RASCI
Retailers Association's
Skill Council of India

Participant Handbook

Sector
Retail

Sub-Sector
Retail

Occupation
Marketing

Reference ID: **RAS/Q0402, Version 3.0**
NSQF level 4.5

Visual Merchandiser

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Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India

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RETAILERS ASSOCIATION'S SKILL COUNCIL OF INDIA

for

SKILLING CONTENT: PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

Complying to National Occupational Standards of
Job Role/ Qualification Pack: **'Visual Merchandiser'** QP No. **'RAS/Q0402, NSQF Level 4.5'**

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* Valid up to the next review date of the Qualification Pack

Authorised Signatory
(Retailers Association's Skill Council of India)

Acknowledgements

About this book

This participant handbook has been designed to enable training for the specific Qualification Pack (QP). Each National Occupational Standard (NOS) has been covered across units. The key learning objectives for the specific NOS mark the beginning of the units for that NOS. The symbols used in this book have been described below.

A visual merchandiser is responsible for promoting the organization's brand image, products and services by creating or designing attractive windows and in-store displays at the store to draw customers, reducing space, and encouraging purchase decisions, thereby supporting top-line sales. The individual should be meticulous, motivated to learn new things, logical, and result-oriented. He or she must have manual dexterity, right eye for visual quality, and excellent attention to detail. Among others, the individual must have decent communication skills and be able to prioritise tasks. The trainee will enhance his/her knowledge under the trainer's guidance in the following skills:

- **Knowledge and Understanding:** Adequate sales target knowledge and understanding to perform the required task
- **Performance Criteria:** Achieve the required skills via hands-on training and complete the necessary operations within the specified standards
- **Professional Skills:** Ability to make operational decisions related to the area of work

The handbook incorporates the well-defined responsibilities of a visual merchandiser.

Symbols Used

Key Learning Outcomes	Unit Objectives	Exercise	Tips	Notes	Activity	Summary

Practical

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S.No	Modules and Units	Page No

Employability Skills is available at the following location :

https://www.skillindiadigital.gov.in/content/list

Scan the QR code below to access the ebook

1. Introduction

Unit 1.1 - The Retail Industry in India

Unit 1.2 - Role of Visual Merchandiser

Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, the participants will be able to:

1. Sketch an overview of the retail industry
2. Discuss how the Indian retail industry developed over time
3. Summarise basic concepts of the retail industry
4. Describe the role and responsibilities of a visual merchandiser

UNIT 1.1: The Retail Industry in India

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Summarise the current scenario of the retail industry in India
2. Define retail
3. Describe how the Indian retail industry changed over time
4. Classify retail marketing
5. Discuss the importance of retail

1.1.1 Current Economic Scenario – Retail

In this fast-growing world, the retail industry has proved to be one of the most important sectors in the world, as well as the Indian economy. India is the world's fifth-largest global destination in the retail space.

India is expected to become the world's fastest-growing e-commerce market, driven by healthy investments in the sector and a rapid increase in the number of internet users. With the rising need for consumer goods in different sectors, including consumer electronics and home appliances, many companies have invested in the Indian retail space in the past few months. Various agencies have high expectations about the growth of Indian e-commerce markets.

The retail industry is one of the pillars of the Indian economy and accounts for 10% of its GDP. The Indian retail market is estimated to be around USD 600 billion. Indian retail trading has received Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) equity inflows worth US$ 1.66 billion between April 2000–March 2019, according to the Department of Industrial Policies and Promotion (DIPP).
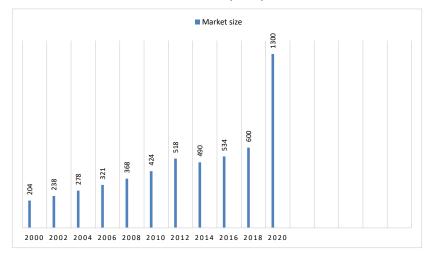
Fig. 1.1.1: Indian Retail Industry Growth - Market Size over the Past Few Years in USD billion
(Source - India Brand Equity Foundation)

The Government of India may change the foreign direct investment (FDI) rules in food processing, in an upcoming bid to permit e-commerce companies and foreign retailers to sell "Made in India" consumer products. The Government of India has allowed 100 percent Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the online retail business of goods and services through the automatic route (less restricted), thereby providing clarity on the existing businesses of e-commerce companies operating in India.

