5. A planogram is also referred to as:
  - a. POG
  - b. Plan
  - c. PGO
  - d. PG
6. Fill in the blanks:
  - a. A \_\_\_\_\_ allows planning of the arrangement of merchandise on a given fixture configuration.
  - b. A \_\_\_\_\_ balance is achieved by creating a mirror image of garments on both sides of a wall.
  - c. An \_\_\_\_\_ balance is achieved when an equal amount of space is filled on either side of a wall.
7. True or False:
  - a. Planograms are not important for neat merchandise presentation!
  - b. The placement of merchandise arriving at the store can be planned on paper, using a planogram, before the products actually reach the store.
  - c. Formal balance is achieved by creating a mirror image of garments on both sides of a wall.
8. Draw a planogram each, for:
  - i. Shirts of sizes small, medium, large and colour: mauves, beiges, whites, blacks and blues.
  - ii. Denim pants in different washes and different sizes.
  - iii. Butter of three different brands (one brand is the retailer's private brand, sold in 3 packs of 100 gm, 250 gm and 500 gm respectively.)

## Case Study

### DISPLAYS DISAPPOINT\*

Visual merchandising, as discussed earlier in this book, has existed ever since merchandise was sold to customers. When a vendor arranged goods so as to appear more attractive to customers, or when street hawkers placed the biggest and ripest fruits at the very top of their baskets, perhaps even decorated with silver foil during festive seasons, for consumers to see and touch... well, that was and is visual merchandising.

Today, VM has become more sophisticated and more encompassing than the mere arrangement of merchandise for the sake of communication and access to customers. The elements of VM are put into practice from designing the very floor plan of a store, to the beautiful mannequins that grace it. One of the initial occurrences of visual merchandising occurred in the 1990s, when Shoppers' Stop began hiring visual merchandisers. Thus came into being the very concept of big departmental stores, and an attempt was made to provide an international experience to the Indian masses. Soon, VM became a necessity to the retail industry.

A recent survey conducted at a fairly new mall in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, called The Great India Place. From Lifestyle to Jumbo Electronics, Big Bazaar to Globus, Shoppers Stop to Pantaloons – the mall houses well known stores along with huge parking space and food court. Team ThinkTank<sup>†</sup> surveyed the window and in-store displays at Lifestyle, Pantaloons and Shoppers Stop during the pre-Diwali season, when the shop décor and its customers are both in a shopping mode. Only Lifestyle, from among these three similar and large format stores, had organized an Autumn-Winter window display, which was much appreciated by most walk-ins.

The survey statistics<sup>‡</sup> (Figures 1.1 to 1.4) indicate that the Diwali displays were not up-to-the-mark in terms of customer expectations as well as display standards. Most customers looked for 'New Arrivals' and the latest fashion inside the stores. Moreover, they expected new ranges to be presented in window displays, and the complete accessorised displays – with pricing – to be presented in-stores, at focal points or in other display areas. Many customers found the displays 'clustered' – contrary to the how 'a display should always be clear and concise'.

However, all the three store windows in the survey were 'incomplete' in terms of VM norms (the display basics were missing): mannequins were not grouped together for better story and impact; backdrops and props overshadowed the merchandise; layering and cross-merchandising was not colour coordinated; and, above all, the 'copy' was missing.

\*by Studio Atomium; Courtesy: RVG News Vision Pvt. Ltd., Mail: vinodkaul@newsvision.in, Visit: [www.newsvision.in](http://www.newsvision.in); Reproduced with permission

<sup>†</sup>Online newsletter on 'Visual Merchandising'; to subscribe, log on to [www.studioatomium.com](http://www.studioatomium.com)

<sup>‡</sup>The survey was conducted on Nov. 2, 2007 and among 30 families who walked into the stores namely, Lifestyle, Pantaloons and Shoppers Stop, at The Great India Place, Noida.

FIGURE 1.1

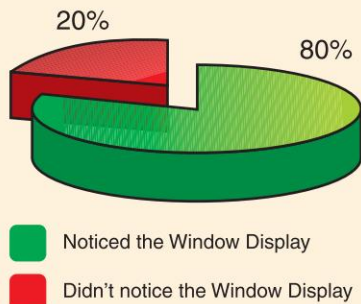


FIGURE 1.2

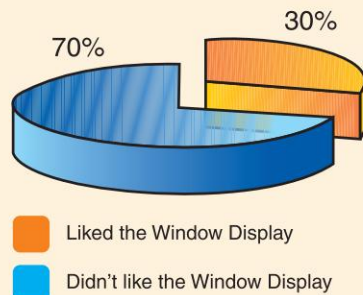
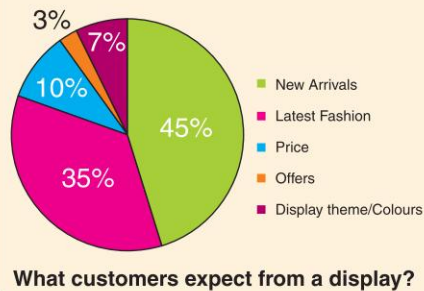


FIGURE 1.3



FIGURE 1.4



Note: One of the biggest challenges posed to visual merchandisers is the glare/reflection of light that comes onto the store window – blinding shoppers from viewing the display. While many stores use decorative awnings to reduce the impact of this glare, some others choose to place their merchandise away (5–6 feet) from the glass pane. Such deep windows pull the customers eyes to the display rather than the glare on the glass.

To conclude, let us hope that in the near future visual merchandisers incorporate the basics of window display to achieve better quality displays. This will not only give a boost to retailing, but also ensure that the customers are better equipped with inputs derived from these displays of merchandise.

## EXERCISE

1. What is the greatest challenge a visual merchandiser faces when it comes to window displays? Elaborate.
2. What do customers expect from a display? Discuss why they expect the same.
3. Name the stores among which the survey was conducted? What themes were on display, and which display was appreciated the most by the customers? Why?



# PART 4

## Merchandise Presentation, Window Displays, and Other Important Tools

This section (chapters 10–12) introduces and informs about the various methods of merchandise presentation, like the planogram – arguably the cheapest tool to keep a store presentable and visually enhanced at all times (somewhat similar to keeping your home well-decorated, clean and with nicely laid out furniture). Various categories of merchandise call for different approaches, as explained in this section. In apparels, for example, principles are more set as compared to other categories of merchandise.

Also included here is a collection of 12 case studies on indigeneous displays, which, in turn, lend a brief idea of the unconscious and creative approaches to visual merchandising as perceived by both street vendors and Indian retailers. In common Hinglish\* parlance, some may even refer to it as VM-giri.

Chapter Eleven, in particular, covers the well-known art of window displays, while also explaining different types of construction and the possible displays. It illustrates that, while many creative geniuses are currently engaged in the art of window display, it takes much more to become an outstanding visual merchandiser. In that, Indian window displays still lack the science of visual merchandising. Some exclusive case studies at the end of this chapter throw light on the details pertaining to the various aspects of display.

In addition, this section spans the 'hands on' aspects of VM, ranging from styling mannequins to tracking displays. Given how retailers are keen to know about the returns of their investment (in terms of VM), it is important to plan and monitor a display so as to assess its impact on sales. Other topics covered include the 'display calendar' – a handy fold-out provided to help pre-set a display – along with some basic ways of handling display props. This comprehensive listing will help VM professionals build their own tool kits.

The last part is a must for every organised retail person: a guide through the importance of quality and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures). It covers presentation principles which help upgrade an in-store shopping experience – making it a delightful one!

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\*A colloquial usage of two languages, namely Hindi and English.

## Industry Insight

### Store Presentation and Window Displays

*By Surender Gnanaolivu, Vice President – Store Development, Mahindra Retail*

In a highly competitive market, wherein gratification precedes loyalty, retailers have learnt that success is about being smart, sophisticated and knowing what is desirable. In this endeavour, communication at physical interfaces with the shoppers (right from the time the point of sighting the store) has become very critical. The idea is to catch the attention of the 'passer by' at the store front, entice him/her into the store and create enough interest for him/her to become a 'browser'. This is called visual marketing. Once inside, the presentation of the merchandise takes over to ensure that the interest breeds a compelling desire to buy – thus converting the 'browser' into a 'spender'. This silent salesmanship is also referred to as VM. Together, these techniques deliver a differentiated and delightful shopping experience through the use of a wide band of skills that spread from stunning dramatics to an organised library-like presentation of merchandise. Both these play a very crucial role in shopper acquisition and loyalty – the lifeline of every retailer – for which a lot of effort and expenditure are invested.

Visual marketing helps retailers, through effective window displays, create first impressions of the store image and its offerings through strategic and tactical communication. For the same, the media of interior design, art and visual communication are used to sustain the preference of the store to the shopper across different seasons and occasions. Strategic communication addresses the brand image of the store and its core offerings, whereas tactical communication pertains to specific promotions or seasonal events with clear benefits that is held inside the store at a given time.

A classic example of strategic communication is Burberry – in the way it uses its signature checks as a backdrop in its window display, to establish a proprietary connect between the brand and the first interface with the shopper from its storefront. The Spanish fashion brand Zara, very popular for its updated high affordable fashion, uses clusters of very stylised mannequins in stunning configurations that keep changing in the frequency of their fashion cycles (of three weeks). This 'advertises' (Zara never advertises through any other medium) specifically their new collection which brings in substantial footfall. In stark contrast, mass value retailers like Tesco very effectively use tactical communication in the windows through product pile-ups signed off with attractive price propositions.

To optimise the effectiveness of this dual objective, retailers and display professionals use tactical communications as an overlay over the strategic. This ensures that both the brand image and core offerings are consistent in all the communication to the shopper even through merchandise-specific window displays. It is not uncommon to see luxury brands use classy, minimalist windows to communicate sales and discounts with just an understated 'Sale' printed across a well-coordinated fashion display window.

Once past the storefront, the expectant browser moves into the store interior where exciting VM further compels his/her conversion to a spender. Here, the game plan is to offer convenience through presentation – making it easy to locate, select, coordinate and accessorise merchandise sold in the store. The success in this effort is endorsed with an increasing rate of conversions and ticket size. Fundamentally, there are three VM techniques: cross-selling, up-selling and top-up. Each of these is used in the context of the store image, offerings, service types and shopper mission. Cross selling is used to increase the number of items on the bill, up-selling to upgrade spends in the same category, and top-up comprises the impulse add-ons into the shopping cart on the way to and at the shopping till. Visual merchandisers effectively use colour, form, props, settings, mannequins, graphics and fixtures to achieve this through controlled densities and configurations of the offerings across the store. The planning of adjacencies, feature points and circulation – in synch with VM techniques – creates a shopping environment that offers a delightful experience of convenience, excitement and fantasy: ingredients that make for 'store preference' in an already competitive marketplace.

Many a success has materialised, following research and the understanding of customer needs, culture, shopping behaviour, to create solutions that work. Yet, the bottom-line of all effort is a proven fact, one which most retailers swear by: 'What is right is what works'.



# Merchandise Presentation

## 10 CHAPTER

### MEANING OF MERCHANDISE PRESENTATION

Merchandise presentation refers to the most basic ways of presenting merchandise in an orderly, understandable, 'easy to shop' and 'find the product' format.



**A neat merchandise presentation helps customers find products easily**

## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- Merchandise presentation – meaning, principles and the placement
- Categories in merchandise presentation
- Examples of merchandise presentation
- Dominance factors in merchandise presentation
- Cross merchandising

## PRINCIPLES OF MERCHANDISE PRESENTATION

Every category is different; thus, every category must have its own presentation norms. These norms depend on customers' buying behaviour, type of merchandise (for ladies, kids, adults, etc.), sizes of merchandise, price points (fashion jewellery vs. diamonds), etc. Based on these considerations that define a merchandise category, and keeping in mind the basic principles of merchandise presentation, different norms of display are set for different categories. The process of merchandise presentation begins with the art of dividing a category into its sub-categories and, then, sub-sub-categories, and so on.

### Points to consider for a good merchandise presentation

- Grouping items makes it easy to buy ensembles or related items e.g. coordinate top wear and bottom wear (refer picture);
- Place items in such a way that selecting and decision-making is faster (logically adjacent) e.g. belts with trousers;
- Use vertical space but not too high (customers do not look up nor can reach the product) nor too low (it could be hidden below other products, or out of sight);

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- Place merchandise of lower price points on or about the store floor;
- Know the 'right' fixtures for merchandise;
- Placed the featured merchandise face-out and colours in capacity on stacks or side-out;
- Place merchandise in a way such that the range of styles is visible e.g. shirts in vertical blocks, checks, solids, etc. Use vertical space for different sizes and for families of the same colour;
- And finally: Do Not Be Scared to Innovate!

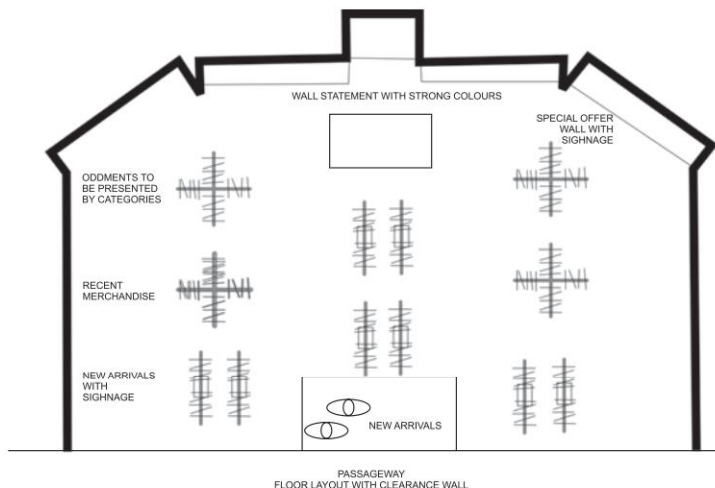


**Group items, make ensemble or related item buying easy. e.g. coordinate top wear and bottom wear.**

### Placement of Merchandise

The placement of merchandise in respective areas allows customers to access the most 'easy-to-shop' format. Over a period, customers familiarise themselves with these areas and feel comfortable while shopping. Furthermore, they return to the same store as it saves their time.

- **Fresh Arrivals/Trend:** This type of 'new' merchandise should only be placed on 4-ways and 2-ways, and should be featured on the aisle, with appropriate signage: 'New Arrivals', etc. Merchandise can also be folded and massed out on nesting tables so as to make a dominant statement. For example, the table displaying men's shirts should have accompanying bust forms that highlight the items and the signage.
- **Oddments/Cut sizes:** As sizes and styles sell down they should be moved to the back of the department and presented on 4-ways according to their categories i.e. cotton wear, skirts, tops, etc.
- **Special offers:** Special deals, discounts, etc. should always be housed at the back of the department. Ideally, these should be placed on a round rack and marked properly with a special offer sign. If a round rack is not available, a 4-way could be used. Special offer merchandise can be shown on a sidewall when capacity dictates; the display wall should be properly signed.



- **Feature wall:** This serves as a backdrop for the entire selling floor and should be considered as the prime visual and merchandise space. When walls use colour statements to draw the customer into a particular area, very strong, dominant trend/fashion merchandise statements can be made.

## General Guidelines for Merchandising

- Fixtures in a department should be aligned in neat rows, from front to back, creating natural aisles. If it consists of multiple brands, the department should be split into neat rows, clearly marking where one brand ends and the other begins.
- Fixtures in natural aisles must have spacing of not less than 3 feet between them. These aisles must be a minimum of 3 feet wide, to offer customers a comfortable shopping experience.
- Platforms/nesting tables must never be placed on the aisle. Aisles are – strictly – customer areas, to browse through the merchandise. Nesting tables/platforms (podiums to keep mannequins) should never encroach upon aisle space. They can be placed right at the entrance of a section, where the aisle ends.



**Footwear boxes are displayed on the main wall. There is no backroom or storeroom in this shop; the boxes are simply arranged neatly.**



**Merchandise is presented from small frames to large frames (from left to right).**

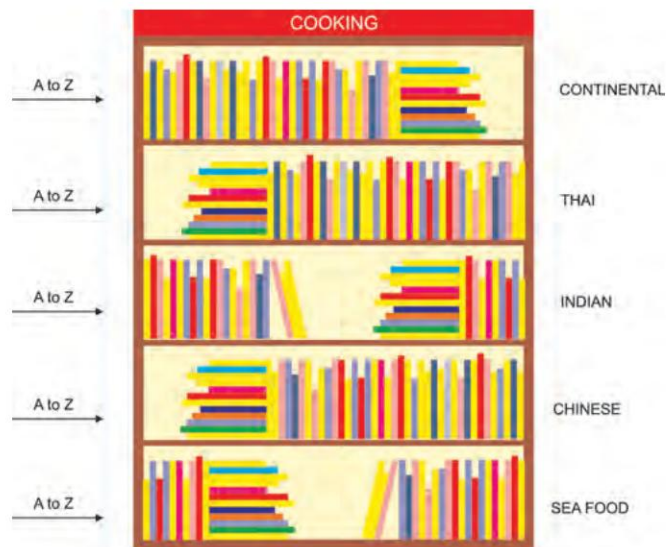
- Platforms/nesting tables must always be neatly stacked. As far as possible, each stack must have an open sample of the product on top. Each featured item requires a signage with item description and price.
- Merchandise should be sized small to large, left to right and small to large, top to bottom – whenever possible.

## CATEGORIES IN MERCHANDISE PRESENTATION

Discussed here are some merchandise categories vis-à-vis the norms set for their display:

### 1. Books

Divide the books into broad sections like kid's, fiction, classics, school books, etc. Then, in the



Display in the 'Cookery' section of a bookshop

'cooking' section for instance, place all the books into sub-sections – Continental, Thai, Indian, and so on. To further add to ease of the customers, arrange the books alphabetically (author-wise or title-wise).

Some 'Special Sections' in the books section/shop could be:

- (i) 'The Store Recommends...'
- (ii) Bestsellers
- (iii) Famous Classics
- (iv) New Arrivals/Launches
- (v) Best Buys

Books can be displayed in many interesting ways; more sections or display ideas need to be developed. A small stand, floor of table top, anything can suffice – it is not always necessary to dedicate wall space for a book display.

## 2. Stationery

- i. Stationery has to be placed category-wise, sub-categorised according to colour i.e. gift pens, gel pens, etc. Within the section say, gel pens, place products colour-wise – all black gel pens together, then red gel pens, etc.
- ii. Small items like sharpeners, erasers, etc. go into small cane baskets or acrylic boxes.
- iii. Folders need to be divided into sections (e.g. with thread, with clip, etc). Then, within a section, arrange folders size-wise.



Merchandise presentation: Stationery for teens



- iv. Notebooks have to be kept in a single line – 4 lines, etc. Within a type, keep them size-wise i.e. all single lined notebooks go together, size-wise, etc.
- v. Basic stationery will move, no matter what; gift items need to be highlighted. Stationery gift items are to be highlighted, as they would not sell otherwise.

### 3. Gift Items

- i. Gift items must each have a signage. Size of the signage must be at least 3" × 3". Details about price, product (e.g. in case of cups-set of 6), and brand can be mentioned. Price, in this category, is often the deciding factor and should be clearly mentioned.



**Merchandise presentation: Gift items**

- ii. In the case of gifts, most items are fragile and, hence, not everyone should be allowed to touch. Here, signage with price becomes very significant.
- iii. Photo frames must be kept according to type – similar ones go together e.g. wooden, metal, glass, etc. Within a group, they must be kept size-wise.
- iv. Mugs would have to be colour-blocked – similar to shirts in a garment display.

### 4. CDs – music, movies

- i. CDs – be it music or movies – have to be displayed category-wise. For example, music can be arranged in the order of classical, instrumental, rock, jazz, etc.
- ii. Arrange the CD titles in alphabetical order in their sections. Like, within the Hindi movies section, arrange the 'New Arrivals' alphabetically.
- iii. Special sections at entrances or focal points make the display more interesting. For example: The Indiana Jones Series, Harry Potter Hits, etc.

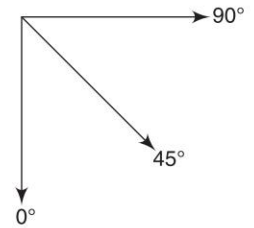
### 5. Shoes

- i. Once the merchandise for ladies, kid's and men have been separated, further divide the items into categories like formal, casual, sports, etc.



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- ii. Shoes must always be colour-blocked.
- iii. Display shoes in clusters/groups – not in a straight line. Make the display more interesting by using different raisers and props.
- iv. Some basic angles when it comes to shoe display:



At Zero degrees: Highlights the upper, the edges of the sole, the shape and possibly the interior of the shoe.



At 45 degrees: The middle position showing practically the whole shoe.



At 90 degrees: Completely in profile to show off the heel, the arch, the sole (thickness) and the overall lines of the shoe.



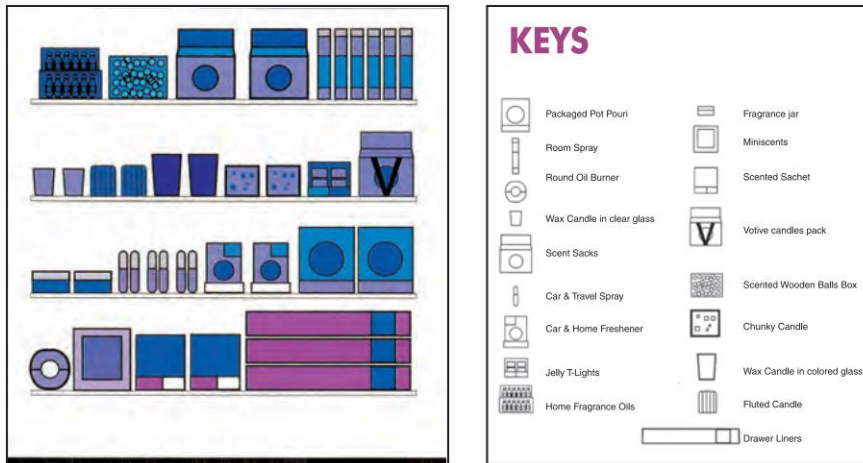
**6. Candles, Incense**

- i. Candles or incense should be colour-blocked.
- ii. Arrange category-wise e.g. scented candles, floating candles, etc.



**Merchandise presentation: Incense display, colour-blocked**

- iii. To ensure that customers realise the entire range of products available in each fragrance, products should be display fragrance-wise e.g. lilac and lavender; champagne and rose, etc. This helps maximize sales, as customers are tempted to buy products within their favorite fragrance.



**Planogram: Candles and incense (with Key); And Implementation of the planogram: Merchandise presentation**

## 7. Toys

- i. Always try to define sections as much as possible e.g. infants, girls, boys, etc.
- ii. Do not mix the good brands with the not-so-good brands e.g. Indian toys and Chinese toys.
- iii. Keep toys category-wise within a brand – cars, board games, etc. Within this category, again, place toys price-wise. Toys are often used for gifting, so highlight price points. E.g. Barbie dolls should be kept together – price-wise, not height-wise.