The Indian retail industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors – domestically as well as internationally. With an increase in disposable incomes and affordability for consumers, the sector is experiencing incremental growth. With the further easing of regulations governing FDI in India, investments by multinationals are on a continuous rise. Organised retailing is manpower-intensive and is the second-largest employer in India. The current scenario indicates that there will be a very high demand for manpower to match the scope of plans of various Retailers in the near future.

1.1.2 The Meaning of Retail

So far, we have been discussing the economic scenario and global position of the Indian retail industry. But what do we actually mean by retail? The word 'retail' means 'the sale of goods to the public in relatively small quantities for use or consumption rather than for resale.'
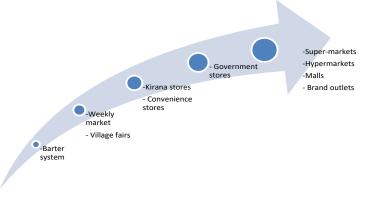
Fig. 1.1.2: How the Indian Retail Industry changed with time

The concept of retail has changed over the years. In the middle ages, the exchange of goods took place in the form of a barter system. Then it evolved to weekly markets, which took place on a particular day of the week, and also village fairs. Later, convenience stores came into existence. This has now further developed into supermarkets, malls and other brand outlets where everything is available under a single roof.
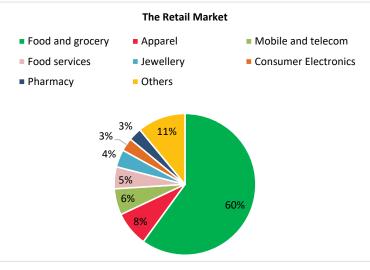
Fig. 1.1.3: Distribution of various retail markets

Research suggests that about 60% of the Indian economy is benefitted from the food and grocery sector, while electronics and pharmacy strive to contribute the least being nearly 3%.

1.1.3 Types of Retail Marketing

Retail is the sale of goods and services from businesses to an end-user (customer). Retail marketing is the process by which retailers promote awareness and interest in their goods and services in an effort to generate sales from their consumers. It is the process of bringing a product directly to customers in a retail store. It involves the planning, promotion, and presentation of a product.

The various types of retail stores are:

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                                              ┌─────────────────┐
                                              │ Department store │
                                              └─────────────────┘
                                              ┌─────────────────┐
                                              │ Speciality store │
                                              └─────────────────┘
┌──────────────┐                              ┌─────────────────┐
│ Types of retail │─────────────────────────── │   Supermarket    │
│    stores     │                              └─────────────────┘
└──────────────┘                              ┌─────────────────┐
                                              │ Fresh food store │
                                              └─────────────────┘
                                              ┌─────────────────┐
                                              │ Quick service food │
                                              │     stores      │
                                              └─────────────────┘
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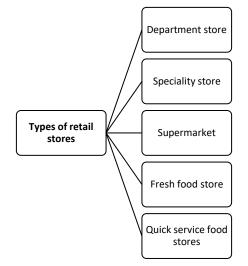
Fig. 1.1.4: Types of retail stores

- **Department store –** A moderately large shop that sells a wide variety of items in different departments
- **Supermarket -** A self-service store that sells a wide variety of assorted products, organised into sections
- **Hypermarket -** A combination of supermarket and department stores, a hypermarket sells a huge range of products under one roof, including general merchandise and groceries
- **Speciality store -** A retail store that sells specific categories of products like apparel, jewellery, watches, eyewear, electronic items, stationery supplies, etc.
- **Fresh food store –** A store that sells fresh grocery items like vegetables, fruits, cereals, pulses, eggs, bread, nuts, dairy products, etc.
- **Quick service food store -** A restaurant or eatery, which sells food items that require minimal preparation time and are delivered to customers very quickly