**Merchandise display: Stuffed toys**

## 8. Mobiles and other gadgets

- i. Such electronic items can be kept either brand-wise or price-wise, as per the store format – value store, lifestyle store, luxury store, etc.



**Merchandise presentation: Brand-wise display in a lifestyle store**

- ii. In a value driven store, the best way to sell is through price-point e.g. at Big Bazaar
- iii. In a lifestyle store, display brand-wise e.g. Nokia, Motorola, etc. mobile phones
- iv. In a luxury driven store, keep the merchandise category-wise e.g. basic models, music phones, business phones, etc. Within a particular category, display brand-wise, then price-wise i.e. in the business phone category, keep Nokia phones in the first row, HTC phones in the next row, etc. Then, within the row of Nokia phones, keep the merchandise price-wise.

- v. Technology changes very fast. New products are launched and old ones are taken off the shelves very quickly. Signage here is a must; features of each product should be highlighted along with price point and brand name.

### Note

1. Use the customer footfall to your advantage. There are areas with lower customer entry, the sections in such an area need to be highlighted at important locations e.g. at focal points at ground floor or window.
2. Small impulse items like chocolates which can be shoplifted easily, must be sold over the counter and not kept in the open with high customer access.
3. Know your customer e.g. If you are trying to sell activity books to kids in the age group of 5–6 years, do not keep them on the topmost shelf of the wall (kids will be unable to reach). Keeping these books at the eye level of the kids would help sell more.

## DOMINANCE FACTOR IN MERCHANDISE PRESENTATION

While deciding the visual merchandising plan of a product category, a visual merchandiser needs to decide those aspects that need to be emphasised. In a merchandise presentation layout, there could be dominance of any of the following:

### Colour

This dominance is established in stores where the first thing that a customer looks for is the colour of the product. People see colours; buy colours. Colour is what sells. It takes precedence over style and size. For example, in a display of various coloured items, red colour items are in a group/cluster.



Fashion jewellery: Dominance by colour



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Then, within the cluster, the merchandise is displayed size-wise and/or style-wise. In this way a shopper can locate immediately the colour he or she is looking for, and then decide on the style and finally the size that's required.

## Size

In some stores, especially speciality stores, size is the determining factor when a purchase is planned. Like a store catering to the larger size. In such stores, it is difficult to maintain a harmonious look since the space tends to be a visual chaos. Dominance by size is also often used in a 'Sale' when merchandise concentration increases on the floor. Setting merchandise by size expedites the buying process and thus helps during the sale period.

## Coordinates

In this case, instead of a single colour being dominant, it can be a team or a group of colours or patterns or prints plus solids that are organised for easy shopping.



**Fashion clothing: Dominance by coordinates**

## Brand Name

Displays by dominance of brands are often seen in stores where customers are very brand conscious.



**Cosmetics: Dominance by brand**

(Photograph courtesy: Anuraag S, Lifestyle, Landmark Group, Dubai)

## Price

This dominance is mostly seen in a value driven store. Even the bazaar look is adopted to give customers a feeling of being in an inexpensive, sale/discounted/bargain store.

## End-user

This is very similar to dominance by coordinates, wherein the merchandise is bought and used together. But, here, the term refers to white goods or hard goods. For example, bathroom accessories are purchased in sets (soap case, tooth brush holder, soap dispenser, tissue dispenser, etc.) Displaying such items in colour coordinated sets helps the customers since their end-use is also catered to via such displays.



**Home section: Dominance by end-user**

## CROSS MERCHANDISING

Cross merchandising refers to related products being display together. It is the practice of showing products from different categories (or store departments) in one place, in order to generate additional revenue – also known as add-on sales, or incremental purchase. This is done in conjunction with customer-centric strategies, aimed at improving the overall customer experience. Cross merchandising improves the image of a store and promotes the look of a certain lifestyle for customers to buy into. It illustrates the variety of selection or the breadth of product a store carries. For example: Batteries displayed next to electronic items; gardening gloves placed near lawn-care products; a range of shampoo kept along with conditioners or other hair-care products, etc.



## Objective

- To promote the total fashion statement
- To communicate to the customers the availability of coordinated merchandise

## Strategy

- Displaying focal points and highpoints with coordinated merchandise at all times e.g. shirt with tie and coat; salwaar suit with matching handbag and/or footwear; socks within the shoe section; bluetooth gadgets with mobile handsets, etc.
- To ensure that all the merchandise is labelled with signage/tickets indicating where the coordinated merchandise is available e.g. more handbags available on ground floor, near lifts, etc.
- To prevent disruption of displays by ensuring that all the merchandise is available on the floors.



**Cross merchandising: Buckets displayed with mugs, soap dispensers, lotion containers, etc.**

### Note:

- Do not display what is not available on the floor in all the coordinates at any time. Check for availability daily.
- Ensure ticketing is done to direct the customer on where to go to get the look. If a display is done on the ground floor for merchandise available on the next floor, make sure the same is mentioned on the ticket.
- Ensure you create 'desire' with your display and they are not abstract where the customer will not know what the merchandise displayed is e.g. dupattas tied as turbans
- Ensure all the coordinates are colour coordinated as you would wear them if you were the customer. Do not coordinate to create visual impact only.
- Cross merchandising can also be used behind the cash counters on pegs (impulse).
- To track the effectiveness of the display, track the sale pattern for each display.



**Respective merchandise placed near the respective visual graphic**

## IN SUMMARY

- Merchandise presentation refers to the most basic ways of presenting merchandise in an orderly, understandable, 'easy to shop' and 'find the product' format.
- Grouping items makes it easy to buy ensemble or related items e.g. coordinated top wear and bottom wear.
- Aisle fixtures must have a spacing of not less than 3 feet between them. Aisles must be at least 3 feet wide for customers to have a comfortable shopping experience.
- While deciding the VM layout of a product category, a visual merchandiser needs to decide those aspects that need to be emphasised: these factors are called dominance factors.
- Cross merchandise wherever possible – on the first nod of waterfall up to windows. The more merchandise you cross, the more sales will happen.
- Place new arrivals near the entrance or alongside the aisle, and preferably on nesting tables or mannequins (focal points) with a 2-way or 4-way browser near it.
- Decide the norms of merchandise presentation for your store/shop depending upon the merchandise displayed and the needs of the customers.

## Exercises

1. Define merchandise presentation.
2. What are the basic principles of merchandise presentation?
3. What are dominance factors? Explain them.
4. Give at least ten examples of cross merchandising, preferably those not mentioned in Chapter Ten.
5. State whether True or False:
  - i. Grouping items never makes ensemble/related item buying easy.
  - ii. Merchandise of lower price point should be placed on the floor.
  - iii. Place items so that selecting and decision-making is faster (logically adjacent).
6. Discuss the merchandise presentation norms for the following categories:
  - i. Mobile phones
  - ii. Shoes
  - iii. Ready to wear
  - iv. Candles
7. Ready to wear new arrivals should always be placed:
  - i. At the middle of the section
  - ii. On a side wall
  - iii. Placed on 4-ways and 2-ways and should be featured on the aisle
  - iv. Always housed in the back of the department
8. Fill in the blanks:
  - i. Merchandise Presentation refers to most basic ways of presenting merchandise in an orderly, \_\_\_\_\_, 'easy to shop' and 'find the product' format.
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_ improves the image of a store and promotes the look of a certain lifestyle for customers to buy into.
  - iii. While deciding the VM layout of a product category, a visual merchandiser needs to decide what aspect needs to be emphasised upon; these factors are called \_\_\_\_\_ factors.
9. Visit the nearest department store and see how the merchandise presentation of the following categories can be improved:
  - i. Home section
  - ii. Sunglasses
  - iii. Perfumes
  - iv. Denims
10. Request the shopkeeper of a nearby *Kirana* (general) store, to let you rearrange any one section as per the norms of merchandise presentation. (Set your own norms for the respective section.) Take photographs 'before' and 'after' the implementation.

## VM Speaks



**Name:** Sandeep Mishra

**Present designation:** Manager Design

**Company:** Mudra Communications

**Location:** Mumbai.

A Physics graduate with a diploma in Fine Arts, Sandeep has 10 years of work experience – ranging from a sales person to visual merchandiser. He currently works with Mudra Communications as Design manager. His key interests include oil painting, photography, blogging, theatre, movies, music and art direction.

### What led you to pursue a career in visual merchandising?

**Sandeep:** The immediate execution of ideas from mind to market; Innovative approach and the power of visual merchandising to communicate to larger set of people, are few attributes that got my attention in my first job during the late 1990s. The joy and creative satisfaction that I got in the earlier stages of my work as a visual merchandiser convinced me to pursue a career in visual merchandising.

Today, after working for 10 years in the retail Industry with different brands and categories that follow an organised approach towards visual merchandising, I feel that my decision to adopt VM as a career and not to continue studying Physics was right. I was not made for the latter subject.

### What is the importance of merchandise presentation?

**Sandeep:** Merchandise presentation is the most important aspect of VM; it is the display of merchandise in the most interesting, appealing and seductive way. A successful visual merchandiser will create a pleasant and enjoyable shopping atmosphere which will encourage the customer to spend more time in the store.

Merchandise presentation enhances the USP (unique selling proposition) of the product displayed. It is the most effective tool to communicate and highlight the key features of the merchandise. A common term used in VM would further sum up the importance of merchandise presentation: **WYSIWYB** (What You See Is What You Buy).

Yes! We display to sell. Merchandise presentation can make or break the image of a BRAND. Hence, it is a very tricky tool which should be handled with a lot of attention to detailing.

### Where does India stand today when one talks of displays and where do you see the future of visual merchandising going?

**Sandeep:** Looking at the present scenario, I feel that even though India was exposed to the concept quite late, it has caught up very fast and is today poised at an intermediate stage of visual merchandising. Today's displays are basic but have a lot of potential on the creative front. There is an abundance of ideas and thoughts; what is lacking is for it to be marketed in right way. Most people even consider VM as a cost centre and not as value addition. The future of VM is bright; it holds the key to successful retailing. The younger generation has to use the tool in the most effective way. More awareness in terms of career options and the potential of VM is the need of hour.

# Window Displays

## 11 CHAPTER

### WINDOW DISPLAY – MEANING AND SCOPE

A window is the most significant aspect of a store/shop front – it communicates style, content and price-point pertaining to the store merchandise. Windows can be seductive and exciting, based on emotional stimulus, or price-based (with a clear emphasis on value-for-money, with easy and obvious ticketing). For a retailer, the window is one of the most controllable elements in relation to the image and the story (what is happening inside the store). Significantly, how these effects are achieved involves a number of decisions. Quite simply, a window display is the ‘visiting card’ of a store.

Well-designed store windows can generate great excitement and may well become the talking-point for an entire city. They contribute



## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- The meaning and scope of a window display
- The window display designing process
- Importance of window displays
- Types of window displays

to the environment by entertaining pedestrians, while simultaneously communicating about the products and services on offer.

For a retailer willing to exploit the full potential that a window offers, this image-building process can be exciting and offers enormous scope. A fashion retailer, for instance, will change a window every week to showcase the latest items on offer. Sometimes, windows may blend seasonal themes – Autumn, Winter, Spring, and Summer combined with Holi, Diwali, Id, Ganesh Chaturthi, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, Mother’s Day, etc. At other times, the displayed props may be based on colour schemes, materials or cultural themes. In short, when it comes to window displays, the possibilities for innovation and ideation are endless.

### Window Display – Designing Process

The main function of a window is to promote the image of the store and maximise the sale of its merchandise. At first, it is the merchandise ‘story’ that is to be promoted. Creating beautiful and inspiring windows is a great way to attract customers and draw them into the store. Here are four display suggestions for windows that look their best:



1. **Choose a theme:** Windows should not be a repository for every type of merchandise to be sold all at once. Select merchandise that tells a concise 'story'. The theme could be anything from a colour trend (everything 'green') to a merchandise category ('Cool Summer T-Shirts' for the family). The key is to avoid adding a little bit of everything in the window. If such a clutter is created, nothing stands out from among the displayed merchandise – certainly not enough to get customer attention.
2. **Pick appropriately sized items:** To attract those who are walking or passing by the store, it is alright to use various, smaller items in the window. Walkers can easily see small merchandise. However, to attract customers who are driving by, the display should include fewer and larger pieces. The use of enlarged copies (photographs) of merchandise can also be considered, to make small merchandise appear bigger and easier to see from inside a vehicle. If both walkers and drivers are to be attracted – like in the case of stores on a shopping street downtown – a combination of bigger items (or photographs) and smaller, related pieces should be put together. For example, a jewellery store with a large, close-up picture of a diamond ring in the window often also displays the actual ring on an elevated stand in the same display.
3. **Use space interestingly:** Merchandise should be layered at different levels in the window. Items arranged in a straight line do not make an appealing visual presentation, no matter how great the merchandise is.
4. **Create good lighting:** This highlights the merchandise in more ways than one. In case the window does not have built-in track spotlights, some clip-on lights can be brought in to help focus attention on key items in the display. Often, backlighting or up-lighting certain type of merchandise creates a pretty glow that allures customers.

## Window Display – Categories

Window displays fall into two main categories:

1. **Closed back window:** The typical display window, it has a full back wall, sides, and a large glass-plate window facing the pedestrians on the street. It is also called an enclosed window. Most display windows have floors that are raised from 8 or 9 inches to 2 feet above the street level.



2. **Open back window** have no back walls, and offer a direct view into the selling areas (in-store) beyond.



## WINDOW DISPLAY VIS-À-VIS MERCHANDISE

### 1. Single-item Display

True to its name, a single-item display showcases only one item. For example, a sari, diamond jewellery, a sports car, etc.

### 2. Range-of-goods Display



Here, only one type of merchandise is showcased – but in varying sizes, styles and/or colours e.g. sunglasses, handbags, etc. However, there is a common link or relevance across the items displayed – for the presentation to be more effective, as well as for better comprehension and acceptance by the customers. All the items could be designed by the same designer; or created with the same fabric/print; or feature a common theme. For example, 3–4 mannequins



dressed in summer-dresses of assorted colours, styles and prints could come together in a range-of-goods display (also called a line-of-goods display).

### 3. Associated (Related) Merchandise Display

This display shows items that are to be used together. E.g. shirt and trouser with matching accessories like shoes, bag, tie, hat, blazer, socks, etc. Here, the items go together and reinforce each other.



### 4. A Variety Display

This is a combination of unrelated items is also called an assortment display. For example, a shirt and trouser shown together with baskets and glassware from the 'home' section, accompanied by candles, a tea kettle, chairs, etc.





Window displays made attractive with colour, repetition and humour (left); and repetition (right)

### How to Get the Shopper's Attention

Some ways in which window displays can attract the shopper's attention, are:

- |              |                       |                      |           |              |
|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| 1. Scale     | 2. Colour or Contrast | 3. Repetition        | 4. Humour | 5. Mirrors   |
| 6. Nostalgia | 7. Motion             | 8. Surprise or Shock | 9. Props  | 10. Lighting |

Mirrors, in windows, add depth, width and height to a display. They can reveal new angles. It is important that mirrors highlight the features, explain, repeat or show new angles of a display. In addition, care should be taken to ensure that mirrors in a window do not show unfinished areas or reflect too much light so as to make the display glaring!





## WINDOW DISPLAY - TYPES OF SETTING

### 1. Real Setting

This display essentially depicts a room or any other recognizable location – re-interpreted in the allotted display area, either in the window or inside the store. A real setting is best controlled and most effective in a closed back window. A restaurant setting created using tables, chairs, rugs, wall paper, crystal wear, candles, etc. is an example of a real setting. Here, both formal and semi-formal clothes can be displayed. Similarly, a pub scenario, complete with bar stools, dance floor and disco lighting, can be used to display fashion wear.

However, at times, a cleverly detailed setting can work against the realistic approach – in that, the viewer may get so involved in the setup that he/she may miss or overlook the merchandise!

*Remember:* In a display, always bring the merchandise closer to the viewer's eye level.



**Real setting: A display to sell shirts, with emphasis on props.**

### 2. Atmospheric setting

Here, an assortment of related merchandise items is displayed in a setting that depicts how and where they items may be used eventually. In this type of setting, the 'background' is actually the 'foreground' – in that, the details that go on to make the setting realistic, are actually the merchandise being promoted in the display.

An atmospheric display shows how and where various, related or coordinated items are used. A chair with a robe tossed over its back, placed alongside a bedside table with a lamp, a photo frame and a clock over it, can create an atmospheric setting (also called an environmental setting). Similarly, a corner-of-the-room setting created using a bed with matching sheets, pillow cases, comforter and rug, and a window with curtains and drapes could well display items of home furnishing.



**Atmospheric setting: A dining room, depicting end-use of items**

### 3. Semi-real Setting

When time, budget or space does not allow for a real setting, a VM professional can choose to create a semi-real setting (also known as vignette). Here, it is best to let the display represent just the tip of the iceberg – leaving the rest to the shopper's imagination.



**Semi-real setting:** A home-display offering hinting at the possibilities; here, comparison to atmospheric setting helps better understand the difference.

### 4. Whimsical Setting

This is as detailed as time and budget permit. Also called a fantasy setting, such displays are very creative; a lot of planning and thought process is needed to implement them. These set-ups are not real, but are an exaggeration in some form or the other. Bolder colours and larger-than-usual props can be part of such displays. Examples of whimsical setting: tables on the wall or chairs on the ceiling; mannequins drifting in mid-air; underwater world; etc.



**Whimsical setting<sup>1</sup>:** A holiday display with snowmen on distorted buildings, cars, etc.

<sup>1</sup>Source: <http://www.hgtv.com>, accessed on March 1, 2008



## 5. Abstract Setting

This might just seem like the easiest form of display, but it actually is very difficult. The least amount of display often makes the biggest statement. In an abstract setting, merchandise is the dominant feature and the setting supports and reinforces the message. An abstract setting is predominantly an arrangement of lines and shapes, panels, cubes, cylinders, triangles, curves, arches and circles. It is like a non-representational painting, done in three dimensions, in various planes.



**An abstract setting: an arrangement of lines and shapes and circles**

### Tips to Build a Display

- The overall display must be balanced and easy to look at.
- There has to be a movement from item to item or group to group. Viewers should be able to view each group/item as a separate entity, somehow set apart from the others.

To understand what can and cannot be accomplished in a display window, it is necessary to understand the physical construction of the window and the limitations imposed by the same. Often, in a small store, the store entrance may divide the store window into two halves. Larger stores may have a group of windows called 'bank of windows'. Then there are 20 or 30 feet long display windows, called 'run-on' windows, wherein the only visible divider is a thin metal band that retains the window glass-plate.

## PROMOTIONAL DISPLAY VS. INSTITUTIONAL DISPLAY

A promotional display can be single-item, range-of-goods, or any other type of display. It focuses/concentrates on a particular concept, trend or item; and, quite simply, it promotes. For a Father's Day promotion, the store can develop its theme around 'Dad- the athlete' or Dad- my



**A promotional display: Gifting ideas for Christmas**

best friend' or 'My Dad is the best'. Such themes can be carried forward to newspapers, radio, TV, in-store displays, windows, etc. In short, a promotional display can extend to all forms of communication.

On the other hand, an institutional display promotes an idea, rather than an item or product. The display presents the store as a worthwhile and interested member of the community.



**An institutional display<sup>2</sup>: A bid to encourage shoppers to join the retailers in supporting St. Jude in its efforts to find cures and save the lives of children with cancer and other catastrophic diseases.**

<sup>2</sup>Source: <http://www.hgtv.com>, accessed on March 1, 2008

## WINDOW DISPLAY - CONSTRUCTION

### Window Glass

As discussed in an earlier chapter, one of the greatest challenges a VM professional faces is when the glare/reflection in the window-glass blinds shoppers from viewing the display. Rather than getting a good view of the display itself, the window offers a reflection of the street or the store across the store! Naturally then, various efforts have been made to overcome this problem: architects have used tinted glass, angled sheets of glass, curved glass and deeply recessed windows –with little success.

While tinted glasses affect the colour of the merchandise, angled sheets or curved glass tend to heighten the reflection. And deeply recessed windows are wastage of prime space that could rather be used for selling or storage.

Nowadays, many stores use decorative awnings to cut down the glare. Placing the merchandise further away (5–6 feet) from the glass can also reduce the glare. In fact, such deep windows pull the customers attention towards the display – and away from the glare on the glass.



**A window display with a glare on the glass**

### Tip

To eliminate glare, coat the display glass with a film i.e. non-glare glass coating (3M, or one sourced from the local window expert)

### Floor

Most window display floors are raised 6" to 24" above the average floor/street level. This elevation helps dramatise an object as it forces the viewer to look up. It not only lends prestige to the display, but can also be viewed, at least glimpsed, from over the heads of the stream of window shoppers.

Creating levels in the floor can better display small articles like shoes, watches, cosmetics, and handbags. Use of platforms or raisers can help create groups of articles or mannequins for greater visibility, separation and dramatic impact.

For example, Lord & Taylor, in New York, has elevator-type windows. Here, the floor is actually a platform that can be lowered to the basement level – where the display is set – and raised, again, to the desired level.

Most window floors have board or wood or are carpeted. Some are lit at the base for extra impact. Special padded flooring, also available, does not spoil (despite the use of display material like glue, pins, etc.). Other add-ons, introduced from time to time as per the display theme, further dramatise the window setting.



**Display floor: Add-ons, as per the display theme, dramatise the setting**

## Back of the Window

Some stores have removable panels that can double as the back walls of their windows. These panels can be removed to convert the window into an open back window, as per the display requirement. The back wall of a window – the side that faces the inside of a store – can be used for selling. In case of a constructed back wall, a door or a sliding panel can provide entry to the window. The size and angle of the entry should always be considered before the props are planned or ordered. A ceiling track that can accommodate drapes – to cover the back wall – may be effective in promoting different looks or seasons. If the window has ample depth, it is also possible to use photo-projection techniques.



**Interesting use of back wall for extra lighting and design**

## Window Ceiling

If the ceiling of the display is too high, lighting issues may arise. All the lights on the ceiling should be moveable so that they can be focused as per display needs. Some lights may have to be switched off, or added – depending on the look of the display.





**Ceiling grid used to hang props/merchandise**

It also makes sense to invest in a ceiling grid or channels in the ceiling. This helps the visual merchandiser create various levels in a given display.

Besides, ceiling grids can be used inside the store as well, especially over focal points. The props need to be ordered according to the weight a grid can actually bear.



**Ceiling channels used to display merchandise, creating various levels**

## Side Walls

These can be painted or used as a part of the display theme. Grids, panels or fins on side walls can be effectively used for various displays. These walls can be backlit so as to provide extra (or dramatic) lighting in the window.

Side panels can be at an angle, adding to the perception of depth to the window – they lend a forced perspective to the merchandise presentation. Some side walls/panels are installed only to create smaller windows within a large one. Self-standing screens, dividers or hung drapery can also be used to create a temporary side wall. These can separate one display from the next, while allowing seamless continuity of the theme or promotion.



Use of angled side wall for display background

## Proscenia

A proscenium is the Greek word meaning, 'before the scenery'. In a window display, proscenia comprises a top valance, which masks the lighting across the top of the window, and side valances which separates one window from the next and also hides any side lighting devices.



**Proscenia:** Note the side valances which hide the side lighting devices.



Dividing the window to create two smaller windows

## Eye-of-the-window

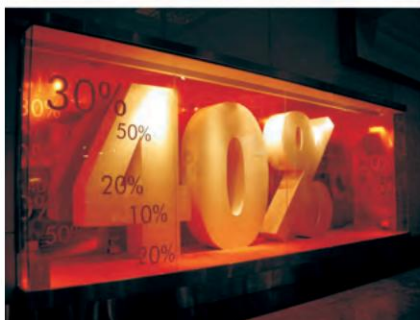
In a window display, the main focus should be on the merchandise or the key item which is to be promoted. That spot/place which first catches the eye of the customer or passer-by is called the eye-of-the-window. This is usually created by focusing the lights on the right spot and on the right items in the window.





Eye of the window

## Some Interesting Arrangements



**Top left:** An excellent arrangement of men's accessories; shows good cross merchandising, promotes a lifestyle and enhances the store's image.

**Top right:** Good arrangement of chocolates and wine; good colour coordination; such displays serve well during gifting seasons like Christmas.

**Bottom left:** A larger-than-usual prop to highlight a 'Sale'; this window can be seen at the mall entrance while driving down to the basement parking. Has crisp communication which is best suited for those driving past in speedy vehicles.

**Bottom right:** A display of premium watches in a signature showcase (note the feature signage). It comprises high-end product specifically addressing brand-conscious customers.

### Tips for Visual Merchandisers

1. While doing a window display, always cover the entire window glass pane with a cloth, preferably black, or with newspapers. At times, even pre-printed flex is used to cover the window while the installation is in progress.
2. If the window is an open-back type, the mannequins should be carried to the trial rooms or changing rooms for draping. A signage should also be placed on the window, informing costumers about the next change.



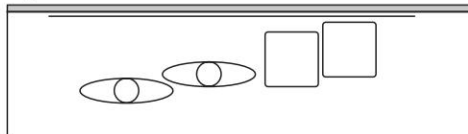
A signage kept in the window, while the display is being installed!

## WINDOW CONSTRUCTION – STUDY

### Study # 1



Top view



Props Used:



Podiums/Risers

#### Note:

1. The depth of the window is approx. 3'.
2. Lights are focused on the mannequins.

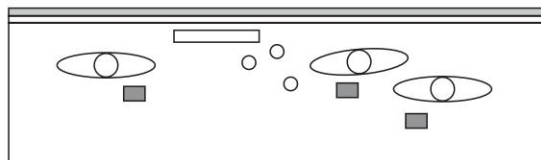
**178** Visual Merchandising

3. The props used are:
  - a. Backdrop visual
  - b. Podiums/Raisers; 2 nos. (Different heights)
4. The mannequins are colour-coordinated. Even the merchandise on the raisers are done up in the same colour scheme.
5. This is the most basic way to do a window display.

## Study # 2



Top view



Props Used

- Vases
- Signages

□ Print in frame

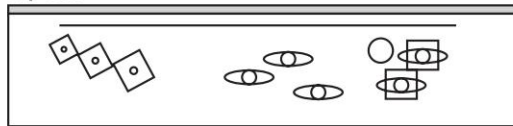
**Note:**

1. The depth of the window is quite good. (Approx. 4')
2. The lights are properly focused on the mannequin.
3. The props used are:
  - a. Print in frame (leaning against the wall; size-2' x 4.5');
  - b. 3 vases;
  - c. Price signage; and
  - d. White paper (chart) backdrop 'roll' (same as in photo studios)
4. The mannequins are very realistic and are coordinated very well.
5. Price signage are laid flat on the floor, the floor is at the same level as the mall aisle.




## Study # 3



Top view



Props Used

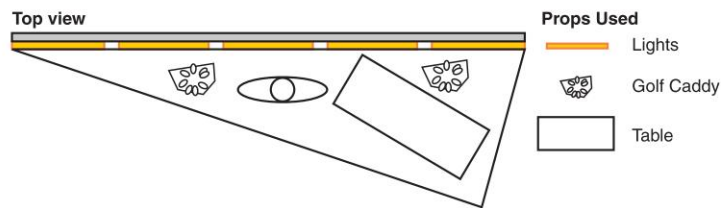
-  Frosted acrylic boxes-hanging
-  Podium
-  Plant

**Note:**

(The window can be clearly viewed in 3 parts – refer to the yellow dotted lines)

1. The depth of the window is quite good.
2. The lights are evenly spread across the window.
3. The props used are:
  - a. Abstract greenish backdrop (hanging from ceiling; approx. 6" away for the back wall);
  - b. 2 wooden podiums;
  - c. Plant; and
  - d. 3 frosted acrylic boxes; hanging from the ceiling Sizes: Box 1: 2'× 2' (showcasing a game/toy); Box 2: 1.5' × 1.5' (showcasing book) Box 3: 1' × 1' (showcasing a single casual shoe)
4. The mannequins are draped in casual wear, very well layered and grouped.

## Study # 4



### Note:

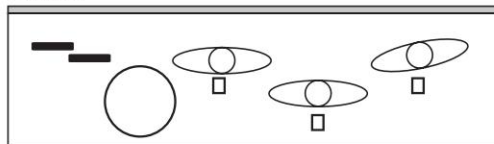
1. The shape of the window is a 'triangle'.
2. The lights are focused on the backdrop and on the head of the mannequin. In such windows, lights should be on the sides so that can be focused on the mannequin and merchandise properly and more effectively.
3. The props used are:
  - a. Golf-course view backdrop;
  - b. Table;
  - c. Golf kit; and
  - d. Grass effect on the base (synthetic grass).
4. The lights are placed behind the base of the window.
5. Since, the display is targeting the premium customer, avoid using price signages.



## Study # 5



Top view

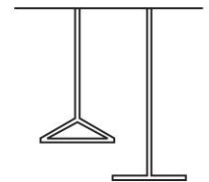


Props Used:



### Note:

1. It is an open-back window, almost square in shape.
2. The lights are focused on the mannequins.
3. The props used are:
  - a. Cylindrical podium (to display matching accessories);
  - b. Display hangers (one to display a coordinate and the other to display a scarf/bag); and
  - c. Coloured wavy base and podium graphic.
4. The mannequins are draped in proper colour coordination.

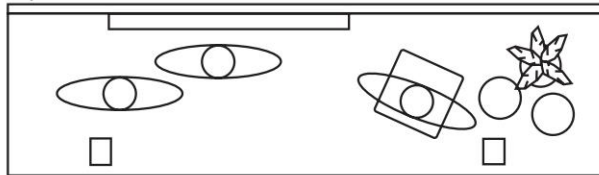








## Study # 6



Top View



Props used:

-  Signages
-  Pots & Palm Tree
-  Chair
-  Wooden frame with hooks

### Note:

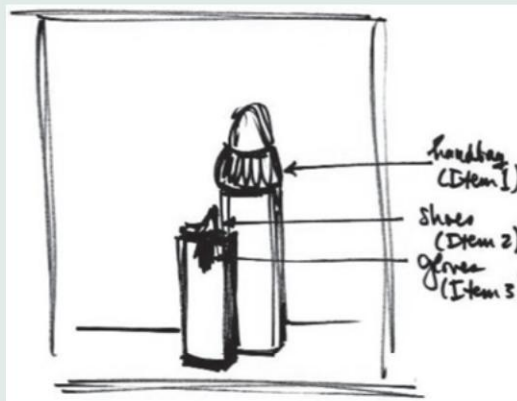
1. The depth of the window is approx. 4'.
2. The lights are rightly focused on the mannequins (note the lights on the sides).
3. The props used are:
  - a. Wall hanging wooden frame with hooks;
  - b. Three pots, one with a palm tree;
  - c. Price signage; and
  - d. A metal chair.
4. The mannequins are nicely positioned.
5. The merchandise gets more prominence as the pros are white coloured.

## IN SUMMARY

- A window display is the 'visiting card' of a store.
- The main function of the windows is to promote the store's image and maximise the sales of its merchandise. The first consideration is the merchandise 'story' that is to be promoted.
- Based on the construction of a window, they can be divided into 2 broad categories: closed back windows and open back windows.
- Four types of window displays, on the basis of merchandise displayed are: single-item, range-of-goods, associated merchandise and variety display.
- There are many ways to get the shopper's attention. Some of them are: scale, contrast, repetition, humour, mirrors, nostalgia, motion, surprise or shock and props.
- Types of display settings: real setting, atmospheric setting, semi-real setting, whimsical setting and abstract setting.
- The construction of a display window comprises: window glass, window flooring, back wall, ceiling, side walls and proscenia.
- Always remember to locate the 'eye-of-the-window'!
- A promotional display emphasises a particular theme (merchandise based). E.g. Father's Day, Children's Day, etc. Whereas an institutional display promotes an idea, rather than an item or product.

## Exercises

1. The main function of the windows is to promote the store's image and maximise the sales of its merchandise. Explain the statement.
2. Why does a retailer need to invest in a good window display?
3. Classify windows on the basis of the merchandise displayed.
4. What is the difference between a real window setting, atmospheric setting and semi-real setting? Elaborate.
5. An institutional display promotes an idea, rather than an item or product. The display presents the store as a:
  - a. Value driven store
  - b. Worthwhile and interested member of the community
  - c. High-end, fashion store
6. Fill in the blanks:
  - a. A \_\_\_\_\_ window has no back wall, and offers a direct view into selling area beyond.
  - b. A \_\_\_\_\_ display shows only one type of merchandise, though the merchandise may vary in size, style or colour.
  - c. An \_\_\_\_\_ setting is predominantly an arrangement of lines and shapes, panels, cubes, cylinders, triangles, curves, arches and circles.
7. True or False:
  - a. A single-item display shows only a single item.
  - b. A associated merchandise display shows items that are never used together.
  - c. A variety display is a combination of items that are related.
8. Choose five different types of products/merchandise. Sketch displays in proportion to a defined picture plane of each of the products. E.g.: fashion accessories, etc.



## VM Speaks

**Name:** Immanuel Pradeep

**Present Designation:** Manager – VM

**Company's name:** Levi Strauss & Co.

**Location:** Bangalore

### What led you to pursue a career in visual merchandising?

**Immanuel Pradeep:** Art-to-wear was one of the favourite modules which I experienced, during my 3-year course in fashion design at NIFT. This course was an eye-opener to me, in knowing my own talents and skills in handling various metals and materials. I wanted to be more creative and innovative in 3D modelling and recycling. Hence, the outcome – VM, as it was the only field in retail (I probably foresaw it would boom) wherein I could experiment, grow, prove and make a mark.

### What is the typical process you go through for implementing a display?

**Immanuel Pradeep:** I still feel the AIDCS theory is a good enough and a simple process, one can follow, to implement a display. After all, what else can be more satisfying compared to a display which results in sales!

### Where does India stand today when one talks of retail and where do you see the future of visual merchandising going?

**Immanuel Pradeep:** As I said earlier, retail is set to boom – further and beyond. So why not visual merchandising? I'm very positive and excited, that India too will become one of the superpowers in retailing. Especially with the growth in organised retail as compared to the unorganised sector, in the past few years, I can easily vouch that retailing can be a major cause for the Indian economy to make a turnaround. In the same way, the VM community too is becoming strong and competitive, as retail grows. It is always good to have healthy competition in terms of looks, creativity, inspirational themes and, yes, the 'WOW factor', which I see in a lot of brands and retail outlets, by way of their visual communication and marketing strategies. No doubt, it is going to be a bright future for the visual merchandisers in India!

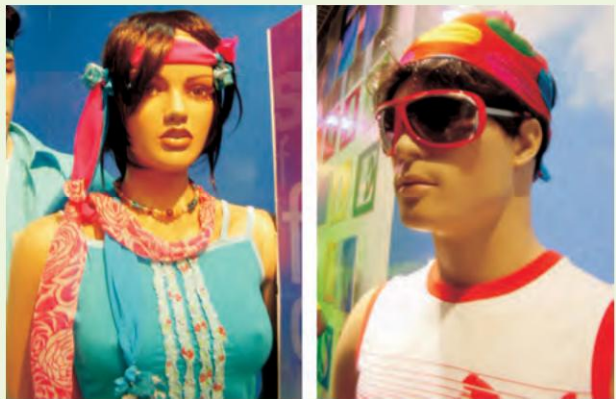
# Visual Merchandising— Hands On

## 12 CHAPTER

### STYLING

Styling merchandise refers to the unique way of displaying products in a way that the USP of each product is not only brought to fore but is also enhanced. Merchandise presentation includes fixture capacities and basic presentation techniques; styling is the next level of this presentation.

Styling means displaying a look rather than individual products. Good styling can act as a shopping guide and helps customers save both time and effort while selecting and matching coordinates. A good stylist knows exactly how to combine objects to maximize the look and feel of a product. Even the design of a promotion is greatly enhanced through the use of merchandise styling. In short, it is a state-of-the-art service that is



**Styling mannequins to showcase a youthful look**

## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- Styling; and how to style a mannequin
- The importance of planning a display calendar
- How to track the sales of a display
- Understanding the handling of mannequins and props
- Store lighting; and organising an in-store event
- VM tool kit
- Quality Management System (QMS) and quality assurance in VM
- Importance of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in VM

imperative for any display – be it merchandise, mannequins or store windows. Styling, if done the right way, can do wonders.

### Importance of Styling

1. It is the best possible way to tell the merchandise story.
2. It is a very important and reliable tool for image building.
3. Shows coordinates and makes shopping easier for customers.
4. Helps increase the bill size through cross merchandising.
5. Brings newness to the store.
6. Makes the store a fashion leader.
7. Through the right mix, it can sell the non-moving products along with the fast movers.
8. Makes the merchandise much more appealing and attractive to customers.



## DISPLAY CALENDAR

A good display is the result of planning, coordination and cooperation! To plan good displays, it is important to have a display calendar. This would include all marketing events, festivals, etc. as well as the launch dates for specific merchandise, such as the Spring-Summer Collection, Special Kids Wear Collection, etc.

A display calendar must span across an entire year and be in sync with local festivals and events. In addition, the display plan should ideally be for a minimum of 2 weeks, and should last till the weekend. E.g. If Valentine's Day happens to be on a Thursday, the related display should stay on till the following Sunday.

Note: While a sample fold-out is included here, a display calendar is generally created as per the requirement of the store.

## SALES TRACKING

As discussed earlier, display or visual merchandising is all about 'showing' off the merchandise in a store. These are visual concepts at their very best, aimed at making a sale. It is, therefore, important to know how effectively VM is being used and the scope for improvement therein.

To understand and, if need be, to modify the visual concept/approach, let us find out the worth of a display by tracking the sales.

### Sales Tracking Plan

Sr. No.	Brand	Style code	Price	No. of pcs in stock	Display Date	No. of days displayed	No. of pieces sold	Total Sales
1	A	Blk Tro 45364	499	35	5-Mar	10	19	9481
2	B	Red Top 54357	199	16	5-Mar	10	11	2189
3	C	Shoes 33400	595	4	5-Mar	10	4	2380
4	D	Bag b/h 456	799	5	5-Mar	10	3	2397
5	E	Gogs s34 6789	999	3	5-Mar	10	1	999
								17446

Shown here is a simple format for tracking sales: it provides all the product details, and also shows the number of items/pieces sold as well as the total sales achieved.

## Purpose of Tracking the Sales

1. To know the potential of a display point i.e. how much, exactly, does a display point contribute to the section/store sales!
2. And after the potential of a particular display point is known, visual merchandisers can then concentrate more on other display points. Furthermore, they can gauge the total sales achieved through 'silent selling'. Not only that, a lot can also be learnt about the likes and dislikes of customers.

## HANDLING THE MANNEQUIN

A mannequin may well be the most valuable asset in a store: A 'silent salesperson', it speaks the clearest fashion message on behalf of the store. A mannequin will stand tirelessly for hours and days, in the same place, in the same position and with the same attitude, always smiling, fresh and pleasant. It does not gain or lose weight or inches; it does not get colds or headaches; it does not ask for time off or extra pay for any increase in the cost-of-living!

However, mannequins *do* require 'love' and attention. They should be carefully handled – not manhandled. A mannequin is usually constructed to take a certain amount of wear and tear, but it can chip, crack and/or be disfigured. Significantly, locations of mannequins should be interchanged once in a while so as not to bring visual fatigue to customers.

### Tips to Handle Mannequins

1. Always change the mannequin garments in the changing/trial room.
2. Accessorise the display with the right props and accessories.
3. Ensure the display garment is next to or near the display point.
4. Arrange garments size-wise and color-wise on fixtures nearby.
5. Ensure the availability of the merchandise displayed on the mannequin(s).

## Types of Mannequins

- **Realistic:** These mannequins are for clothing that is best displayed with faces painted using hi-fashion make-up, ethnic skin tones, or other 'real' details like eyelashes, etc.
- **Semi-realistic:** These mannequins do not have as much detailing as realistic mannequins, but they do have all the basic human features.



Realistic mannequin (left), Semi-real mannequin (centre), Abstract mannequin (right)

- **Abstract:** Mannequins that represent the human body only in broad strokes are considered abstract. They resemble humans only vaguely and look more like robots.
- **Partial forms or Dress forms:** These are mannequin-type bodices for fitted dresses.

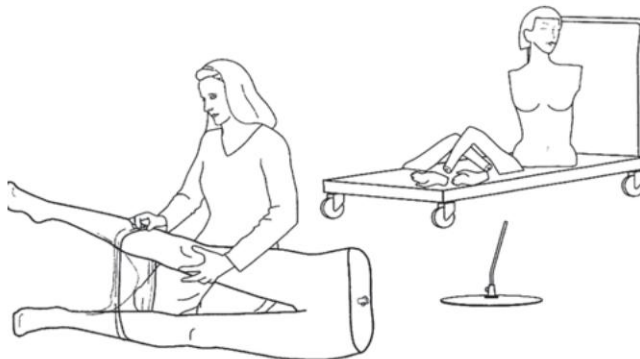


**Abstract mannequin (left), Partial form or Dress form mannequins (centre and right)**

- **Alternatives:** Hang rods or fibreglass forms are often used to display merchandise. They do not distract a viewer from the merchandise.

## Dressing the 3-Dimensional Form

At first, the mannequin should be taken inside the trial room and then carefully reassembled as the items of merchandise are dressed onto the figure. Generally, the lower-half of the mannequin is dressed first.



**Typically, a mannequin has 7 parts including the base stand.**

To dress the mannequin, begin with removing or dismantling the upper-half of this 3-dimensional form. First, dismantle the arms. If the mannequin is to wear shorts, pants or pantyhose, one leg will need to be removed (if detachable). Shoes are put on next, and then the dressed lower-portion can be set into the ankle rod. The top-half of the mannequin is attached to the torso. Outer garments such as coats or jackets should be slipped over the inner garments, before the arms are re-attached. Later, accessories and jewellery can be added onto the mannequin.

## Lighting a Mannequin

In-store mannequins should be lit with an intensity that is five times greater than the ambient lighting in the store. This can be done using incandescent flood-lights and spotlights. The mannequins face should be lit from, most desirably, three angles – or at least two angles to avoid shadows.

## Positioning of Mannequins and Props

Positioning mannequins, with the props coming together, to form a triangular shape is more effective than positioning them in a straight line.



This arrangement forms a triangle at the base of the displayed items. An upright triangle can be used effectively to set up a group of mannequins. This triangle is the highest point vis-a-vis the group of mannequins at the centre.

### Tip

At all times, avoid lighting up the mannequins face. Chest lighting is the preferred technique. This not only shows off the colour and the detailing of a garment, but also softly illuminates the mannequin's face.

## PROPS

Anything that assists a display is known as a prop. Props are special elements which help to communicate the concept of a store/company image, and add an accent to the environment that is being created. Many Hollywood or Bollywood films depend on the use of props to project a feeling of reality on the screen.

As in motion pictures, a retailer has the option to fill display sets with props that can help maximise sales as well as merchandise flavour. For instance, the 'Fall' theme can be promoted by bringing in a rake, dried leaves and a wheelbarrow as props for store merchandise. The famous fashion designer Ralph Lauren used saddles and stirrups to merchandise belts. Waterworks, the store, promoted its bath products using an old bathtub, filled with clear Christmas ornaments (to look like bubbles) as a backdrop. Similarly, towels, sun-tan lotion, sunglasses and a beach umbrella – as the backdrop for summer merchandise on display – can connote that 'ideal family getaway'.

Equally important is awareness about the local festivities and events in the area. In other words, if there is a music festival in the town and if the store merchandise has no connection with music – the props in the store can still reflect the event through select musical instruments propped as background accents in its display.

### Tip

Always wear gloves while changing the garments from a mannequin! This will prevent merchandise as well as mannequins and props to get dirty.

The best recommendation to find or gather props is to look no further than the storage area at a friend/relative's place. Start with people who have an established reputation for bargain hunting and collecting, and recruit them as your prop suppliers. Unusual items like wire baskets, old-fashioned fruit scales, funny hats, picture frames, cycles and automobile parts, antiques and artificial flowers, etc. often serve as great props. A quick dash of spray paint on some of the items may give new life to the not-so-new products. Since props are usually used to enhance the products, it is best to display the merchandise in front of the props.

## Choice and Placement of Props

Choose just one theme for the props in each window. Remember, the merchandise must be the focal point of the window/display; too many props tend to distract both attention and communication. Props for window displays can be simple or elaborate; the degree of usage is generally determined by the available resources/budget.



**Incorrect position of props (left);  
Correct position – overlapping and not overshadowing the merchandise (right)**

- A prop can be anything – old or new, rusty, dirty or freshly-painted – as long as it works with the design and concept of the store.
- Props should be such that they can be easily added to or removed from the window.
- Very large props – if used – should be such that they can be dismantled and reassembled according to the size of the window-entrance.
- Very large windows can be designed with removable glass if prop-items like automobiles, etc. are to be used.
- Props like motor scooters, antiques, fine art, etc. can often be loaded from vendors for recognition in the store window.

### Important

1. Outfit a mannequin the way the customer would want to look, colour coordinated and correct size.
2. Outfit mannequins with only that merchandise which is stocked (size and quantity).
3. Remove or hide price tags.
4. Ensure the props do not overshadow the merchandise.
5. Ticketing/Price sign is a must.