1.1.4 Importance of Retail Marketing

The retail sector has a tremendous impact on the economy. It generates high sales volume annually and offers many job opportunities. As a major source of employment, retailing involves a wide range of career opportunities like store management, merchandising, and owning a retail business.
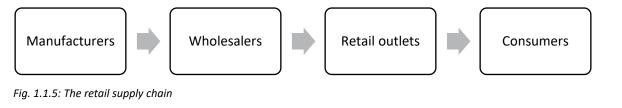
The consumers' benefit from retailing is that retailers perform marketing functions that make it possible for customers to access a wide variety of products and services under the same roof. A retailer's service also helps in enhancing the image of a product.

Retailers collect an assortment of goods and services from a wide variety of suppliers and offer them for sale. The width and depth of assortment depend upon the individual retailer's strategy.

Importance of retail:

- Retail provides consumers with information through advertising, displays and signs and sales personnel
- Retail provides market research support to other distribution channels and other members of the supply chain
- Retail employees store and mark prices on merchandise, place items on the selling floor and handle products
- Usually, in retail, suppliers are paid for the items delivered before they are sold to customers or end-users
- Retail employees complete transactions by using appropriate locations and timings, credit policies, and other services, e.g., delivery.

Retailing is the final stage in marketing channels for consumer products. Retailers liaise between producers and ultimate consumers.

| Manufacturers | → | Wholesalers | → | Retail outlets | → | Consumers |

Fig. 1.1.5: The retail supply chain

Activity

1. You would require a few specific skills to become a successful Visual Merchandiser. In this note, fill up the below table and show your trainer in the next class.

Skills you have	Skils you need to acquire	Plan of Action

2. Which was the last retail store that you visited? What interior ambience did you like about it? Had you been in charge of the store, what changes would you have made to them, and why?

Exercise 📝

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Role of the retail industry does not include

   a) Providing information to consumers   b) Storing merchandise

   c) Complete transactions   d) Shunning away customers

2. Which of the following is not a retail store?

   a) Department store   b) Supermarket

   c) Auction house   d) Fresh food store

B. Match the columns:

Type of retail store	Description
Department store	A self-service store that sells a wide variety of assorted products, organised into sections
Supermarket	A retail store that sells specific categories of products like apparel, jewellery, watches, eyewear, electronic items, stationery supplies, etc.
Hypermarket	A store that sells fresh grocery items like vegetables, fruits, cereals, pulses, eggs, bread, nuts, dairy products, etc.
Speciality store	A restaurant or eatery, which sells food items that require minimal preparation time and are delivered to customers very quickly
Quick service food store	A moderately large shop that sells a wide variety of items in different departments
Fresh food store	A combination of supermarket and department stores, which sells a huge range of products under one roof, including general merchandise and groceries

UNIT 1.2: Role of Visual Merchandiser

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Define visual merchandising
2. Summarise the importance of visual merchandising for retail stores
3. Discuss the role of a visual merchandiser in retail stores
4. List various responsibilities of a visual merchandiser

1.2.1 Definition of Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandising is the representation and use of attractive sales displays and retail floor plans to engage customers and boost sales activity at a retail store. Visual merchandising requires products (for sale) to be arranged in a visually appealing way so that customers are drawn to the best features and benefits of the products or services on offer.

Fig. 1.2.1: Visual merchandising at a garment retail   *1.2.2: Fig. Visual merchandising at a food retail store*

Fig. 1.2.3: Visual merchandising at a store for electronic items

1.2.2 Importance of Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandising enhances store aesthetics and bridges the gap between better-selling stores and average-selling stores. However, there are several other reasons why it is a vital element of retail management.

1. **The visual display attracts customers**

   If a customer is not sure about his/her choices, displaying and emphasising on products are better ways to attract a possible buyer and help him/her with the purchasing decision.