## LIGHTING

You walk by a store. It is daylight. You catch a glimpse of the window and all you see is a reflection of yourself in the window of a store that may or may not be open for business. In that glimpse you can see what you are wearing, but you have no clue what lies beyond the glass. What kind of a store is it? What sort of merchandise does it sell? Thus, when a store window is not illuminated (or is illuminated improperly), it merely becomes a giant mirror facing the street or the mall.

Retailers think hard and long about their location – right traffic, target market, and so on. But just being where the action is does not make a retailer a part of that action. The retailer has yet to grab the attention of the passers-by, the potential shoppers.

In one of her book on lighting, Janet Turner<sup>1</sup> says, 'The correct source of lighting is essential for good colour rendition, and this can be made more effective by using a combination of light source: metal halide for coolness, and tungsten for warmth.' The choice of fitting should never be based solely on its outward appearance: in many cases, the type of lamp and reflector will be more important to the effect of the light.

There is natural daylight. And there is artificial light: fluorescent, incandescent or high-Intensity discharge (HID) lighting.

**Fluorescent** lights have the dual advantage of being economical and offering good colour rendition. The newer fluorescent bulbs/lamps are very small and can be set within compact fittings. **Incandescent** lights are the traditional lamps used in most households. They are inexpensive – but inefficient, as most of the power is used to generate heat instead of light. Both, tungsten or halogen lamps (PAR lamps) in this category provide better light quality as

<sup>1</sup>*Designing With Light – Retail Spaces Lighting Solutions for Shops, Malls and Markets*, Janet Turner, Watson-Guptill, 1998



well as long lamp life. They are low-voltage lamps and offer the most seductive light, excellent colour rendition and miniature sizes. These, however, need transformers either integral to the fitting or fitted nearby. Discharge lamps are highly efficient but require large control gears to support their use. They have limited indoor use and often have to be used in combination with incandescent lights to improve their colour rendition.

Designing light should incorporate three main objectives: ambient lighting, accent lighting and task lighting. When it comes to deciding the lighting scheme for interiors, most stores fall into two basic categories: (i) Ambient lighting used for maximum overall visibility (supermarkets, pharmacies, etc.); and (ii) Accent lighting fitted in stores where the layout calls for detail and/or illusion.

While ambient light is used along walkways and circulation routes, as well as in service areas (lifts and escalators), accent lighting is preferred within merchandise and display areas to create an atmosphere or enhance the mood.

- Ambient lighting – provides general illuminations to an area;
- Accent lighting – enhances or highlights particular (store/product) features; and
- Task lighting – directed at a specific surface/area to provide illumination for visual tasks.

The correct use of light can make merchandise look beautiful and full of life. It can also highlight or shadow to create visual effects rendering even a dull product as interesting!



## Lighting an Open Back Window

If the store has an open back window, then the lighting in the display area, up front, must be strong enough and bright enough to attract – and keep – the shopper's eye from going past the displayed merchandise, directly into the store and beyond. A string of fluorescent tubes can cause a flat, dull, dead chill over the colours of garments displayed. Here, only a few sharp spots should be used; focussing the lights away from the glass, directly down, onto the merchandise.

## Lighting a Closed Back Window

If the store has an enclosed display window – three walls, a floor and a ceiling – there is far greater scope for magical lighting effects. A display professional can not only highlight the merchandise, but can also use lighting to 'paint' the backdrop in a complimentary or accenting colour, or dramatise the setting by creating a particular ambience – for example, blue and green lighting to stimulate an underwater look.

Used with certain filters, lighting can also create textures. Similarly, filters can bring about the feel of rain, snow, sunshine, fireworks, etc.

### Basic Guidelines

1. Inspect store display windows every morning.
2. Windows should be kept clean from dust and dirt.
3. Window floors should always be polished and in the best possible condition.
4. Walls should be free of nails and screws, patch and repair and paint after every use.
5. Light trellis should be clear of hanging filaments or wires.
6. Light fixtures not in use should be removed from lighting trellis and properly stored.
7. Windows glass should be kept clean on the inside and outside.

### Lighting the Store Interior

Now let us consider the inside of a store. Light means 'seeing'. Lights serve to lead a shopper into and through the store. Lighting can be used to lead a shopper's eye. It can help separate one area from another. The level of light and its colour (warm or cold) create the store ambience. Is the store welcoming and inviting? Or is it aloof and depressing? Is it flat and boring, or does it sparkle with contrasts?



**Note the placement of signage with each mannequin: there is balance in the display, spot-lighting and colour coordination. Even the props are used very subtly – they do not overshadow the merchandise.**

General or primary lighting refers to the overall level of illumination in an area. It does not include accent lighting, wall washers, lamps and display highlighting. Although fluorescent fixtures are most inexpensive and have longer life, they are not the most recommended as they produce a flat light and tend to make the store look dull and boring. They have no depth or textural interest.

Store lighting comprises various sources and lamps. The lighting plan of a store includes the general, overall illumination of the retail space as well as the accents. It can also include

atmospheric touches like a chandelier, or wall and ceiling washers –they may not always show off the merchandise, but they do reflect the attitude.

### Retail Lighting – Common Misapplications

1. Using incandescent lights for everything.
2. Track lighting, rather than fixed locations.
3. Using floodlights, rather than spotlights.
4. Random fixture layouts or visual chaos.
5. Too many shiny surfaces.
6. Black ceilings.
7. Dark finishes.
8. Accenting everything, emphasizing nothing in particular.
9. Spotty lighting. Not enough ambient light to clearly examine merchandise.

If the store is narrow and long, a strong light on the far wall can make the wall look closer – encouraging the shopper to head towards the rear end of the space. While bright lights can highlight the merchandise, the aisle itself should be low light. Another area where lighting is extremely important is the trial room. This is where the shopper makes his/ her final decision. The lighting here should complement the garment in a way that flatters the shopper. And finally, the lighting at the cash counters. As the shopper sees the garment being boxed/ bagged, and being paid for, the garment must reach out in its fullness and richness of colour to reassure the shopper that he or she has – indeed – made the right decision.

### Is it better to have more lights?

**Answer: No.**

Lighting for retail is all about contrast and focus. Too much accent lighting means no contrast and no focus. The greatest lighting value is achieved through a balance ambient and accent lighting.

## ORGANISING AN IN-STORE EVENT

### A. Concept note

It is generally prepared by the marketing and category teams. It helps the store staff avoid confusion when the event is being planned and/or implemented. A concept note includes clear answers to the following:

- What is the event about?
- Is the event to promote a look or a category, lifestyle, sale or a festival?
- Is it being sponsored? What is the deal with the sponsor in terms of VM?
- Will the store give the sponsor some promotion space (e.g. in windows)?

- Is there an Ad being released? If yes, it should communicate the look and feel of the event, and be in sync with the display as much as possible.
- Are the dates (including setting-up and winding-up the event) planned?

## B. Event Mnemonic

A logo is a trademark or distinctive name identifying a product or a manufacturer. In same way we need to have an identifying symbol (like a LOGO) for the event. Mnemonic is an unregistered logo. This is how the event shall be symbolised in all communication (Ads, VM, etc.).

## C. Scope of Display

There is a lot that can be done to promote an event held inside a store: a window display; overhead dangles; graphics on lift doors and entrance floor; etc. It helps to prepare a complete list of such display ideas/articles, depending on the size and budget of the event. Presented here is a small list to start with:

### Exterior

- Store compound: main gate, flag pole, car parking area, kiosks
- Store facade: main store signage, store windows, windows awning (if any), entrance/exit doors, lighting (especially during festivals like Id, Diwali and Christmas)

### Interiors

- Wall: merchandise presentation, high point, brand signage, wall graphics, ticketing
- Floor: merchandise presentation, focal point, nesting tables, floor graphics, ticketing
- Ceiling: suspended signage, dangles/pennants, lighting (for focal/high points)

The mnemonic, being the symbol of the event, is used in all communication material.

For instance, the 'Festive Dhamaka' mnemonic is used in various communication materials, some of which are shown here:



Example of a mnemonic: It is the symbol of/for the event; it is how the event is represented in the communication e.g. ads, leaflets, posters, etc.





A4 signage/poster (top left); Tabletop stand (top right)



Floor graphic (top left); Dangler (top right)

## D. Window Displays

A store window is planned as per the theme/look of the event (Summer Collection, Valentine's Day, Diwali Sale, etc.). It makes for the least expensive form of advertising. A good window display brings customers into the store. Windows set the note for what the customer will find inside; there is no second chance to make that first impression.

## E. Set-up Checklist

For a smooth set-up, good cooperation from all support functions is necessary. Good coordination and foolproof planning. The store has to be set up overnight, not over a period of time. The set-up has to be made after the store closes at night – and before it reopens the next morning. All installations have to be done overnight. Customers are never to be disturbed in the course of their shopping. Furthermore, all the details have to be planned e.g. what items to order; what size, colour, quantity, location, etc.



After all, the VM staff has to improve the shopping experience, to help customers select/find what they have come to the store for – and not to distract them.

## G. Wind-up Checklist

Once the event is over, the set-up needs to change. All windows should have a fresh look. The danglers, floor graphics, etc. should be removed. Here, a wind-up checklist help see to it that all communication material pertaining to the event is removed from the store.

## VM TOOL KIT

Mechanics have tool boxes. Stationary is their tool kit for kids. Doctors and engineers have their tools. Similarly, even visual merchandisers have their tool kits. In fact, if even one tool is missing during a display or merchandise presentation, the entire display can go for a toss.

A visual merchandiser should always carry his/her own tool kit, which comprises: signage templates/holders, stationery and generic VM material required to support any VM activity in the store, at any point of time. The content of the VM Kit is completely depends upon the retail format, type of merchandise, selling areas (departmental store, lifestyle shop, etc.), VM budgets and new launches in the store as well as new store roll-outs. Depending on these factors as well as the nature of work, a visual merchandiser should customise and develop his/her own tools. Listed here are some generic as well as essential VM tools:

- **Pre-printed stationery:**
  - price signage templates/formats,
  - product signage,
  - templates/formats (these can be pre-printed and kept at the working desk)
- **General stationery:**
  - office stapler with pins,
  - cello-tape,
  - eraser & sharpener
- **Cutting tools:**
  - scissors, wire cutters,
  - seam ripper,
  - cutter knife,
  - paper cutter (can be stationed at the working desk)
- **Tools which fix:**
  - pliers,
  - wrench,
  - staples (Hansen and arrow staples)
- **Tools which paste:**
  - masking tape,



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double-sided tape,  
fabric glue,  
3M mount spray (easily sticks papers and leaves no marks post removal)

- **Tools that attach:**

nails,  
screw-eye or screw-hook (to hang dangles on ceilings),  
pins, flat tips and Philip head,  
fishnet wire,  
Moly bolt,  
hammer,  
screwdrivers

- **Tools which measure:**

measuring tape,  
stainless steel ruler (1' and 2'),  
T-square

- **Tools which clean:**

cleaning rag or duster,  
all purpose or glass cleaner (usually available with the maintenance team),  
steam iron and lint remover (both available with the apparel team)

- **Tools which aid climbing:**

ladder (available with the store maintenance team)

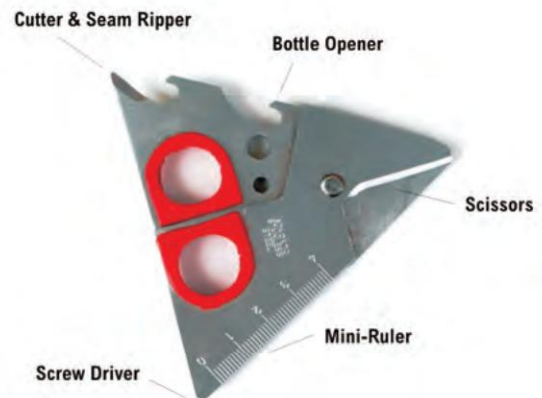
### Additional Aids

- Digital camera (minimum 3 mega-pixel, preferably)
- Pen drive with templates of all signage's used in store
- VM guidelines and instructions
- Planogram, with storyboard
- Tint and brush to touch-up mannequins
- Gloves (to work with paints, change mannequins, etc.)

However, the **pencil** is the most important tool. So commonly used, yet never listed somehow!

Besides, some VM professionals prefer to use a multi-purpose tool – such as the Swiss-knife – for cutting, etc.

Some of the less common tools are shown here for ready reference:





Paper Cutter



Hansen and arrow staples



Screw Hook



Double Sided Tape



Mount Spray



Fishing Net Wire



Seam Ripper

## QUALITY AND PROCESS IN VISUAL MERCHANDISING

Creativity and innovative thinking are the key drivers of visual merchandising. Yet, there is a general misconception that – unlike other retail functions – VM activities cannot be standardised because they are part of a creative unit. At times, such flawed thinking can lead to huge investments being made in certain VM activities – without gaining the required returns.

There are several cases where organisations fail to realise the benefits of VM due to:

- Lack of standardisation in VM activities;
- Absence of clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for VM functions;
- Non-adherence to VM standards in retail stores; and
- No proper integration of VM activities with other functions like marketing, retail operations and store planning.

That is why adopting a **process approach** gains paramount importance. It is essential to have proper procedures for all the key activities in any organisational set-up – and visual merchandising is no exception to this rule.

### Quality Assurance

The Quality Management System (QMS) integrates all the activities of various functions through Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). SOPs, in turn, are developed on the premise that ‘we do what we say and say what we do’.

### Benefits of QMS

- Systematic and consistent way to execute activities
- Promotes better communication between departments
- Helps to avoid person dependency as processes runs the show
- Mechanism to identify the problem areas
- Enforces work discipline among staff
- Helps to benchmark against other organisations
- Lends a competitive edge
- Provides opportunity for continual improvement

A QMS is build upon the principles of the **P-D-C-A cycle**. PDCA stands for:

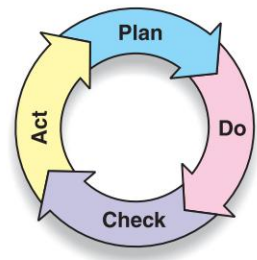
Plan the activities

Do the activities

Check whether the plan is correct and the activities are as per plan

Act based on the feedback collected by the PDCA cycle

One of the important features of the PDCA cycle is its emphasis on continual improvement. All the data collected from executing the procedures is analysed to identify opportunities for improvement. These improvement actions are then incorporated into procedures, thus keeping the QMS dynamic and effective.



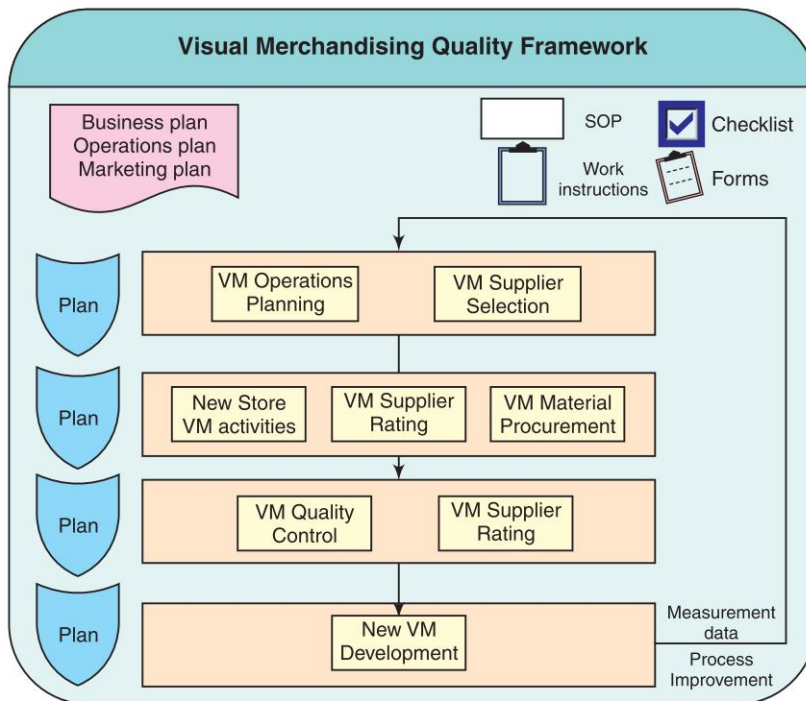
### Documentation Hierarchy

When the process for VM is laid down, it generally comprises 4 levels:

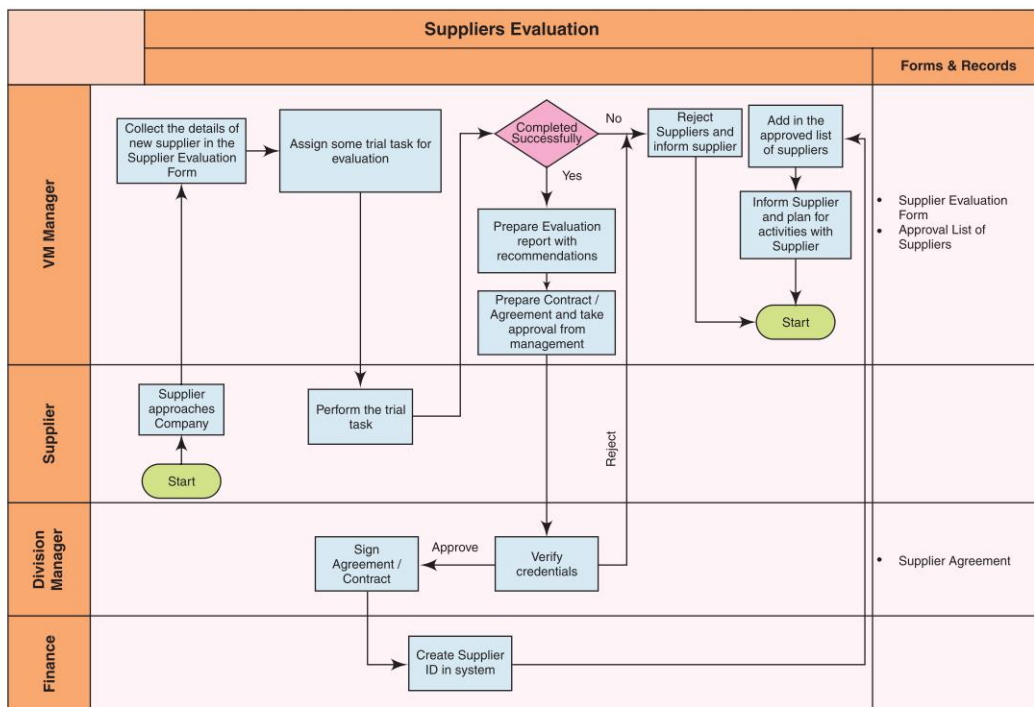
Level	Name	Description	Examples
1	Policies	High level direction for the activities to be followed.	E.g. Price display policy: Price displays must be printed; no use of manual price displays.
2	Procedures	Flow of activities describing the sequence of events, interactions with other processes along with roles and responsibilities.	E.g. VM planning: VM material procurement, VM supplier management, etc.
3	Work instructions	Step by step description of activities to be performed.	E.g. Front unit display instructions, digital signage instructions, etc.
4	Forms, checklists	Tools that enable the staff to execute the procedures and capture the required information.	E.g. VM audit checklist, VM material request form, etc.

### STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPs)

SOPs give details pertaining to the flow of activities. They address what, where, who, why, when and how the activities are performed. Shown here are some of VM SOPs:



Generally, SOPs are supported by work instructions, which are a more granular way of detailing the tasks that are to be performed.



**Example of a Standard Operating Procedure in VM**

Some of the work instructions that need to be laid down clearly, are:

- Store display rules
- Handling of damaged/used VM material
- Handling of VM stock

## Key Aspects in VM Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance (QA) is a broad term that helps in ensuring high standards of quality – right from planning to delivery. Quality Control (QC) – a subset of QA – is focused more on inspection and delivering defect-free products.

Some of the important QA aspects to consider in VM are:

1. **VM store audits:** It is important that the VM team visits stores and audits the compliance to VM standards, display rules, etc. Audit results should then be reported to the management on a periodic basis, to drive in the importance of VM among the retail sales staff. The best way to do this is by using the VM store audit checklist.

VM Audit Checklist			
#	Activity	Yes/No/NA	Remarks
1	Is the back wall unit properly illuminated?		
2	Are the standees placed at the entrance?		
3	Are the price displays in the standard format?		
4	Is the product display as per planogram?		

2. **VM Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** ‘You cannot improve unless you measure’ – The measurement of data for the activities performed are essential to take the right decisions. Some KPIs which should be regularly monitored by the VM team, are:
  - Sales impact percentage due to VM
  - Store compliance score percentage in VM audits
  - VM material requests received Vs. on-time fulfilment
  - Customer complaints regarding VM (internal/external)
  - On-time submission of VM store audit reports
3. **VM Training:** Training of all retail staff is an important aspect when it comes to implementing VM standards in stores. The VM department must conduct periodic training sessions, and establish communication channels to reach out to the retail staff. It is equally essential that the VM staff also keep themselves updated about the latest advancements in the field of VM through journals, newsletters, conferences and visits to other stores.
4. **Supplier/Vendor management:** Suppliers are an integral part of the success of an organisation. They should be selected carefully. A formal evaluation procedure must be followed to finalise a supplier. Regular monitoring of supplier activities goes a long way to ensure good relationships with suppliers. Vendors are organisation or individuals who are hired to provide the VM team with VM material and services which may/may not be available in-house. Most retail organisations have a process for vendor evaluation and selection, so as to assure vendor capabilities (samples, bulk minimum, production capacity, bulk rate, etc.).

Vendors are registered with the retail organisation after evaluation, following which bulk orders are placed. Often, different vendors in different zones also make sourcing of VM material more cost-effective. Generally, a rate card is maintained for every vendor.

<b>Vendor Name:</b>		<b>Date:</b>		
<b>Registration No.</b>				
<b>Email :</b>				
<b>Postal Address</b>				
<b>Contact Nos.</b>				
<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Bulk Minimum</b>	<b>Bulk Price</b>	<b>Lead-time</b>

**A template of vendor rate card**



## IN SUMMARY

- Merchandise styling refers to a unique way of displaying merchandise that brings forth the USP of the product and enhances the same.
- A good stylist knows exactly how to combine objects to maximise the look and feel of a product – in keeping with latest trends in fashion, hairstyle, etc.
- A display calendar should span the entire year, and be in sync with the marketing and merchandising calendar.
- To understand and – if need be – to change the VM approach, it is necessary to know how well a store is doing by tracking its sales.
- A mannequin's face should be lit from three (most desirably) or at least two angles to avoid shadows.
- Positioning mannequins with props in a triangular shape is more effective than positioning them in a straight line.
- Prop should always overlap the mannequins, and not overshadow the merchandise.
- Artificial light can be incandescent, fluorescent or high-intensity discharge (HID) lighting.
- Organising an in-store event involves a concept note, event mnemonic, scope of display, windows, set-up checklist, daily checklist and wind-up checklist.
- Having a well-defined quality system helps the VM team to perform its tasks in a more effective manner.
- Following the procedures ensures that the regular VM activities are carried out smoothly, without fire-fighting for day-to-day activities. This also provides an opportunity for the VM team to focus more on finding innovative ways to increase sales through VM.
- Quality assurance ensures that the VM delivers the required value to business in the most effective and efficient way.