2. **A good ambience attracts customers**

   Colours, display, light, sound, and scent – all contribute to attracting customers by influencing their five senses. For example:

   • The bright images of food at the food outlets increase the appetite of customers

   • Music makes retail stores vibrant and the customers, happy

   • Thus, soothing music and ambience in stores attract and retain high-end customers to increase their purchase

   • The position of lighting and placement of products are essential factors for drawing the attention of the customers

3. **Accessibility retains customers**

   Appropriate visual merchandising gives visual access to what one is looking for. For example, if a bride-to-be is looking for a particular design of jewellery, which she is unable to express verbally, she can simply continue looking for the same, come across the appropriate section, and make a quick purchase decision.

4. **Visual merchandising utilises the seasonal advantage**

   Retail stores are often set up as per the season of the year.

   For example, visual merchandising in the international fashion industry is done based on the following seasons:
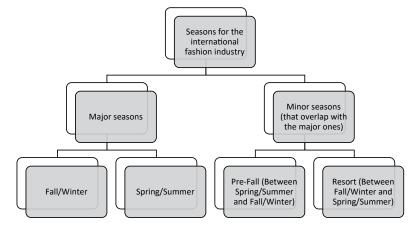
Fig. 1.2.4: Seasons considered for visual merchandising of the international fashion industry

These seasons are accepted internationally. However, in India, it is slightly different. Every individual retail store may put up themes according to their company policies. Some of the seasonal ideas can be:
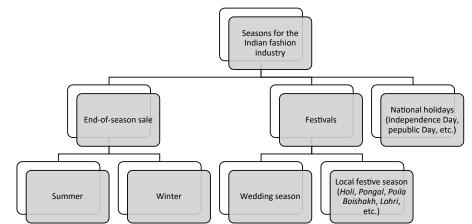
Fig. 1.2.5: Seasons considered for visual merchandising of the Indian fashion industry

5. **Visual merchandising leads to opportunities for cross-selling and upselling**

    Another vital role of a visual merchandiser is improving sales opportunities:

    • By placing associated products along with the main product

Fig. 1.2.6: Accessories, like shoes, are often placed near garments to promote cross-selling

    • By placing products from different brands and displaying and comparing them

Fig. 1.2.7: Smartphones, from various brands, are kept together at electronic retail outlets for comparison

    • By increasing chances of upselling

For Example:

If a customer wants to buy a sandwich or a burger, the person behind the counter introduces him/her to combo meal offers like fries and beverages along with the burger at a discounted price (cross-selling) or, combo offers can be given only with an upgraded size of the same product (upselling). Here, the role of a visual merchandiser is to put up appropriate displays indicating various combo offers or discounts available for various food items.

6. **Visual merchandising equips stores with a competitive edge**

   Visual merchandising provides stores with an advantage over competitors as buyers get influenced by the visuals and make the final purchasing decision. Competitive edge also helps stores in tapping a vast customer base via word-of-mouth.

   For Example:

   During Christmas, store A has worked on its visual merchandising by decorating everything in harmony with the Christmas theme. Thus, it attracted more footfalls (the number of customers that arrive at a store at a given point of time), whereas, store B has not made any such efforts. Hence, the number of footfalls was less at the store.

7. **Visual merchandising helps stores improve revenue**

   Improved revenue is the outcome of all the above benefits visual merchandising provides stores with. Visual merchandisers put up signage, displays, and props, indicating various contextual offers, which catch the customers' eyes and open up opportunities for sales. Attractive visual merchandising improves customer footfall and buying impulse, thus resulting in faster and assured sales conversion.

   For Example:

   A retail store has put up a poster, declaring a 10% discount on Women's Day for female buyers, for which more women come and buy products, and that, in turn, increases the revenue. On the other hand, another store in the same locality has not taken such initiatives, and the revenue generation is comparatively low on Women's Day.

1.2.3 Role of a Visual Merchandiser

The role of a visual merchandiser, in a retail store, has been explained below.

1. **Managing the store layout**

   A visual merchandiser is responsible for the entire store layout, which includes the blueprint of the store interiors. Awareness of store layout includes the knowledge of a few crucial concepts of visual merchandising. The below table introduces a few items that play important roles in visual merchandising.