## Exercises

1. Define styling and its importance.
2. What is a Display Calendar?
3. Discuss the positions of props and lights with reference to a display.
4. Explain the process of organising an event.
5. What is Quality Management System?
  - i. Collection of process, tools and resources
  - ii. Collection of Standard Operating Procedure
  - iii. Both (A) and (B)
6. Draft a Standard Operating Procedure for making tea. Describe the activities using a flow chart.
7. Fill in the blanks:
  - i. A good display is the result of \_\_\_\_\_, coordination and cooperation!
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_ lighting is throughout an area that provides general illumination.
  - iii. \_\_\_\_\_ ensures that VM delivers the required value to business in the most effective and efficient way.
8. List five points which should be checked during a VM quality audit in a/an:
  - i. Apparel store
  - ii. Mobile Phone shop
  - iii. Jewellery retail outlet
9. Prepare work instructions describing steps for store display inside a mall. Use the following format:

Step #	What to do?	When to do?	How to do?	Who will do?

9. State whether True or False:
  - I. A cross-functional flow chart describes the roles of different functions for doing set of activities.
  - II. SOPs once made should never be changed.
  - III. An audit checklist is used to check the compliance to VM standards.

## Case Study

### DISPLAYS IN INDIA

Every retailer applies/uses the science of visual merchandising, however unconsciously it may be. And, as some retailers will confirm, the impact of VM is tremendous. Presented here are some case studies wherein the science and tools of VM have been used very effectively.

#### Case Studies 1–3



1. A 'Churan' shop in a busy market: It has similar jars for all kinds of churans, suparis, etc. These too are colour-blocked (reds on the left and browns on the right side).
2. Window display in a shop selling musical instruments. The Sitar and Veena have been hung from the ceiling, facing the floor, displaying the beautiful paintings to catch the attention of passers-by. (Always project the USP of the merchandise.)
3. The most common way to display apparels on the wall of a display window. Note the neatness and colour coordination.

## Case Studies 4–6



4. An artisan's display at Delhi Haat, Delhi: In this display of ceramic figurines, the neck swings/dances when the figure is touched. Each one rests on a thick and strong spring, which rolls these heads in motion when touched.
5. A wooden fixture of bangles, displayed vertically. Customers can browse through these bangles and, surprisingly, although they are displayed straight against the wall, the bangles still do not fall off their rods when touched.
6. A display of 'mojaris': it includes a pair in an extraordinary size to get the customers' attention. These type of enlarged props always add to the walk-ins.

## Case Studies 7–9



7. The famous textile traders of Surat, Gujarat: note the price-point on every 'length-piece'. The upper layer costs Rs. 60 per meter and the lower layer Rs. 90 per metre. Meaning, if the price sign suits the pockets of passers-by, they may stop and shop!
8. A very unusual roadside (foot-path) shop: displaying photographs of leading Bollywood stars and sports personalities, 95 per cent of which are female stars – ranging from actress Deepika Podukone to the tennis sensation Sania Mirza. Size: 2" × 4" (width × height), price: Rs. 4 each. Customer traffic: At least 6–8 people were seen staring at the display at any given point of time!
9. A simple way to project 'waterproof' wrist watches: a tub is filled with water and watches are thrown into it! Each of these ultra hi-tech watch is for Rs. 30 only.



## Case Studies 10–12

10. Here is a 'kitchen-and-shop in an auto rickshaw'. From teatime snacks to omelettes with bread or toast – everything is prepared in this mobile kitchen-cum-snack-shop. Even the merchandise is laid out properly. The rickshaw-shop is parked in front of a waterfall near Cochin, Kerala.



11. An unusual shop; this person makes only 'dies' for jewellers at Dariban–Chandani Chowk, in Delhi. Note the various dies displayed on the walls; the most popular designs are showcased in wooden boxes placed at the front of the shop.

12. A simple display of 'kurtas', 'salwaars' and matching 'dupattas'. This new, Summer Collection was not moving. A salesperson then displayed the merchandise on the focal points, put up a 'New Summer Collection' signage at various places. But the merchandise was still not moving.

Then, the VM team carried the manne-quin to a studio and had the entire collection photographed on the mannequin.

Post that, the pictures were hung with the respective *kurta* hangers, communicating various mix-and-match possibilities to the women-shoppers. Surprisingly, the entire collection was sold out within 3 days.





## EXERCISE

1. Visit your local or popular market. Try to find innovative ways through which the merchandise is displayed and the quality of the merchandise is highlighted. Support your observation with photographs.
  2. Similar to the way 'waterproof' watches are displayed to bring out their USPs, suggest what can be done to highlight the main features of the following:
    - a. Fresh juice
    - b. Cycles
    - c. Mosquito repellent
- Support your ideas and suggestions with rough sketches.



# PART 5

## Experiential Retail\*

This chapter focuses on key aspects of the experience economy, brand experiences, experience design and experiential retail. It presents these aspects in specific sections with theoretical descriptions and examples pertaining to each. Thereafter are offered various case studies of experiential retail in practice across the globe, before the chapter culminates in an estimate of popular brand experiences and the retail scenarios in the near future.

The opening section summarises the history of evolution of world economies, thereby explaining the context and concept of experience economy. Subsequently, the section on brand experiences succinctly defines important terminology, before detailing the essential concepts of both user-centered and brand-centered experiences.

The section on experience design is vital to the entire chapter, and talks about key facets of this discipline. It offers merely a brief insight into the vast field of experience design, broadly defining the field before delineating and describing experiences on the basis of their interactivity, participation, absorption and nature. While a broad design roadmap is put forth for better understanding of the process of experience design, the concept of conversational capital is also summarised.

The next section encapsulates the profile of the average consumer of the future – the persona of Generation C, so to say. The section on ‘augmented reality highlights the fascinating way in which the real and virtual environs overlap. It, thereby, hints at a language of interaction and experiences, where the boundaries between real and digital realms are blurred beyond recognition.

Experiential retail delves into aspects of meaningful experiential retail, delivered through participatory and augmented retail environs. This section also touches upon the important elements of purchase intent, word-of-mouth marketing, social retailing, etc., and highlights the relevance of experiential retail in the context of improving brand recall and overall sales.

The case studies presented in this section span the global range of experiential retail. These examples are described in depth to illustrate the strengths and features of each experience. The summary at the end of Chapter 13, sketches a vivid picture of the probable trend of retail and brand experiences of the foreseeable future, based on current economic and retail trends and their projected prospects.

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## Industry Insight

### The Experience Economy

By Anurag Sehgal, Founder and Principle Interaction Designer, and Puneet Monga, Principle Designer – Interactive Media, Experiential Design Lab Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi (India) and Milan (Italy)

Prior to the Industrial Revolution in Europe (late 18th – early 19th century), the prevalent economic systems were largely agricultural. Described in simple terms, it was an economy driven by raw commodities – consumers purchased grain to bake their own bread, milk to make their own cheese and curd, cotton to make their own thread, etc.

The revolution impacted the transformation of socio-economic systems across continents. With substantial populations migrating from the fields to the factory towns, agrarian economies gradually morphed into industrial economies – and manufactured goods became the prime drivers of economy rather than raw materials. The factories produced all kinds of goods, from ships and steel, to clothes and food – and these found many willing consumers who preferred purchasing mass-manufactured goods instead of personally making things of need from raw materials as was done in the earlier times.

Over the next century and a half, with radical advancement in technology and automation, socio-economic conditions further prospered in the advanced industrial economies, with average pays becoming better and work time requirements decreasing. This increased spending capacity ushered in the new era of service economy, where customers now preferred to purchase the very services – instead of goods or raw materials. For instance, instead of purchasing bread from a local bakery, they could now eat at a restaurant, where the meals would be cooked and served, and the dishes were taken care of.

Today, more than ever before, these services have become so prevalent that virtually all products have a higher service component. This process of 'servitisation' of products has led to a scenario where services like goods and raw materials are also becoming commoditised because of technology, increased competition and increasing consumer expectations. In this scenario, to differentiate from the competition, many companies are moving beyond services to offer experiences, thereby ushering in the experience economy.

Experience economy was first described in *The Experience Economy*, written in 1999 by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, as the next economy to follow the agrarian economy, the industrial economy as well as the most recent, the service economy.

Pine and Gilmore\*\* believe that businesses should create memorable experiences for their customers through events which can be dynamically personalised, in order to make them feel a distinct sensation upon their active participation. Such experiences provide a 'memorable' offering that remains with one for a long time, and that memory itself becomes the product – the 'experience'.

They also opine that experiences are not the ultimate form of economic offering. Furthermore, Pine and Gilmore have identified the fifth stage: Transformations. Unlike experiences, which, while providing sensations and creating memories, create only a transient impact which fades with time, transformations make a permanent beneficial change to the customer e.g. a sick person becoming well in body and mind, a dying company getting turned-around, and a customer habitually spending beyond his or her means achieving financial viability and stability. Whilst experiences are memorable and are sustained for a time, transformations are 'inspirational' and must be sustained through time. Businesses can then begin charging for the value of the 'transformation' that an experience offers. This, they argue, is a natural progression in the value added by the business over and above its inputs.

Therefore, in a gist, **there has been a distinctive change in behaviour, an evolution of businesses with respect to their operations.**

- A commodity business charges for undifferentiated products.
- A goods business charges for distinctive, tangible things.
- A service business charges for the activities you perform.
- An experience business charges for the feeling customers get by engaging it.
- A transformation business charges for the benefit customers (or 'guests') receive by spending time there.

Although the concept of the experience economy was born in the field of business, it has crossed its frontiers to foray into tourism, architecture, nursing and urban planning among other fields.

\*\*Pine and Gilmore, founders of Strategic Horizons LLP, were one of the first to write about experience economy through their 1999 bestseller, *The Experience Economy*. This book helps understand the evolution of businesses through different time periods and also to comprehend the various attributes and applications of the new economy. Source: [www.strategichorizons.com/intro.html](http://www.strategichorizons.com/intro.html)

# Experiential Retail

## 13 CHAPTER

### BRAND EXPERIENCE – BRAND-CENTRIC TO CUSTOMER-CENTRIC<sup>1</sup>

Before delving into the ever-evolving aspects of brands and brand experiences, let us take a precursory look at some basic terms and their definitions. This will help clarify those concepts which not only form the basic premise of this chapter, but are also known to seem confusing and contradictory.

- **Brand experience** is the cumulative perception of a brand, based on impressions garnered from visual, verbal and experiential encounters with the brand. The brand experience encompasses a range of intellectual, sensory and emotional connections. The experiential aspect consists of the sum of all points of contact with the brand, called touch points. Some touch points are controllable e.g. retail, products, websites, services, advertisement, etc.; some others are less controllable or, at times, even uncontrollable e.g. word-of-mouth, press/blog comments, etc. Successful brands arise from consistent, coherent, holistic and well-implemented brand experiences.
- **Brand centred experiences** are directly formulated around the brand and its products, values, services and messages.

<sup>1</sup>By Anurag Sehgal, Founder and Principle Interaction Designer, and Puneet Monga, Principle Designer – Interactive Media, Experiential Design Lab Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi (India) and Milan (Italy)

## Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to discuss:

- The experience economy
- Brand experience, today, and its customer-centric nature
- Experience design – Beyond visual merchandising
- The changing face of consumer – Generation C
- Augmented and mixed reality magic
- The new retail scenario – Experiential retail

- **Consumer centred experiences** are experiences derived around the consumer and his/her likings, interests, lifestyles and worlds of reference.
- **User experience** is the experience lived by a brand's audience, seen from the point of view of design professionals.
- **Experiential designers** are professionals or companies which specialise in the designing of experience touch points.
- **Experiential marketing** is a relatively recent branch of marketing, which studies, analyses and/or defines a brand experience or a consumer experience in all its declinations (products, services, corporate image, retail, events, etc.).

Till very recently, most brands had been focussed on generating experiences that were brand-centric. Experiences, which had a strong direct relevance to the brand itself, were presented to customers to participate in. Such experiences, aimed at conveying brand values and messages in exciting manners and media, were found to be very effective.

Products and services offered by the brand were almost always a prominent part of advertising campaigns, and the product/service/brand recall improved consequentially. However,



one key limitation of such campaigns was that they were indistinguishable amidst many similar brand and product centric advertisements and experiences. Invariably, customers felt that their priorities were secondary to the brand's priorities, and were usually weary about giving sustained time and attention to brand-centric experiences.

Not surprisingly then, brands began to adopt an increasingly customer-centric approach. Successful customer-centred experiences are a collective set of experiences, including visual, verbal, in-store, web and all other forms of interaction and communication that a customer finds relevant and interesting in his reference world. In the process of generating effective customer experiences, brands need to listen to and understand their customer's desires, and align their actions to build strong emotional connects with the customers. The most successful customer experiences would be materialised if customer needs are addressed and implemented at all levels – from product conceptualisation and service creation, all the way to their purchase and thereafter in post-sales support and service. The better the customer-centric experience the longer and stronger the brand–customer relationship, and the more loyal the customer.

Let us consider, for example, a set of experiences being presented by a mobile phone brand that wants to promote the aspect of connectivity between friends, which it offers. Based on any/all of the paradigms discussed earlier, the experiences can be vividly different:

- The brand can offer a space within its store, from where customers can not only call their friends at no cost, but can also 'feel' the connectivity. They can also use the product and see its various features for themselves. Here, the complete experience is brand-centric; the product is the 'star' of the experience.
- In a customer-centric experience, a company would first research and analyse various activities which interest its customers and are also based on the customer's connect to/with friends. As a result, the company may offer a social networking platform as a 'connectivity' experience to all its customers, while exposing them – as a secondary priority – to its products. In this scenario, the customer is the 'star' of the experience and the brand is a promoter of those customer interests that may be relevant to the brand itself.

Brand experience has also been exposed to a new evolution called Brand 2.0, which takes its name from the evolution of the worldwide web to Web 2.0. These new, evolved brands know the significance of social networking, personalisation, content production and sharing – which are key needs and behavioural attributes of the new generation of consumers, called 'Generation C' (more about this in the following pages).

Brand 2.0 empowers the consumers by enabling them to generate content, share it with other consumers and friends, network with other consumers and friends as well as personalise products and services offered by the brand (to suit their needs). Some interesting examples of Brand 2.0 activities are present partially in brands like Adidas, Dell and IconNicholson.

## EXPERIENCE DESIGN – BEYOND VISUAL MERCHANDISING

The design of experiences is not any newer than the recognition of experiences. As a discipline, though, experience design is still in its infancy. However, experience design has gained recognition considering it has no history (it is a newly defined discipline) and, simultaneously, has the longest history (it is the culmination of many ancient disciplines).

According to experience designer Nathan Shedroff<sup>2</sup>, experience design is actually the combination of many previous disciplines; but never before have these disciplines been so interrelated, nor have the possibilities for integrating them into whole solutions been so great.

*Wikipedia*<sup>3</sup> states that experiential design or experience design (XD) is the practice of designing products, processes, services, events, and environments with a focus placed on the quality of the participant's experience and culturally relevant solutions, with less emphasis placed on increasing and improving functionality of the design. An emerging discipline, experiential design attempts to draw from many sources including cognitive psychology and perceptual psychology, linguistics, cognitive science, architecture and environmental design, haptics, product design, information design, information architecture, ethnography, brand management, interaction design, service design, storytelling, heuristics, and design thinking.

Experience design is not driven by a single design discipline. It seeks to develop the experience of a product, service, or event along any or all of the many possible dimensions.

There are, says Nathan Shedroff, at least six dimensions to experiences: time/duration, interactivity, intensity, breadth/consistency, sensorial and cognitive triggers, and significance/meaning. Together, these create an enormous palette of possibilities for creating effective, meaningful, and successful experiences.

1. Duration (initiation, immersion, conclusion and continuation)
2. Intensity (reflex, habit, engagement)
3. Breadth (products, services, brands, nomenclatures, channels, environment/promotion and price)
4. Interaction (passive< >active< >interactive)
5. Triggers (all human senses, concepts and symbols)
6. Significance (meaning, status, emotion, price and function)

## Experiences and Interaction

Interactivity is one of the most important dimensions of customer experiences. On the other hand, experiences can be mapped on the active v/s passive axis as well as on the static v/s dynamic axis.

- **Active experiences** engage the audience to participate within the experience by actively and deliberately performing a certain task or action. E.g. writing something specific, pressing a particular button, moving a hand in a specific way, speaking certain words, etc.
- **Passive experiences** address the participant without having him/her perform any specific task or action. Such experiences are generated around the audience, while they are doing actions or tasks they would perform naturally and commonly, without any deliberation. E.g. walking on the road, pressing an elevator button, stepping close to a display stand in a shop, sitting on a chair at the airport, etc.

<sup>2</sup>Nathan Shedroff is one of the pioneers of 'Experience Design' and is helping the community to evolve and define this field by presenting at various conferences and teaching at various universities across the globe. Working as an experience strategist since 2001, he has been one of the first few to recognize the arrival of the experience economy and help businesses adapt. ([www.nathan.com/ed/](http://www.nathan.com/ed/))

<sup>3</sup>Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experience\\_design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experience_design)

- **Dynamic experiences** utilise moving and changing audiovisual elements. Dynamic visuals displays (DVDs) are scientifically proven to gather more attention than static visual displays (SVDs). Mechanical movements, video or animated content displays, flashing or moving lights, a sudden spray of perfume, etc. are elements of some such experiences. Most participatory experiences are coupled with dynamic experiences.
- **Static experiences** are formed by elements that do not change or move in any way. A printed text or graphic visual, immobile architectural elements, etc. are some elements static experiences. While active experiences have a tendency to be coupled with dynamic experiences, and passive experiences tend to be coupled with static experiences, there is no particular limitation.



**Interactive shadows are spaces where people's silhouettes are captured live and projected behind them in the form of a white shadow trail, imparting a surrealistic feel to the augmented space (by interaction design lab, Milan, Italy).**

Experiences can vary from active to passive with respect to participation, and between absorptive and immersive on the basis of the guests' relationship with the environment or event.

## The 4 E's of Experience Design

Pine and Gilmore<sup>4</sup> have identified four types of consumer experiences, with the richest being those offerings that combine all four. In their essence, experiences can be entertaining, educational, escapist or esthetic. These are collectively referred to as the 4 Es of experience design, which vary based on the customer's active or passive participation as well as on their absorption or immersion in the experience.

1. **Entertainment experiences** are passively absorbed by people via their senses. E.g. while viewing a performance, watching TV, listening to music, or reading for pleasure.
2. **Educational experiences** involve active participation of the individual, who absorbs the events as they unfold. Active engagement is essential to effectively transfer knowledge and information through an educational event.
3. **Escapist experiences** offer much deeper immersion for an individual. The person partaking in such an experience becomes completely immersed, actively involved and wants to do activities.

<sup>4</sup>*The Experience Economy – Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*, Joseph Pine II and James H Gilmore, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, 1999

4. **Esthetic experiences**, on the other hand, immerse the participants in the event or the environment, but do not engage the individuals actively. A person partaking in esthetic experiences just wants to be – absorb the experience and leave the environment untouched.

These days, significant effort is being made in creating participatory and multi-sensory experiences, using technology and new media systems to engage people in interactions. Participants, in turn, become a part of such an experience by interacting with engaging and intuitive touch-points. The touch-points respond in accordance to their actions, by conveying an emotion, information or a mix of both.

Such experiences are essentially dynamic in nature, but work within active as well as passive interaction realms. An interactive store window, which responds to people walking on the walkway outside, would be a passive and dynamic experience, while a similar window that invites visitors to touch an interactive holographic projection on the front glass becomes an active and dynamic experience. Engaging experiences increasingly utilise the ever-growing treasures of TUI (tangible user interfaces) and GUI (graphical user interfaces) interactions being developed in the field of interaction design. These experiences are often based in the realms of both augmented and mixed realities.

## Roadmap for Experience Design

In this new experience economy, brands and businesses need to orchestrate memorable events and journeys for their customers, as ‘memory’ itself becomes a meta-product – the ‘experience’. There are five proposed design principles for successful XD. When designing and delivering experience one must aim to:

- i. **Theme** the experience – create a consistent theme, one that resonates throughout the entire experience.
- ii. **Harmonise** impressions with positive cues – layer the theme with positive and intuitive cues that allow visitors to engage with the various stories.
- iii. **Eliminate** negative cues – affordances of materials, visual and forms are important to analyse.
- iv. **Mix** in memorabilia – place interesting and relevant stories in the space that are engaging for the visitors.
- v. **Engage** all five senses – through sights, sounds and so on, to heighten the experience and make it more memorable.

A comprehensive experience can only be generated if all the five senses are targeted in synch. What the visitor/consumer feels should co-relate to what he/she hears, sees, etc. The importance of addressing diverse senses is in conveying distinct contextual information relevant to any of them. For example, in one of the interactive stands at the Adidas store, when a person approaches a rack with a specific sports shoe, he/she is sprayed with the smell of freshly cut grass, while the audio-visual content shows soccer being played with players wearing that particular shoe. Thus, simultaneously addressing three senses generates a high-fidelity experience, immersing the consumer into the context surrounding the product.

## The Value of Stories and Conversational Capital

Content transforms into stories, when it is conveyed through an experience. Stories are also the way people convey their experiences. A story contains emotions and information interspersed ideally in a designed form, with a distinct beginning and an ending. And, as people love to hear stories and talk about them, the style becomes very relevant to consumer experience. There are two forms of stories that are seen in the context of consumer experience:

- i. **Brand stories** are developed by the brand to convey information about itself, laid over engaging emotions. These stories, combined with experience design methodologies, convey brand values, products, services, activities, etc.
- ii. **Conversational stories** are personalised word-of-mouth accounts of any intense experience, as told by people. Customers feel compelled to internalise any powerful experience, thereby propagating the story of the experience as part of their own identity, often making them more exciting and personal. These word-of-mouth accounts about transformative personal experiences take the form of conversations, making the experience in question more meaningful and intense.

A leading international fashion brand calls this conversational capital because this form of storytelling is a powerful currency that transforms the economic relationship between brand experiences and their consumers.

Conversational capital arises when organisations manage to deliver product/service experiences that are remarkable and meaningful enough to prompt consumers to want to talk about them. If the experiences are planned correctly, the stories that consumers convey can also be engineered so as to be most effective and useful for the brand.

## GENERATION C - THE CHANGING CONSUMER

The alphabet 'C' in this term does not indicate a time period; C stands for content. Falling within the ambit of this quite inclusive trend would be individuals who are:

- Very interested in personalisation and participation;
- Active with content production and sharing, online revolutions;
- Hands on, tech savvy and media friendly; and
- Searching for new experiences.

The essence of Generation Content (Generation C) is reflected in the ever-growing size of consumer generated content on the Internet. Every second, slices of lives of this generation are being preserved and/or shared in the form of new text, images, audio and video, being added to the web, captured on digital media, embedded in cell phones, and so on. No wonder then, every consumer's urge to share and network is fuelled by the availability of technologies to document text, audio and video, the availability of systems to share and store and the natural inclination for people to produce dialogues. This dialogue is centered on the vast amount of content the consumer generates while documenting his/her life, thoughts, ideas, opinions, etc.

Generation C operates in the realms of a connected, informed society. It speaks its opinions to a global audience through networks that allow sharing and posting their ideas, thoughts and digital content. It communicates through blogs, forums, and tools such as multimedia



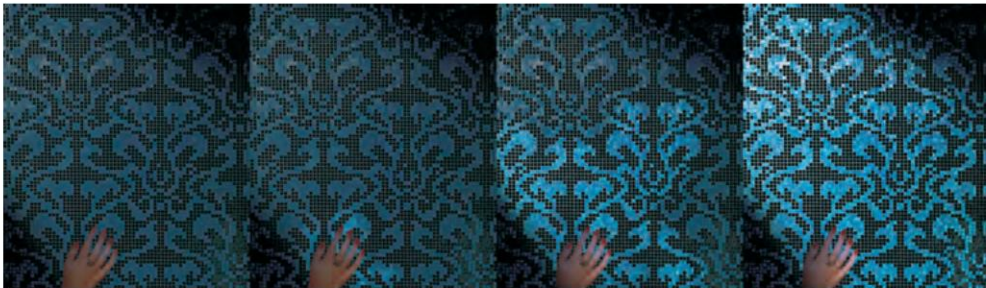
messaging. Newspapers, direct mail, magazines, television, cable, radio – all these converge and contribute to discourse and decision-making in varying and overlapping degrees alongside and simultaneous with word-of-mouth, email, online advertising and other forms. And all this is accepted as part of daily life. Multitasking is the way of life for these ‘digital natives’.

This phenomenon is an experience the consumer willingly and happily engages in; and, from a business and money point of view, this trend truly has something to offer to everyone!

## THE MAGIC OF AUGMENTED AND MIXED REALITIES

We are currently witnessing a rapid, relentless evolution of both man-made spaces and products. This has resulted in realms such as augmented reality, mixed reality, physical computing, intelligent environments and responsive environments, among others. This evolution aims towards seamlessly integrating our real, physical environment (with all its limitations) with the soft, virtual environment (where the only limitation is imagination). As we blur the divisive line between the physical and the real are blurred, and generate bridges and dialogues between the two worlds humans inhabit, we start creating a world where our perception of the obvious is challenged.

Sixth Sense<sup>5</sup>, for instance, is a wearable device that enables new interactions between the real world and the world of data. It presents how a person, by wearing a portable camera and projector connected to a mobile phone, can augment any space around him/her contextually relevant to the actions of the wearer. From reading instant book reviews projected on physical books, to directions projected on physical maps – the possibilities of such a scenario are endless.



**An interactive light mosaic that glows on touch, serving the purpose of a light source; the intensity of light is controlled by the duration of touch.**

Then there is the ‘chameleon’ lamp that can ‘see’ the colour a person is showing it and, then, it can change the colour of its own light to match the same. Another product, a small strap that can be worn by a senior citizen, can track various biometrics – it can sense if the wearer has had a sudden fall or has not moved for a long time, and, then, it can contact the nearest emergency service to give the information. Among similar but VM-related products is a mirror that can present a garment or accessory by superimposing it on a person’s reflection, thereby eliminating the process of wearing it to see how it looks.

<sup>5</sup>Pranav Mistry (MIT, USA) is the genius behind ‘Sixth Sense’, is a wearable gestural interface that augments the physical world around us with digital information and lets us use natural hand gestures to interact with that information. *Source:* <http://www.pranavmistry.com/projects/sixthsense/>



Furthermore, special embedded technologies have even augmented a stage where virtual characters of the popular band, Gorillaz, performed live on stage, alongside pop diva Madonna! For that matter, politician and Nobel laureate Al Gore visited and inaugurated the 'Live Earth' event through a life-size hologram – without being physically present at the site!

Consider restaurant tables with augmented physical menus. As a person chooses a particular food preparation, he/she can see the image of the preparation superimposed on his plate. If so desired, he/she could even ask for more information about the recipe, possible variations, chef's suggestions, etc.

As we master this merger of the real with the virtual, our environment will become more intuitive and intelligent. This augmented environment will understand our needs and respond to them as best desired. The challenge is to blur the boundary between the physical and the virtual and, hence, completely camouflage these magical virtual environments amongst our physical spaces. Then, like in the world of Harry Potter, our environments will engage awe and surprise everyone who enters these spaces.

## EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL - THE NEW RETAIL SCENARIO

### Participatory and Augmented Retail Spaces

Experiential retail is a commercial manifestation of the experience economy. It aims at generating impactful and immersive experiences within the retail environment, using embedded interactive systems and new media technologies. These participatory and augmented retail spaces use mixed media and mixed reality systems to create multi-sensory, pleasing and intuitive experiences that people love to engage with. Through these experiences, then, information related to brand values, product and service is passed on to the customers. Along with presenting emotional and utilitarian information about products and services, experiential retail systems can also be devised to overcome store level limitations and enhance in-store interactions in magical ways.



**A magic mirror where a visitor's reflection within the mirror is filled with content; on touch or proximity the mirror launches the content full screen**

Consider this example. A denims store has a physical space that allows a display rack with 20 spaces to be installed. Each space on the rack stores 4 jeans, therefore restricting the total number of items on display to 80. This store can add an augmented space amongst the 20 available spaces

on the rack. This augmented space can present sets of 4 jeans as life like holograms, visually identical to the other spaces. However, this is a magical space, where a person can simply change the 4 jeans on display with an intuitive action, something as simple as snapping his fingers or moving his hands in front of the rack. Once the visitor shows preference for a pair of jeans, he can choose to see it superimposed on the reflection of his body in a magical mirror adjacent to him. If the jeans still interest the visitor, he can choose to see a map, in the mirror, of the closest where it is available, and, finally, he can even use the mirror to approve, buy and have the jeans delivered to his home.

Sounds far-fetched?

Very likely, such features will become standard in the future retail scenario. Such participatory experiential retail applications may be very beneficial for brands that have dedicated retail centres. A complete store can become an immersive experiential touch-point, which not only houses products and services but also gives a comprehensive customer-centric experience that also conveys a lot of meta-data about the brand, products, services, brand values, additional brand activities like social and green initiatives, etc. – all this, by creating compelling emotional and multi-sensory experiences.

Multi-brand outlets can also create immersive experiences, although the need will be to create generic experiences that apply to the brands they house. Another possible experiential retail route for a multi-brand outlet would be to create pockets of dedicated experiences per brand.

## Purchase Intent

One of the reasons why experiential retail is a very beneficial medium is because it greatly enhances purchase intent. Purchase intent is the inherent intention of the customer to purchase a particular product or service; it differentiates a visitor from a buyer.

According to a comprehensive study carried out by a member of the Interaction Design Association (IxDA)<sup>6</sup>: Conventional media investment by a brand, which is part of the communication budget, is applied to media like print in newspapers, or spots in TV and is successful in bringing visitors to the store. It is estimated that around 50 per cent people decide on a purchase after entering the store, and it is here, where experiential retail scores. Compelling in-store experiences, providing beautiful stories about the brand and its products, generate much higher purchase intent than the advertisements that a visitor views at home. A brand has much more control in making their in-store experience immersive, compared to a 30" screen on which an advertisement is viewed, or a smaller print advertisement, even though the latter two might have a larger reach and visibility.

More significant is the finding that, while TV ads and websites with e-commerce facilities can generate 59 per cent and 76 per cent purchase intent respectively, in-store experiences can create an astounding 86 per cent purchase intent. Compelling retail experiences, if conducted well, can also generate tremendous media buzz along with a lot of WOMM (word-of-mouth marketing).

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<sup>6</sup>The IxDA is a novel kind of 'un-organization' and there is no cost for membership. It relies on its passionate members to help serve the needs of the international Interaction Design community. With over 10,000 members and almost 70 local groups around the world, the IxDA network actively focuses on interaction design issues for the practitioner, no matter his or her level of experience ([www.ixda.org](http://www.ixda.org))

Pine and Gilmore, in *Experience Economy*, opine that the new consumer will be willing to bear an additional cost for rich experiences, instead engaging in mundane retail. Hence, a balance can be achieved by investing part of the communication budget in retail, allowing the formation of experiential retail environments that are stronger in conveying concepts and messages compared to conventional media and much more potent in creating purchase intent.

## Retail 2.0

Retail 2.0 is the evolution of retail experiences which focus on Generation C. Interested in personalising their surroundings and creating individualistic identities, this generation of consumers is attracted to brands that give them this possibility. They can do this by creating log-ins and dashboards on their sites, or through personalised membership cards providing context-aware services to the consumer.

At Adidas, for example, consumers can give their foot measurements in the retail store, personalise their footwear, and get a custom-made shoe delivered to their residences. Similarly, evolving its retail experience, Dell has created an idea-box to accept suggestions from consumers and accordingly make changes to its products.

## Social Retailing

This is another focus area for a brand targeting Generation C's immense interest in creating social networks and exchanging user-generated content. A genre of retail solutions, social retailing allows consumers to create social networks (or dialogues within the same) using the infrastructure of the retail space. Apart from the growing interest in social networking promoting these retail solutions, another study that promotes retail 2.0 concludes that during a purchase, a significant number of people seek suggestions from their friends or like to shop with friends.

Two iconic brands, Nike and Apple, partnered and used their retail stores as touch-points for their products, services and applications to promote community-building around the iPod/nike+ concept.

Another brand-new technology application, introduced by the interactive design firm IconNicholson<sup>7</sup>, is the Magic Mirror, a device that can turn any solo shopping trip into 'social retailing'. In Icon Nicholson's future, after a shopper has picked out some clothing, they hop into a dressing room equipped with the Magic Mirror and begin live streaming to the Internet as they try on each outfit. Next, friends and family can check out the shopper's selections and comment, without ever being in the store.

More and more experiential innovations, like the mirror, will bridge the gap between retail and the popular realms of customer lifestyle. Evidently, selling merchandise is becoming all about ideas that make consumer lifestyle easier. As newer and better innovations define the shopping experience, visual merchandising – both, the science and the art – is poised to become that much more challenging and interesting.

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<sup>7</sup> IconNicholson is the leading full-service digital agency to Global 1000 companies. Based in the US, it has, since 1987, pioneered the use of innovative, digital solutions to help clients engage, delight and interact more profitably with customers. ([www.iconnicholson.com](http://www.iconnicholson.com))

## IN SUMMARY

- Business is currently in its fourth economic evolution – passing from commodities to goods to services to its current experiential nature.
- Brand experiences have evolved from being brand-centric experiential offerings to becoming customer-centric. Brands, too, are moving on towards Brand 2.0 – empowering consumers to generate content, share/network with other consumers and friends, as well as to personalise products and services offered by the brand.
- Participatory and multi-sensory experiential design process are relevant to this new experiential offering as they target holistic experiences, digital or analogue, compared to visual merchandising alone.
- The new generation of consumer – called Generation C – is interested in social networking, generating and sharing content, always searching for immersive experiences and is hands on, tech savvy and media friendly. This generation is also referred to as ‘digital natives’.
- Augmented and mixed reality environments are the new evolution of man-made spaces. It is the practice of seamlessly merging the two worlds we inhabit namely the physical and the virtual world.
- Experiential retail is the commercial initiatives of business’ in the experience economy that are treating their retail environments as customer centred experiential touch-points for Generation C consumers. Using augmented and mixed reality magic, emotional and intuitive experiences are offered to consumers while imparting brand and product related meta-information to create an emotional link between the consumer and the brand.
- Experiential retail spaces, if done well, generate the highest amount of purchase intent compared to conventional media and online interactions.
- Social retailing and retail 2.0 are some of the retail practices that belong to experiential retail environments.

## Exercises

1. What are the different kinds of economies discussed in this chapter?
2. How has brand experience evolved in recent times?
3. What are the 6 different dimensions of experience design as proposed by Nathan Shedroff?
4. What axis can an experience are mapped upon?
5. What are the 4 Es of experience design?
6. What is the new generation of consumers and what are their attributes?
7. What is augmented reality?
8. Describe the new retail scenarios and their attributes.
9. The earliest form of organised economy in the world was:
  - ☐ Service economy
  - ☐ Industrial economy
  - ☐ Agricultural economy
  - ☐ Experiential economy
10. The experience where the participant becomes completely immersed, actively involved, and wants to do activities is called:
  - ☐ Esthetic experience
  - ☐ Escapist experience
  - ☐ Entertainment experience
  - ☐ Educational experience
11. The alphabet 'C' in the term, Generation C, stands for:
  - ☐ Connect
  - ☐ Collect
  - ☐ Consume
  - ☐ Content
12. The inherent objective of the customer to purchase a particular product or service is called:
  - ☐ Purchase ability
  - ☐ Purchase need
  - ☐ Purchase intent
  - ☐ Purchase decision
13. Select any popular domestic consumer brand, like Titan, and study its in-store customer experience and advertising. Similarly, study an international consumer brand, like Nokia, and compare its domestic in-store experiences to its international in-store experience. Formally document and present your research of the strengths and weaknesses of the brand experiences, reinforcing your analysis with appropriate audio/visual data.
14. Visit a popular experiential space, such as the Eternal Gandhi Museum in New Delhi. On your return from the visit, recall and document all the information you retain. How many of your memories were associated to strong emotional and participatory experiences?

## Case Study

### EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL IN ACTION

#### Prada

Prada was one of the first brands to indulge in augmented retail environments in a large manner. Their flagship store in New York was one of the first to create multiple participatory experiences by augmenting conventional spaces found within the store. In the changing room, the closet recognised the garment being hung within, to launch information at the visitor through an embedded display. The door of the changing room was made of an interactive LCD glass, which could change from being transparent to opaque with just the press of a button. The changing room even offered the option to choose the quality of lighting within the space – sunlight, home light, dim light, party light, etc., thus allowing the customer to see the garment within the lighting scenario where it was intended to be worn.

The magic mirror would, however, reflect ones image with a delay of some seconds. So when a customer/visitor would turn around in front of such a mirror, she would see herself turn only after a few seconds – then allowing her to see her own back to check the fit of the garment.

**Note:** This is one of the trendsetting projects within the field of interactive experiential retail. Related information has been collected, as a case study, from various sources over years of research. Some of the sources are:

[www.digitalwellbeinglabs.com/dwb/?page\\_id=172](http://www.digitalwellbeinglabs.com/dwb/?page_id=172);

[www.ideo.com/work/item/staff-devices-dressing-rooms](http://www.ideo.com/work/item/staff-devices-dressing-rooms); and

[www.galinsky.com/buildings/prada/index.htm](http://www.galinsky.com/buildings/prada/index.htm)

#### Adidas

The Adidas flagship store in Paris is the biggest and most technologically advanced Adidas store worldwide. One of its main attractions is the Mi-Innovation Centre, which offers its visitors participatory experiences which are emotive as well as informative.

The experience starts by jogging on an interactive floor pursuing another digital jogger who appears in front. This floor registers the dimensions and shape of the feet. Thereafter, one proceeds to a central installation called the cube, which offers multiple interactions on different faces. One of the faces of the cube allows the visitor to assemble a personalised pair of shoes by simply pointing with his finger in the air ahead. The assembled pair is even superimposed on the feet of the visitor on a magic mirror.

On other faces, the cube presents information about the brand, its products and services as well as various sports it is involved with. The store also has an augmented shoe rack with a sliding display. When a visitor slides the display over a shoe of choice, then the display presents information about that shoe.



This experiential flagship store of Adidas is already a very popular and successful touch-point.

**Note:** A heavily advertised and well communicated move by Adidas, information about this project is available at various sources, including videos on YouTube. The following links offer some such experiences:

[www.press.adidas.com/DesktopDefault.aspx/tabid-16/94\\_read-7150/](http://www.press.adidas.com/DesktopDefault.aspx/tabid-16/94_read-7150/); and

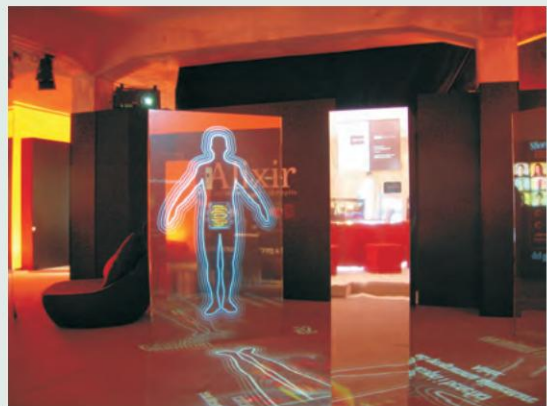
[www.coolhunting.com/archives/2007/03/mi\\_innovation\\_c.php](http://www.coolhunting.com/archives/2007/03/mi_innovation_c.php)

## Alixir

A temporary retail experience was set up by one of Italy's biggest food FMCG – Barilla. This store was created to offer its visitors a pure experience and to inform him/her, through various emotions and information, before giving the option to make a purchase. Barilla developed this store for the launch of its new brand of engineered foods, called Alixir. This range was developed to target four areas of health of a consumer – lightness, heart, immunity, and cellular health.

The store experience began with an emotional experience in a space, where sound projectors were utilised to create isolated sound pockets, in which a visitor could hear about different secrets of living a good life. These secrets were collected and short-listed amongst various stories collected from random people throughout the country.

The next space, also presenting an emotional experience, utilised an interactive video wall to show different facial profiles. When the visitor would touch any of the faces, the video wall would change and reveal aspirational videos at customers. For example, if the face touched was of a person belonging to the profiles of the lightness foods, one would see aspirational videos like a ballet dancer, people somersaulting, kites flying, etc. to present the emotion of lightness.



**Alixir temporary experiential retail store with an interactive holographic projection and an interactive kiosk**



**Alixir interactive video wall presenting facial profiles; aspirational videos get presented when a face is touched**

Yet another space used life-sized holographic projections to offer complete information about different food categories, while the last space allowed the visitor's body-type to be profiled through a small questionnaire. This profile was then carried by the visitor himself, on a smart card, to a bar counter where a chef would serve sample creations to people depending on their body-type. For example, a person with a weaker heart would get to taste a food preparation that targets the health of heart. The last space then offered the visitor to make a purchase depending on the body profile he generated.

**Note:** One of the first interactive experiential retail spaces implemented in Italy, there are various sites documenting this project. Information, mainly in Italian, can be accessed at: [http://experiential-lab.com/eng/portfolio\\_000.htm](http://experiential-lab.com/eng/portfolio_000.htm); [www.ninjamarketing.it/2008/02/15/alixir-food-lounge-il-gusto-di-vivere-meglio/](http://www.ninjamarketing.it/2008/02/15/alixir-food-lounge-il-gusto-di-vivere-meglio/); and <http://creabrand.ning.com/profiles/blogs/842444:BlogPost:1504>



**Alixir Interactive kiosk to profile a visitor's body type; the visitor then carries this profile to the chef's bar, on a smart card**



**Alixir chef's bar where people are served sample food preparations as per their body type, while having an informative dialogue with the chef**

## Samsung

The 'Samsung Experience' flagship stores are touch-points where experiences are sold for free. These stores do not offer any products on sale. They are set up to give people the possibility to spend time interfacing with various emotional and interactive experiences presented through Samsung's technologies. One of the main purpose of this store is to create an emotional connect between the customer and the technologies.

The manager at one of these stores describes it as 'selling the dream of using the product, not selling the product', calling the Samsung experience a 'living, breathing commercial'.

The experience has helped convert various visitors into Samsung customers, who follow up their experience at the flagship store with a purchase at another conventional store.

**Note:** The Samsung experience is one of the first completely dedicated and bold move by any corporate towards experiential retail. Fast becoming an ideal case study, there are various sites documenting information on this:

<http://pages.samsung.com/us/experience/>; and

[http://blog.brandexperienancelab.org/experience\\_manifesto/2004/10/i\\_got\\_to\\_spend\\_.html](http://blog.brandexperienancelab.org/experience_manifesto/2004/10/i_got_to_spend_.html)

## Future Possibilities

It is becoming almost inevitable to merge the two worlds we inhabit – the real, physical and the soft, virtual. Since the virtual world is linked to technologies that develop at a faster pace than the real world, the merger brings about the possibility of evolving our surrounding environments and solving many needs and problems which are relevant to the real physical world by integrating virtual realms, where the same problems are non-existent, and vice versa.

Experiential retail is a capable means of offering enriching, meaningful and customised experiences at the touch-points of any brand. It makes deeper connects with customers, increases brand recall, pushes purchase intent higher than any other means, adds to the conversational capital associated with a brand, increasing WOMM in the process. In the near future, the appeal and relevance of experiential retail will cut across age, gender and cultural divides, addressing the global audience across Generation C *and* the newly born Generation Z.

In a short summation, participatory and augmented experiences are the beginning of a whole new chapter in retail and visual merchandising, promising enriched, engaging and meaningful retail experiences of the foreseeable future.

## EXERCISE

1. Which space did Prada pay special attention to, while augmenting their in-store experience? What all did this new space offer to a guest and how?
2. What are the main attractions of the Adidas Mi-Innovation Centre? Where is this store located?
3. What was the central concept behind the development of the Alixir temporary store? How did the in-store installations convey the message experientially?
4. Why is the Samsung Experience unique in its consumer experience?

## VM Speaks



**Name:** Gagan Khanna

**Present Designation:** VM Manager | GCC Countries

**Company's name:** Shoe Mart, Landmark Group

**Location:** Dubai, UAE

A graduate in fashion and lifestyle from NIFT, he has received the 'Best Designer' award. Gagan has worked with prestigious European, Gulf and Indian retailers including the UK based retailer, Marks & Spencer. He has credited for up to 300 per cent increase in sales through VM initiatives and is associated with premiere institutes like the NIFT, Mudra Institute of Communication Ahmedabad, and the Retailers Association of India through seminars

and workshops on retail design and visual merchandising.

### What led you to pursue a career in visual merchandising?

**Gagan:** Being creative, I look for newness in every assignment that I undertake. Visual merchandising is a unique profession which offers just that. No matter which product or service you work with, VM has an unlimited scope. It never gets mundane that way!

### What is the typical process you go through for implementing a window display?

**Gagan:** I personally do not follow any one typical scientific process for implementing a window display. However, I ensure that the end-product appeals to the target customer and pushes selling. Sometimes, I take the lifestyle of the target customer as the theme or, at other times, it may be the unique features of a product. Often, I find an interesting raw material to work with and work the displays around it. So there is always more than one way. In my view, it is important to keep the process flexible as this helps to be original. One process mostly leads to one type of result, which might be counter-creative.