Item	Role in visual merchandising
Props 	• Props are non-saleable items, which are displayed at a retail store to convey a given style, theme, or ambience • Props are usually placed in store windows and back-walls • Examples of props include artwork like balloons, photo frames, and other decorative items
Signage 	• Visual communicators in the form of icons, graphics, text, and photos • Direct customers to the points of sale, special offers, discounts, and trial rooms • Carefully designed to match the theme and maximise store sales
Fixture placement 	• Fixtures include back-walls that are filled up with props, products, and signage
Mannequins 	• Mannequins are dummy figures representing men, women, and children • Mannequins are used to display products in a human context, so that prospective buyers get a better perspective of the products on display • Mannequins are dressed up with garments and accessories with a specific objective • For example, a sports retail store may put up mannequins in a running pose
Focal points 	• Focal points are the hotspots or key points at a retail store like entrances and windows • Focal points are the centrepieces of a store, which are designed with displays, mannequins, and props • Focal points are often created at elevated levels so that they catch the customers' eyes more easily – these are called "high points"

Item	Role in visual merchandising
End caps	• End caps are the product displays placed at the end of aisles for drawing the customers' attention.
Point-of-sale display	• Point-of-sale displays are checkout areas that display small products like chocolates, keyrings, small toys, makeup items, etc. • Placed near the billing counters for boosting last-minute sale and encouraging impulse buying
Store ambience	• Includes the use of light, colours (colour blocking), themes, scent, music, etc. that are appealing to all the five senses (sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch) of a customer
Exterior window displays	• Displayed at the glass pane windows and provide onlookers with an idea of the type of products sold in the store

Table 1.2.1: Store layout

2. **Following visual merchandising directives**
   a. **Following the VM brief**
      - The visual merchandising (VM) brief summarises how the entire retail store or a new collection must be set up
      - Different retail stores follow different VM briefs
      - The VM brief describes the six basic levels of visual merchandising and how the visual merchandiser must set up each level

Store
Level 1

Department

Division
Level 3

Product
Level 4

Class
Level 5

Sub-class
Level 6

Level 1 - 6
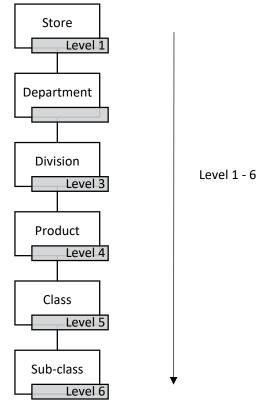
Fig. 1.2.8: Various levels of visual merchandising according to the VM brief

The below guidelines explain how the VM brief helps a visual merchandiser in setting up a store.

Level	Guidelines for visual merchandising	Example
1 - Store	• The store must be set up as per the type of merchandise sold • The store must be brightly-lit, decked up, and well-organised to appeal to the five senses of customers • A well-organised and well-lit store attracts more customers than a cluttered, gloomy one	• Sports retail, food retail, jewellery retail, footwear retail, electronics retail, a retail store for general merchandise, etc. are examples of retail stores selling various types of merchandise

Level	Guidelines for visual merchandising	Example
2 - Department	• Customers arrive at a store and look for individual departments, where they expect to find the items of their choice • Departments must be designed to display a wide variety of a particular type of merchandise • The most attractive departments are placed near the POS and entrance • The comparatively less attractive ones are placed at the back of the store	• Women's apparel, toys, chocolates, and electronics items are placed near or at the store entrance • Automotive supplies and appliances are placed at the back of the store
3 - Division	• A department is further segregated into related divisions to help customers find what they need	• Boy's clothing department is often divided into infants, children, pre-teens, and teens • Children's books department is often divided into pre-school, kindergarten, junior school, etc.
4 - Product	• Different products within a given division are classified based on similar characteristics	• Different products in the electronics division would be smartphones, laptops, smart TVs, computer accessories, etc.
5 - Class	• Similar products, which share specific qualities, are grouped together in the same class	• Women's eveningwear can be broken down into floor-length dresses, ankle-length dresses, and street length dresses
6 – Sub-class	• Customers make their purchasing decisions at the sub-class level • Here, items, sharing specific attributes, are grouped in the same sub-class	• Smartphones can be grouped as per the manufacturer • Children's pre-school books can be grouped as per fairy tales, nursery rhymes, books of alphabets, numbers, shapes, and animals, etc. • Women's floor-length dresses, of the same size, can be grouped together, irrespective of other factors like brand and colour