### Where does India stand today when one talks of displays and where do you see the future of window display going?

**Gagan:** I think potential of visual merchandising as a selling-aid is yet to be tapped fully in India. In my experience, profitable displays generally do not need as much money as they need advance planning. Displays need to be planned as early as planning the product in a business cycle of any retailer. VM needs to be integrated into other business processes at all times for it to be really effective. As the Indian market evolves in future, window displays would function more as a store-level marketing tool, which would be more cost-effective than other similar media.

# VM–Resource Guide

## ONE APPENDIX

In order to stay ahead of the ever-increasing competition and, more significantly, to draw customers inside their stores/shops, retailers constantly need new ideas on merchandising and display. And, while no single book or website may contain *all* the information related to VM, there are plenty of resources from which visual merchandisers can adapt skills, techniques and tips, to suit their specific retail needs. Listed here, for ready reference, are a few of the finest websites, magazines and trade shows related to VM:

### WEBSITES

- **[www.ddimagazine.com](http://www.ddimagazine.com)**

Some of the best features of *Display and Design Ideas*, another magazine-cum-website, include industry news, special reports and store reviews. The Buyer's Guide is an especially rich resource for merchandising materials – it spans 17 categories, ranging from ceilings and fixtures to lighting, signage/graphics and wall coverings.

- **[www.retailindustry.about.com](http://www.retailindustry.about.com)**

Vast and comprehensive, this is a clearinghouse for websites with almost everything to do with merchandising and display – the latest news, tools, trends, statistics, trade information, research and innovation. When you enter the site, you'll see a box on the upper

right-hand side where you can leave your email address for free news and retail industry.' In addition, on the homepage, the 'Must Reads' menu offers reports, articles and other interesting information on the retail industry.

- **www.studioatomium.com**

A ready-reckoner on the Indian retail industry, this website also helps VM professionals in using the scientific tools of retail – from merchandise presentation manuals, to store planning and management. Readers can also subscribe to its VM newsletter, *Think Tank*. Best yet, it is perhaps the only site which offers an online course on visual merchandising, along with display solutions and training programs for corporate and store staff.

- **www.visualstore.com**

The website for *Visual Merchandising and Store Design* magazine features new retail stores (photographic display) and provides information on where to find the best mannequins, fixtures, lighting, props, and the like. And, for those seeking books on retail merchandising, this website is also linked to its affiliated bookstore, ST Publications.

- **www.whizbangtraining.com**

Founded by Bob and Susan Negen, who combine over 35 years' on-the-floor experience as highly trained retail professionals, WhizBang! Training offers street-smart marketing ideas, sophisticated technical retail skills and tips to run your retail business.

## MAGAZINES

- **Display and Design Ideas (DDI)**

*DDI* covers all facets of retail – from luxury and specialty stores, to discount and dollar stores. Product category coverage ranges from flooring, lighting, surfacing and fixturing, to signage and graphics, visual props and décor, mannequins and in-store technology. This tabloid-sized magazine is loaded with full-colour photos of new stores and display products and is the best place to source merchandising materials. For subscription information, go to [www.ddimagazine.com](http://www.ddimagazine.com)

- **Point-of-Purchase (POP)**

*POP* updates the industry helping them explore brand communication options at retail. It covers the in-store activities of brands, retail promotions, review of POP products, consumer behaviour and various resources relating to vendor contact details and new products. It provides a common communication platform that encourages knowledge transactions between the various interest groups such as brand marketers, retailers, POP/signage producers and design agencies in the Indian POP industry. For magazine subscription, go to [www.vjmediaworks.com/PoP](http://www.vjmediaworks.com/PoP)

- **Visual Merchandising and Retail Design (VMRD)**

*VMRD* is India's only magazine on VM and retail design. A bi-monthly that was launched in September 2005, VM&RD underscores the best there is to the systematic art of creating a complete retail experience. Each issue of the magazine focuses on all aspects of retail design and visual merchandising in the context of branded shopping environment. To inquire about the magazine and subscriptions, go to [www.vjmediaworks.com](http://www.vjmediaworks.com)



- **Visual Merchandising and Store Design (VMSD)**

VMSD is the leading resource for retail designers and store display professionals, serving the retail industry since 1869 (then called *Display World*). It showcases the latest store designs and visual presentations, presents merchandising strategies and new products, and reports on industry news and events. A good resource with plentiful ideas, this magazine can be accessed at [www.vmsd.com](http://www.vmsd.com)

## TRADE SHOWS

- **GlobalShop**

This is where retailers and brand managers go to find retail design, in-store marketing, and technology solutions. Whether you're an apparel company who wants to buy the newest POP display fixtures, a restaurant concerned about creating a memorable dining atmosphere, or a museum looking for lighting that will illuminate the artwork, GlobalShop has it all. Receive advice from industry professionals on how to refine your visual displays and optimise your space, making it more functional and profitable. The biggest visual merchandising show in the United States, GlobalShop is actually six shows under one roof: architectural millwork, countertop fixturing, extrusions, fixtures, shelving, and showcases. To be a part of GlobalShop 2010, in Las Vegas, you may have to first visit [www.globalshop.org](http://www.globalshop.org)

## IN-STORE ASIA

On the lines of GlobalShop, In-Store Asia is organised by VJ Media Works Pvt. Ltd. which is a media company with interests in publishing and industry events related to marketing communications and retail businesses. The company already owns three established publishing brands, Point-of-Purchase, Outdoor Advertising and VM & RD, targeted at the In-Store Marketing fraternity, Out-Of-Home advertising community and retail design, and VM industry in the country respectively. The magazine concepts also extend to on-ground events in the form of In-Store Asia (the exclusive show on Marketing-at-Retail), OAC Asia (Outdoor Advertising Convention) and DSA (Digital Signage Asia) under the banner of ThoughtShows & Events Pvt. Ltd. To know more, log on to <http://www.instoreasia.org/index.html>



# VM–Career Options

## TWO APPENDIX

Visual merchandising is a comparatively new career field which has sprung up with the growing popularity of window and floor displays. Visual merchandisers can find employment with departmental stores, fashion boutiques, shopping malls, event management companies, etc. Often, they are engaged as window display artists, shop floor managers, and so on. VM professionals can also freelance at exhibitions, trade shows, and other seasonal or thematic retail events. Other career options include being production coordinator, quality control supervisor, fashion retailer, etc. Quite simply, the scope is immense for VM professionals.

In India, according to retail business analysts, the average spending on POS and merchandising displays in the organised retailing sector is Rs.1000 per square foot – and Rs.11,00,000 crore, including the unorganised sector. Furthermore, multi-brand retail formats (hypermarkets) are accruing an annual growth rate of 35 per cent – indicating the bright prospects for VM professionals with skills/experience in designing effective store layouts and displays in particular, and retail communication in general.

Foraying into this field depends purely on the individual's areas of interest, personality and temperament. However, the key attribute of a visual merchandiser is his/her willingness to interact with customers and their needs. Equally important is the ability to imagine and innovate.

While the options for a career in VM are virtually limitless, listed here are some related fields:

- **Trade Show/Exhibition design:** This skill is about showcasing merchandise or products but within a limited space. The display can be theme-based or basic in terms of product representation. In this field, visual merchandisers largely focus on lighting and other finer aspects of interior design.
- **Food presentation:** People first eat with their eyes. What looks good will most likely taste good! With newer cuisines and finer restaurants, wining and dining is breaking interesting ground. Food industry professionals, and more so chefs, are focusing on the very presentation of food – be it décor, lighting, display, design or even the art of serving.
- **Product styling:** Films, commercials, magazines, catalogues and the like require stylists. Adherence to a specific look or theme is necessary, as is the understanding of lighting (for photo-shoots). Stylists are the VM professionals who add visual appeal to merchandise, making it look so good that viewers/customers go and get it!
- **Wedding planners:** Weddings, even birthdays, anniversaries, and charity affairs are very well-organised and cater to both the occasion and the audience. So, while every host wants the celebration to be unique and memorable, every VM professional wants to display the very best of his/her art and science.
- **Special events:** A ‘Miss World’ pageant, cricket match, Olympics, fashion shows – are some well-known examples of special events. And it is the display professional who transforms these already large events/occasions into larger-than-life experiences!
- **Malls:** Perhaps the most popular retail format among all age groups, the mall tells many a ‘storey’ at the same time! And, for such displays to be effective, they have to be enhanced and exaggerated. Designing these huge promotional spaces for customers and window shoppers is a challenge to say the least!
- **Store planning:** Although this field calls for a little more training and experience, it offers a sea scope for VM professionals. Designing everything for a store – beginning with the facade and window display, to the aisle space and check out counters – store planners can display any and all their skills.
- **POS:** Point-of-Sale designing again is contemporary and, hence, popular among VM artists. However, it necessitates a good knowledge of material and design aesthetics.

# VM–Resumé and Portfolio

## THREE APPENDIX

### RESUMÉ

Like any other professional, a visual merchandiser would require a resumé to best represent his/her education, experience and expertise. A well-planned and well-written resumé may not get you best of the jobs in the industry but can surely get you the call for the interview.

A resumé can be written in a very standard way or in an individual's imaginative style. Never undervalue the power of a neatly formatted and presented resumé. While the length of a resumé may vary depending on the experience and accomplishments, it is recommended to keep it short and to-the-point. A resumé should carry the following information:

1. Name, address and updated contact details
2. Email address and website (if any)
3. Work experience – in the order of jobs and designations held
4. About yourself – key attributes, especially design oriented
5. Education details – with details of academic institutions
6. Special skills – languages known, computer skills (preferably related to VM), etc.

If the application is for an opportunity abroad, it is advisable to provide passport and VISA details (expiry date, etc.).

## **PORTFOLIO**

A portfolio is, literally, a portable case to hold material – be it sketches (store layouts), photographs (displays done), advertisements (special events) or drawings (mnemonics, signage) – in short, all things demonstrating the proven proficiency of a VM professional.

An individual's portfolio should present his/her best and most innovative work; that is exactly what an employer expects to see. Most importantly, it should contain recommendation/appreciation letters (if any).

Be it a chic leather bag or an inexpensive plastic folder – the contents of a portfolio should be neatly and simply presented. It is best to avoid portfolios stored on a CD/pen-drive, to eliminate any technical error while viewing the same.

This well-designed presentation/brochure is a must for all VM professionals – be it a fresh design graduate, an established visual merchandiser, or a freelance style consultant. Not surprisingly, a well laid out portfolio may well get the job.



# Glossary

## **Abstract mannequin**

A highly stylised and usually non-featured mannequin, devoid of wig and/or make-up details. Though based on lifelike measurements and proportions, the shape and sculpting is not realistic and strives, instead, for a decorative and non-objective effect. A female, male or child mannequin that is ageless, non-ethnic, non-specific and can be finished in a variety of decorative or metallic colours.

## **Acrylic**

A glassy thermoplastic; can be cast and moulded, or used in coatings and adhesives. Often used as a substitute for glass.

## **A-line**

A dress or skirt silhouette that is narrower at the top, flaring gently wider toward the bottom thereby resembling the letter A. Works well on most figure types; good for disguising bottom-heavy figures. Shape of a dress made popular by Christian Dior during the 1950s.

## **Aisle**

An aisle is, in general, a space to walk, with rows of seats on either side or with rows of seats on one side and a wall on the other. Aisles can be seen in certain types of buildings

such as **churches**, **cathedrals**, **synagogues**, meeting **halls**, **parliaments** and **legislatures**, **courtrooms**, **theatres** and in certain types of passenger vehicles. Aisles can also be seen in **shops**, **warehouses** and **factories**, where they have shelving on either side (rather than seats). In warehouses and factories, aisles may comprise storage palettes (often separating work areas in factories). In **health clubs**, **exercise equipment** is usually arranged in aisles.

**Anchor store, draw tenant, anchor tenant or key tenant**

One of the larger (or the largest) stores in a mall/shopping complex. It, as the name suggests, is the store that is expected to draw footfalls or work as an anchor for the mall – which would ultimately lead to business for all the other stores as well. It is usually a departmental store or a major retail chain store. Grocery stores are the most common type of anchor store, as they are frequented often and customers do not switch grocery stores very frequently. However, as per global research on consumer behaviour, most trips to the grocery store do not result in visits to surrounding shops. Increasingly, malls are looking at more than one anchor store.

**Angled window**

Similar to the parallel-to-sidewalk window but are angled to feature more displays in less space.

**Ankle rod**

The short, upright bar that extends up from the floor base and inserts into the fitting above the mannequin's ankle. It is the usual way of keeping male mannequins upright and is also desirable for female mannequins that wear pants. It is almost invisible and usually doesn't require the opening of any seams for the insertion of the supporting rod. See: Foot Spike. (*Source*: Martin M. Pegler)

**Ankle socks**

Ankle-length socks, usually white in colour and made of cotton or wool, mostly worn with sports shoes.

**Ankle straps**

Part of a shoe (usually open shoes or sling-backs) used to secure the foot inside the shoe.

**Appliqué**

Ornamental pieces of fabric that are either sewn or glued onto another fabric, in a specific design or pattern, by way of decoration.

**Articulated forms or mannequins**

Forms similar to, or the life-size variations of, the wooden artist's mannequins that can be repositioned into myriad human poses. Forms or mannequins with articulated or movable joints (elbows, wrists, knees, hips, etc.), that can be swivelled or turned in different directions. (*Source*: Martin M. Pegler)

**Ascot**

Men's neckwear, made popular during the mid-19th century. Considered part of formal dressing, the ascot was also adapted as part of women's clothing during the mid-20th century.

**Assortment**

A retailer's selection of merchandise, it includes both the depth and the breadth of products. It is also known as merchandise assortment or product assortment.

**Audio-visual displays**

Displays designed with computerised electronic devices (video and/or audio) to provide shoppers with communication they can 'see' and/or hear. Relatively expensive, they are used where the information is rather specific or complicated.

**Awning**

A canopy or sunshade which shields from, or helps avoid, direct sunlight. An awning can be used for a display window or at the store entrance.

**Banners**

Colourful pieces of fabric, plastic or flex – usually with holes punched on top – used as attention-getting decorative devices outside and inside the retail setting. They are often rectangular in shape.

**Ballerina skirt**

A type of gown or dress, it reaches up to the mid-calf or above-ankle in length.

**Batik**

A printing technique; wax is applied to certain areas of the cloth to create a design or motif. It is very popular in the Far East especially in Bali, Indonesia.

**Bikini cut**

A female mannequin with a removable leg; the break or cut line is close to the pubis area and, thus, is successfully hidden by the bottom of a bikini swimsuit. It makes for a more natural look to display abbreviated swimwear, sportswear and lingerie. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Bill of lading**

Also referred to as a BOL or B/L, it is a document issued by a carrier to a shipper, acknowledging that specified goods/shipment have been received on board as cargo for conveyance to a named place for delivery. It is a receipt given to the shipper or sender of goods by a transport company or carrier.

**Bin**

A container or an open-box to hold products or merchandise; mostly seen in-store and especially during a 'Sale'. It can vary in size, shape, and proportion and can be made of cardboard, plastic, wood, etc. Bins can be grouped together to hold a variety of products.

**Blouse form**

An armless, headless, and bust-defined form that ends just below the waistline. It may be equipped with an adjustable up-and-down rod and a decorative base. It is used to display ladies' blouses, sweaters and jackets. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Body trunk**

A torso form, sometimes male, (also called the torso form or trunk form) which starts above the waistline and continues downwards to end just below the knees. It is used to display walking shorts, underwear, swimwear, etc. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Booking programme**

A vendor booking programme provides an opportunity to view new products and samples. Retailers can preview/look at the products at an earlier date – and place an order for delivery of that merchandise at a later date.

**Boutiques**

Circa 1920s, and were originally small shops within couture houses.

**Bow tie**

A man's necktie, shaped like a little bow, usually black in colour. It is generally part of formal dress code, like the tuxedo.

**Bra**

Short form for brassiere. See brassiere.

**Bra form**

A headless and armless bust form, with or without shoulders, which ends just below the bust line.

**Brasellele form**

A bra form that ends at the hips, rather than below the bust line or at the waistline. It can also be used to display lingerie (slip, etc.). (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Brassiere**

No one knows exactly who invented the brassiere, but it dates back to the early 1900s. In 1914, Mary Phelps Jacob patented a design, in the United States, for a brassiere. It was made of two handkerchiefs and a narrow ribbon.

**Break-even point**

It is the point of no profit and no loss. This is the point where the sales equal the expenses. A break-even point is usually part of an estimate drawn before a business is set up.

**Brick and mortar**

A store with a physical presence, as opposed to the virtual stores on the Internet. These days most retailers have a brick and mortar presence as well as an online store.

**Building a display**

Arranging and putting together items of merchandise or sample products so as to showcase the same.

**Business plan**

No business is started/should be started without this. A business plan is a detailed document describing the financial and operational objectives of a company. In retail, a business plan needs to clearly specify the kind of retail – in terms of products, size of the outlets, pricing, and the target group it wants to attract, among other things.

**Butt fitting**

A square, hollow metal tube with a setscrew that is set into the bottom part of a mannequin or its upper thigh. It accommodates the butt rod which angles up from the metal, glass or plastic mannequin base to hold the mannequin erect. See: Butt Rod. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Butt rod**

A square metal rod that extends up, at an angle, from the base of a mannequin. The metal end then fits into a square opening, equipped with a setscrew, on the bottom or upper thigh of the mannequin. The butt rod, when secured in place, keeps the mannequin upright in the position it was meant to hold. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**CAD**

A technical term, it is the acronym for ‘computer aided design’ – used by architects, engineers and 3D artists to visualise and manipulate objects or spatial environments while designing. One of the most popular of these programs is AutoCAD by AutoDesk, sometimes referred to as computer assisted design.

**Carton**

A box or container usually made of bendable board (cardboard or corrugated material) that may contain products like shirts, tops, belts, wallets, etc.

**Circular windows**

A non-traditional window used to display merchandise; it is usually used to individualise the image of a retailer.

**Cash discount**

It indicates a percentage reduction in price.

**Cash flow**

It indicates availability of cash. This, in turn, is an outcome of the movement of money in and out of a business.

**Cash register**

A machine that records customer transactions, it is used to record, total, accept payment and make changes related to customer transactions.

**Cash-on-delivery**

Payment made by the customer, for the merchandise, at the time of delivery, instead of up-front.

**Catalogue**

A listing of items for sale – usually with descriptive price and product details – arranged in an electronic format, paper pamphlet or book. It is used to facilitate orders, either by a retailer from a vendor, or by a customer from a retailer.

**Category killer**

It is, as the name indicates, a retail chain store that is very dominant in its product category. It has a vast selection of merchandise in its specific category and the prices are so low vis-à-vis competition that smaller retail outlets and chains find it difficult to compete.

**Chain stores**

These are retail outlets, usually corporate owned businesses, that share brands and central management, often with standardised business methods and practices, and these may include stores, restaurants and some service-oriented businesses.

**Claw hammer**

It is used to hammer nails as well as remove nails and other fasteners.

**Colourise**

To display merchandise by colour, hue or intensity; also known as colour blocking.

**Comparable-store sales or comp sales**

As is commonly known, it is used to compare sales of retail stores that have been in business for a year or more. It is a measure of productivity in revenue. Historical sales data allows retailers to compare revenues on a year-on-year or month-on-month basis.

**Combo-pack**

A sales promotion technique, it calls for two or more different but related items to be packed and promoted together. Examples: a shirt and a tie, or a deodorant and an after shave lotion.

**Computerised inventory system**

A computer program that tracks inventory and, sometimes, creates automated replenishment orders.

**Contribution margin**

Indicates the difference between total variable costs and the total sales revenue. It is generally expressed as a percentage and is applied to a product line.

**Convert to sale**

Turn a browsing customer into a buyer.

**Cost of goods sold**

The price paid for the product, plus any additional costs necessary to get the merchandise into inventory and ready for sale, including shipping and handling.

**Coupon**

A coupon is a printed slip offering a certain discount which can be redeemed when purchasing goods and services for a specific retailer. Sometimes they offer a discount on all the products, and at other times they can be used only for the purchase of specific products or while buying products above a certain price point/total bill.

**CRM**

An acronym for 'customer relationship management', it denotes how the focus of customer relationship management is on increasing customer satisfaction and, thereby, increasing customer loyalty. Happy and loyal customers are the biggest contributors to sales and profitability.

**Cross merchandising**

Several different products that are related in us but may be produced by different manufacturers are shown together in a display or fixture, such as shirt, trouser, belt, shoes and tie. By displaying the products together, the customer is likely to buy all/both the products at the same time.



**Customer involvement**

It refers to displays and fixtures that induce customer interaction. Examples: pressing buttons, turning dials (body shape/size chart), physically touching or moving something or lifting out a brochure, etc.

**Daily walk-through**

Maintenance of store displays – an everyday task for every visual merchandiser, in every area assigned to him/her. Before the stores open, VM staff walk through their assigned areas, fix and fluff the displays (handled by customers), and, in this way, ensure that each display begins the day with a fresh look.

**Depth of assortment**

Also known as product depth, it refers to the number of styles or brands and variety within a product line, or the classification of merchandise.

**Destination store**

A destination store can be defined as a store to which a consumer usually makes a special trip to, to purchase a specific product. The rate of conversion from footfalls to actual purchase is comparatively higher in destination stores.

**Digital signage**

In simple terms, it means signage that uses modern technology as against the traditional signage formerly used by brands and retailers. Digital signage is far more attractive, more targeted, and more interactive than traditional signage with static images and messages.

**Distressed goods**

These are items that have been damaged or soiled; also known as returns, clearance, liquidation dispensers. A POP card, sign or unit that includes a coupon pad or booklet or brochure holder or a displayer/fixture that holds some merchandise that the shopper can remove from the unit.

**Dressmaker form**

A dress form used by designers, tailors, seamstresses, etc. to fit garments while working, to try out designs or patterns. It is available in a variety of dress sizes and can also be customised for specific bust, waist and hip measurements. The dressmaker form is often seen on a wire basket-like structure supported on an ornate cast-iron base, with or without casters. It is usually associated with custom-made and designer fashion. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Dummy**

Reference for a mannequin; most commonly used to describe the headless, legless and armless upholstered dressmaker form. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**End caps**

An additional table or container, an extension surface or bin at the end of a stocking fixture, such as a shelf or display at the end of a gondola facing the traffic aisle.

**Fabric samples**

Small pieces of fabric, representing different types of fabrics/materials; also known as swatches.

**Façade**

It is the face or front of a store or mall. It reflects the image of the store or brand, as it offers the first impression to passers by.

**Facing**

The number of similar products (or same SKU) facing out toward the customer. Facings are used in planograms, and also when zoning a retail store.

**Face out**

A garment, handbag, book, etc. displayed with its front facing the customer. Face-out presentation has proven to attract customer attention and increase sales.

**Fashion**

The prevailing manner in dressing, behaving, and living, at a given time or place.

**Feature**

Details and aspects of a product that describe or set it apart from similar other products.

**Fibre content**

Percentage of a particular fibre present in a fabric. Example: 20 per cent linen and 80 per cent cotton.

**FIFO**

'First in, first out' method of stock rotation in which the goods that were received first are sold first.

**Flexible pricing**

A method of selling, wherein customers are able to bargain with the retailers.

**Floor pyramid**

A four-sided build-up of product boxes, cartons or containers on the selling floor that diminishes in width on each side as the pile rises up to resemble a pyramid.

**Foot bracket**

A sandal-strap-like device attached to a flange or base, usually made of a clear plastic material. It will accept and hold a leg form or pantyhose form in an upright position. It may also resemble a cup. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Foot spike**

A short metal rod that extends upwards from the base of the metal, glass or plastic mannequin, and insets into the matching square fitting, with a setscrew, midway between the heel and the calf of the mannequin leg. It supports and holds the mannequin upright, but can interfere with the use of hosiery or pants.

**Forecasting**

It refers to predictions or estimates made, usually in terms of future sales or trends.

**Form**

A headless mannequin, specifically a 3-D representation of a part or parts of the human anatomy – torso, bust, shoulder to waist, hips to ankles, etc. See: blouse form, bra form, coat form, dress form and torso form. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Forms, articulated**

They forms are similar to, or are life-size variations of, the wooden artist's mannequins that can be repositioned into myriad human poses. These forms or mannequins have articulated or movable joints (elbows, wrists, knees, hips, etc.), that can be swivelled or turned in different directions. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Forward stock**

Merchandise that is kept on the selling floor.

**Freestanding store**

A retail outlet that stands by itself and is not attached to a mall or shopping centre.

**Frequent shopper programme**

It refers to customer rewards, usually in the form of discounts, awards or perks based on their shopping patterns. This scheme/plan is designed to promote customer loyalty and visit frequency.

**Fuller figure**

It is a larger sized mannequin for a plumper, fuller figure. The female form wears a size 14½ and, depending on its pose, stands about 5' 9" tall. The bust, waist and hips, as well as the arms, legs and head, are proportioned to suit the half-size garment. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Gross margin**

It is the difference between the actual price of merchandise and the price at which it sells.

**Gross margin return on investment**

It is a measure of inventory productivity. It expresses the relationship between money invested in the inventory, the total sales and the gross profit margin earned on the sales.

**Gift vouchers/certificates**

A certificate or card usually made of paper, given by a store/shop to its customers; can be redeemed for a specific value at that particular store/shop.

**Girdle form**

Usually a lightweight, 3-D form, flesh-coloured from waist to toes. It is used toes up and waist as the base, or upright with the toe set into a foot bracket. It may also be used to show stretch tights and slacks. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Glass base plate**

A heavy piece of glass, equipped with a metal plate or flange and an extending rod, used to support a mannequin. The base-plate can be of almost any shape and is usually about 18" wide. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Glass eyes**

Large, artificial, but extremely realistic eyes, which fit into the hollowed-out eye sockets of a mannequin; usually made to be positioned so as to look to the right, left, straight ahead, up or down so as to appear to make eye-contact with other mannequins in a grouping. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Glove hand**

An accessory to a mannequin – replacing the regular hand that joins the arm at the wrist or a separate entity – designed to wear gloves. The finger arrangement facilitates the putting on and taking off of gloves, and yet presents them in a graceful manner. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Glue gun**

An electrical tool where a plastic resin (glue) is melted and used as an adhesive while the plastic resin is still hot. It is the most favoured adhesive of visual merchandisers.

**Gondola**

A long, flat-bottomed merchandise container with straight, upright sides, usually designed to hold adjustable shelves and may be combined with cabinets or storage areas below. There can be a centre-divider panel (perpendicular and equidistant to the ends), which then makes the gondola double-sided with shelves on either side. Gondolas are commonly used in groups on the selling floor and oriented towards aisles. They are largely used for trousers.

**Grouping**

Two or more mannequins designed, arranged or positioned to be together and create a situation or semblance of belonging in the same place at the same time. Mannequins proportioned and posed to be used together. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Hang tag**

A label provided by the manufacturer, describing the merchandise. Or a hanging price-tag used for garments, purses and similar other merchandise.

**Hard lines**

Product lines largely comprising merchandise such as hardware, houseware, automotive, electronics and sporting goods, health and beauty aids, or toys.

**Hard tag**

A re-usable EAS (Electronic Article Surveillance) tag, which is detached/removed from merchandise at the point of sale. It can be re-used for other merchandise. EAS tags are primarily used for apparels.

**Headless mannequin**

A complete, lifelike mannequin that ends at the neck. Sometimes, the neck is straight or flat cut, or it may end in a fanciful swirl. Either way, the decapitated form is a full-size, full-scale, non-personalised representation. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Hyper mart**

An extremely large, self-service, retail outlet with the appearance of a warehouse.

**Impulse items**

Those items or pieces of merchandise that get attention and are purchased on impulse – spur of the moment – rather than on purpose or plan. They draw upon the spontaneous appeal created by seeing merchandise, sometimes in relation to other pieces of merchandise.

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**Inventory**

Merchandise available with a retailer is known as inventory. Inventory-taking refers to taking stock of the available merchandise or supplies.

**Inventory turnover**

An important indicator of a retailer's success, it refers to the number of times an average inventory-on-hand is sold and replaced during a given period of time.

**Island display**

A merchandise presentation or fixture that can be approached from all the sides. It gives the shopper access to the merchandise from any side.

**Junior mannequin**

This refers to mannequin size rather than age. It is often posed and made-up as a young, active woman. Depending on the style of pose, make-up and wig, the junior mannequin can be a college freshman, young executive, or a sophisticated, mature lady. It wears a size 7 dress and averages about 5' 8" in height. Hip, bust and waist measurements may vary as per the manufacturer and fashion trends. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Junior petite**

A special sized and type of mannequin which, depending on the manufacturer, wears a size 5 or 7 and is about 5' 5" tall. It is often made-up and posed as the super-annuated, freckled and braided, saucy and perky teenager. Yet, with the right pose, make-up and wig, it can represent a smaller woman. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Kiosk**

In retail terminology, a kiosk is a small stand-alone structure used as a POP. Usually found in locations with high footfall, like malls, they also make for a full-fledged retail store in a small format, or can be a stall or booth providing information or demonstration.

**Layaway**

It is the act of storing merchandise for a customer to purchase at a later date. The merchandise is stored against the payment of a deposit amount.

**Like-store sales**

Sales money generated by only those stores that have been open for over a year and have historical data to compare a year's sales to the same time frame in the previous year. Also called comp store sales, comparable store sales, same-store sales.

**Loss leader**

A loss leader refers to the specific merchandise, sold by retailers, at a cost lower than the actual cost. The purpose of this strategy is to attract customers to the stores – who may then end up buying products and merchandise that is profitable for the retailer.

**Loss prevention**

This refers to action taken to reduce the amount of theft and shrinkage within the store/business. It is very critical in retail as such shrinkage leads to a heavy loss for the retailer.

**Mail order retailing**

It refers to the sale of goods and services to customers through the mail.

**Maintained mark-up**

The final mark-up on an item based on the actual selling price.

**Mall**

A combination of many stores, designed to serve a large geographical area.

**Make-up**

Body and facial colouring; the mannequin type or image as personalised by artwork. It may refer to the colour and artwork used on the lips, cheeks and around the eyes. It can be the subtle or dramatic use of rouge, mascara and lipstick; or the enhancement of facial sculpture. It is done through brushwork, blending or sharpness of line and colour. (*Source: Martin M. Pegler*)

**Mannequins**

Stylised plastic, wood, fibreglass, plaster, metal or glass representations of human form used for displays.

**Mannequin, abstract**

A highly stylised and usually non-featured mannequin, devoid of wig and/or make-up details. Though based on lifelike measurements and proportions, the shape and sculpting is not realistic and strives, instead, for a decorative and non-objective effect. A female, male or child mannequin that is ageless, non-ethnic, non-specific and can be finished in a variety of decorative or metallic colours.

**Mannequin, custom**

A mannequin sculpted-to-order for a particular product/retail customer, it could be a special head (used on an existing bodyline), or an all-new form (to express an image or look). It may also refer to very individualised make-up, finish glaze or texture. (*Source: Martin M. Pegler*)

**Mannequin, ethnic**

A mannequin realistically portrayed with the skin tone and body and facial physiognomy of a particular ethnic group. (*Source: Martin M. Pegler*)

**Mannequin, realistic**

A full, round sculpted form – not abstract – resembling a particular type and size of woman, man or child, in terms of face, pose and proportion. (*Source: Martin M. Pegler*)

**Mannequin, semi-abstract**

An abstract or highly stylised mannequin, which may suggest, through sculpting or artwork, a face or resemblance to a particular type of individual. At times, it is a mannequin with sculptured features but no make-up or tonal qualities. (*Source: Martin M. Pegler*)

**Margin**

The margin is the amount of gross profit made when an item is sold.

**Mark-up**

The percentage added to the cost of an item/product to arrive at its retail selling price is called the mark-up.



**Mark-down**

A mark-down is the planned reduction in the selling price of an item/product. Usually it is for a limited period of time, or only made available on a specific date.

**Market segmentation**

The process of dividing the total market into smaller sections based on shared characteristics.

**Marketing calendar**

This is a tool used not only by retailers but also by other businesses. It shows which events are happening in which location and on which dates.

**Market research**

It refers to the investigation, gathering, recording and analysis of data pertinent to a specific item of merchandise or a retail issue.

**Martin M Pegler**

A leading authority on store design and visual merchandising, Martin M Pegler has worked as a designer/manufacturer/display person/store planner and consultant during his 40 years in the business. For long a champion of excellence in store design, he has lectured on the subject for industry and small business groups, at shopping centers and chains nationwide and internationally. He is the author of *Café's and Coffee Shops*, *Stores of the Year*, *Store Windows*, and *Streetscapes*. In addition, he teaches store planning and visual merchandising at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City.

**Merchandise mix**

Also known as product assortment; indicates the entire range of products stored and/or sold by retailers.

**Minimum advertised price**

It is that specified amount decided by the supplier, below which resellers are not allowed to quote. Minimum advertised price can include a reseller's retail price.

**Mockshop**

A virtual reality tool that helps build interactive 3D stores of any size and designs perfect shop-floor layouts by simply dragging and dropping virtual fixtures, garments and graphics.

*The authors could be contacted for more information about this software.*

**Model stock plan**

It is a plan for maintaining adequate merchandise on hand.

**Multiple-pricing**

This refers to the sale of two or more of the same items/products at a unit price that is lower than the unit price if only one item/product is purchased.

**Mystery shopping**

This refers to those shoppers (generally hired by the senior management of a retail organisation or a research company) who shop in a store/multiple stores and record their experiences. The scores given by them are then used to improve weak areas in the retail approach.

**No frills retailer**

A retailer whose facilities are minimal and whose prices are low.

**Odd price**

A price just below an even amount, such as Rs.199.95 instead of Rs.200. Odd-even are types of psychological pricing indicating how buyers are more sensitive to certain ending-digits.

**Open-to-buy**

Open-to-buy merchandise is that which has been budgeted for over a certain period of time, and is yet to be ordered.

**Open-back window**

This is a store-front window that is not separated from the rest of the store by a wall. The idea, here, is that the entire store is made visible to consumers/passers by.

**Operating expense**

Not a retail term, it is used in all businesses and indicates the sum of all expenses used for running a business.

**Pennant**

It is a signboard that hangs above the aisle, and contains some information about the prevalent in-store promotion. Always double-sided and standard in size, 1' × 2' (h × w), it is usually mounted on a sun-pack or a flute board so that the false ceiling may hold the lightweight pennant.

**Planogram**

This is a schematic drawing of fixtures that illustrate product placement. Planogram is an architectural term, also called POG, P-O-G, plan-o-gram. It is a diagram/drawing of a store layout, indicating how/where products/product categories will be placed in-store.

**Planogramming**

An inventory control and merchandise display method that allows a retailer to maintain shelf-inventory in an orderly way, so as to improve efficiency and customer service.

**Peg tag**

A tag or sticker with merchandising information on what belongs on a particular shelf or hook in the planogram or display. Also referred to as bin tags, bin labels, peg tags, shelf labels and planogram tags.

**Profit margin**

A ratio of profitability calculated as earnings divided by revenues. It measures how much out of every rupee of sales a retail business actually keeps in earnings.

**Product life cycle (PLC)**

PLC is all about the stages a product goes through – beginning with its launch and onwards. The four main stages of PLC are introduction, growth, maturity and decline.

**Private label**

A private label is a product manufactured by retailer and sold in his/her own stores. Retailers often tie-up with small manufacturers to make such products which are then sold solely in their stores. Private labels, also called store brand or house brand, are owned by

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the product's reseller rather than by its manufacturer. They are often positioned as lower cost alternatives to regional, national or international brands, although some private labels have been positioned as 'premium' brands to compete with existing well-known brands. The term 'private label' is often associated with: (i) Advertised brand versus unadvertised brand (a private brand is most often unadvertised); however, the concept is changing globally, as retailers have also started advertising private labels; and (ii) National brand versus regional brand or local brand; however, in this case too, there are those retail players who have made their private labels a national success.

**Podium**

A platform that is raised above the floor or ground (surrounding) level, in order to give prominence to the mannequin/display placed on it.

**Point on sale (POS)**

POS is used for advertising or promotion done at a store. The term also refers to that area of a store where customers can make the payment for their purchases.

**Product depth**

Also known as product assortment or merchandise depth; indicates the total number of each item or a particular style of a product, available in a shop.

**Product breadth**

It indicates the variety of product lines offered by a retailer or store.

**Point-of-purchase (PoP)**

They are generally used to promote or advertise a product at a retail outlet(s). Usually, PoP displays are placed next to the respective products, and the merchandise being promoted is displayed near the payment counter or at the entrance area of a store.

**Quantity discount**

It is given directly in proportion to the purchases made – the more a customer buys, the lesser the price per unit.

**Rack jobber**

A wholesaler that is allowed or appointed by a store to install, stock and replenish selected items on display racks.

**Receipt of goods (ROG)**

The cash discount period for payment begins with the retailer's receipt of merchandise or goods.

**Referral premium**

A gift awarded to those customers who refer potential new customers.

**Retailing**

Retailing is the selling of products, in small quantities, to the end users.

**Refund**

Money or credit-slips given to customers, generally when they return merchandise. The refund amount is usually equal to the price of the goods being returned.

**Reserve stock**

It refers to merchandise that is stored in an area made inaccessible to customers.

**Retail display allowance (RDA)**

An additional discount, off the cover price of a magazine, offered in order to guarantee an adequate display of the magazine(s). RDA is paid in addition to the normal discount given on the cover price.

**Retail merchandise management system (RMM)**

A system that tracks the performance of merchandise by placing re-orders with good sellers and identifying poor sellers. RMM thus enables buyers to make timely merchandise decisions.

**Retail method**

A method to estimate the cost of an ending inventory on the basis of a rationale of the cost of the goods available for sale, in relation to their retail price.

**RGB**

Red, Green and Blue; three main colours that help create all the other colours on a computer screen.

**Retail price**

The price placed on an item or service available for sale to the consumer.

**Retailer**

An individual or firm that sells goods and services, directly to the customers.

**Retailing**

It refers to the selling of goods and services to the customer.

**Rigging, rig**

Dressing a mannequin or form – the padding, pinning and plumping of merchandise on the inanimate object (mannequin) to make it look and fit better, and to emphasise the best features of the product on display. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Rotate stock**

Stock new merchandise behind old merchandise when filling or arranging a display. In some cases, this also means completely replacing old stock with new stock.

**Shelf talkers**

A dye-cut, scored cardboard, or an acrylic signage holder, or a printed message that extends outwards from a shelf, but is actually attached to the shelf.

**Sales forecast**

It is an estimate of future sales volume done on the basis of current sales figures and information from manufacturers, wholesalers, accountants, economists and bankers.

**Sales floor**

It is that part of the store where goods are displayed and sales transactions take place. Simply put, the area in a store that is accessible to the end customers.

**Sales per square foot of selling space**

Net sales divided by the square feet of selling space.

**Sales promotion**

Method(s) used to generate sales, attract customers to the store, build loyalty, and promote goodwill.

**Salvage goods**

It is that merchandise which has been damaged in transit or during storage.

**Seasonal discount**

A trade discount given to retailers who are willing to order, receive and pay for goods during the 'off season'.

**Seasonal merchandise**

It refers to those products that are in demand especially at a certain time of the year. For example, Christmas or school re-opening time.

**Self-service**

Customers select items from open displays and take them to the cash counter for purchase.

**Shadow box windows**

Used in stores which feature small items such as jewellery, these windows are raised and close-backed, offering customers a clear view of the merchandise.

**Shell form**

A half-round form; usually, a lightweight, plastic bra, blouse, sweater or dress form with a full-dimensional front and a scooped-out back for one-sided merchandise presentation. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Shirt form**

It is the male equivalent of the blouse form. See: blouse form. (*Source:* Martin M. Pegler)

**Shopping mall, shopping centre**

A building or set of buildings containing retail units; it has interconnecting walkways enabling visitors to easily walk from one unit to another.

**Shoplifting**

Shoplifting in retail terms refers to taking merchandise – offered on sale in a store – but without making a payment for the same.

**Shrinkage**

Retail shrinkage is a reduction or loss in inventory due to shoplifting, employee theft, damages, paperwork errors, supplier fraud, etc.

**Store window**

A showcase, usually 8–10 feet high, located in the storefront. Some store windows are 3–4 feet high, and are used to display smaller items. See: parallel-to-sidewalk window; corner window; open back window; angled window.

**Store directory**

A list of all the broad categories of merchandise available in the store, it is placed at convenient locations in-store – at the entrance (where customer first decide which way to go in the store), near the lift (where customers wait awhile), stairs, entry to each floor, etc. rest

room locations are also mentioned in the store directory, for the convenience of customers. Often, it is used to inform customers about the prevalent offers.

**Signage**

This term refers to signs, labels, shelf tags and other identification signs to provide directions, prices, or information on merchandise or policies.

**Silhouette**

An outline of a solid object (as cast by its shadow).

**Stock keeping unit (SKU)**

An identification number assigned to a unique item by the retailer. The SKU may be an internal number to that retailer or may be tied to an item's UPC or EAN.

**Special order**

A customised or one-off order made for a specific customer, usually of a product not included in the normal inventory.

**Specification buying**

A system in which buyers develop product specifications for their purchases, rather than selecting from what is already available in the market.

**Staples**

Products that are constantly in demand and infrequently influenced by fashion changes. Staple goods are products purchased out of necessity. Demand for these products does not change much with fall and rise in prices; however, they generally do not offer a high profit margin.

**Step theory/AIDA**

A view customer decision-making wherein the choice to buy, or not, follows these steps: attention, interest, desire and action.

**Store credit**

A merchandise or store credit is a voucher valid for the purchase of merchandise that is given in lieu of cash.

**Stock turnover**

A measure to determine how quickly particular merchandise is being sold.

**Suggestive selling**

Suggestive selling happens when the salesperson suggests additional items that are related to the original item being purchased. Also known as add-on selling.

**T-stands**

Basic apparel fixtures with posts topped by cross bars.

**Tag pollution**

The act of a live EAS label leaving a store without triggering an EAS alarm (or without detection by the EAS system) and entering another store with an EAS system (causing an undesired alarm).

**Target market**

It is the defined group of consumers which the retailer tries to satisfy.



**Tent-cards**

Small cards folded in half and set on a table, counter or bar, shaped like an inverted 'V'. They usually carry a message on both sides and are self-standing.

**Theme display**

A display designed with an idea or based on a 'story' devised as a selling theme to stimulate the interest of the customer.

**Trade credit**

This is an open account that a retailer maintains with the supplier(s) of goods and services.

**Trade discount**

It is a reduction in the list-price offered by vendors to those who purchase in volumes.

**Trading up**

This term refers to selling wherein a salesperson persuades a customer to buy a more expensive item, or larger quantity of items, than what the customer originally intended.

**Trends**

An ongoing or current style of merchandise; preferred by customers.

**Tri-level round**

An apparel fixture with three face-out arms, or a rounder split into three adjustable sections.

**Trunk show**

This term refers to vendors presenting their merchandise directly to store personnel and/or customers in the store.

**Twig**

A small branch of a departmental store, stocking only one kind of merchandise or several similar lines – versus larger branches in remote locations, or the main (flagship) store.

**Visual merchandising (VM)**

VM is presentation of a store and its merchandise in ways that attract the attention of potential customers. As the term denotes, VM is all about creating visual displays and arranging merchandise assortments within a store. The purpose is to increase footfalls and, thereby, sales through improved layout and presentation and visual appeal. Stores are increasingly focusing on impulse purchase and ease of navigation for customers, while working on the visual merchandising aspect. Window display itself has become a science, with a lot of thought going into what kind of mannequins to use and where to place them!

**Vendor**

A person or company providing merchandise or services to a retail store.

**Visual merchandising guidelines**

A publication generated by the store, giving details about how the store – ranging from the store log, to what type of fixtures to use in each area and what the distance of shelves would be from each other.

**Visual plan**

An actual photograph, a hand-drawn illustration or graphic presentation of a display.

**Waterfall fixture**

A diagonal bracket from which merchandise hangs down, it is tiered and suggests a 'waterfall' effect.

**Wholesale**

The sale of goods in a large quantity to retailers for reselling is called wholesale.

**Wig**

Detachable hairpieces used on the bald mannequin heads. Usually made of synthetic-yet-realistic fibres, they can be arranged into lifelike hairstyles. The more decorative wigs can be made of yarn, rope, papier-mâché, wood shavings, etc. (*Source*: Martin M. Pegler)

**Wig foundation**

This is a skull-cap or bathing cap type of unit to which the fibres of a wig are attached. The foundation fits onto the head of the mannequin and sets and keeps the wig in place. (*Source*: Martin M. Pegler)

**Window schedule**

It is, literally, a schedule of upcoming displays that are to be installed in a store window.

**Windowless window**

This is similar to the open back window, but there is no dais or platform that separates the window from the store. All displays are set on the floor, using props and risers to raise them. This type of window is popular in malls and boutiques, where there is ample store frontage but very limited selling space.

**Word-of-mouth**

A verbal recommendation passed on by satisfied customers, it is also one of the most effective ways of marketing. Viral in nature (spreads very fast), it is far more effective than advertising and promotion because people have more trust in what other people say.

**WYSIWYG**

'What you see is what you get'.

**WYSIWYB**

'What you see is what you buy'.

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