Table 1.2.2: Visual merchandiser in setting up a store

b. **Following the planogram**

A planogram is a blueprint that describes the location of merchandise in various sections of a store. It visually conveys how merchandise, props, and displays physically fit onto a store fixture or window, to allow for perfect visibility. A planogram allows the visual merchandiser to maintain shelf inventory in an organised manner. This helps the store improve efficiency and customer service.

Below are the responsibilities of visual merchandisers w.r.t planograms:

- Visual merchandisers are responsible for minimising space wastage and maximising the number of customer footfalls
- Visual merchandisers must prepare and follow placement plans like planograms
- Planograms help visual merchandisers identify optimum display for stores
- Visual merchandisers often study planograms to analyse store performance and spot out the low-sales product categories
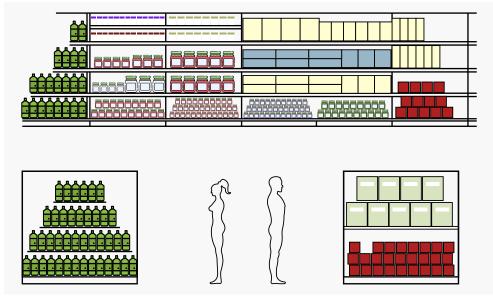
Fig. 1.2.9: Sample planograms

- Planograms help visual merchandisers expose customers to newly-launched or highly profitable products
- Planograms increase the chance of boosting sales by enhancing the chances of cross-selling and upselling

Factors to be considered while developing planograms

- Brand name of merchandise
- Seasonal advantage enjoyed by the merchandise
- Popularity of merchandise
- Price of merchandise
- Availability of inventory and merchandise
- Visual appeal of merchandise

For examples:

- Bread-like products and jam, jelly, butter, peanut butter, and other condiments are placed in the same aisle so that customers are drawn towards these items simultaneously
- Accessible products sell better, and targeted products are often placed at the eye-level for easy accessibility
- Products (like candies, toys, and chocolates) aimed at children must be placed at the lower shelves

1.2.4 The Job Responsibilities of Visual Merchandiser

- Defining, designing, and implementing a creative visual merchandising strategy
- Creating, revising, presenting, and discussing design ideas with assistant merchandisers
- Creating appealing and eye-catching visual displays that lead the customer through the entire store
- Collaborating with vendors, manufacturers, and retailers for ensuring appropriate execution of merchandising plans
- Monitoring costs and working within the sanctioned visual merchandising budget
- Producing window displays, signs, interior displays, floor plans and special promotion displays
- Supervising visual merchandising operations and briefing staff on the optimal arrangement of displays
- Ensuring that the store complies with merchandising plans and strategies
- Changing displays for promoting new product launches and reflecting festive or seasonal themes
- Identifying key messages and set a clear image of the end result
- Liaising with suppliers and sourcing elements
- Creating and arranging for in-store promotional activities
- Keeping track of inventory
- Collecting relevant information on market trends and customers' feedback on products
- Staying aware of and updated on creative visual merchandising trends
- Acting in alignment with the store's culture, products, image and target market
- Researching on various lifestyle, demographic, and design trends

Activity

1. List the ideas for display of the toiletries and sanitation products in an FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) store.
2. Prepare a set of ideas that can be applied for the display of a coffee shop.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. **Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:**

1. Role of scent in a store is to

    a) Make customers run away from the store

    b) Ensure that customers lose interest in the store

    c) Make customers stay for a longer time

    d) Make customers enquire about the brand of the aroma

2. Rhythmic music is played in retail stores so that

    a) The crowd moves at a quicker pace

    b) The crowd starts doing a flash mob

    c) The crowd does not standstill

    d) Both a and c

3. Bright colours in food joints

    a) Kills the appetite of the customers

    b) Makes customers feel more hungry

    c) Both a and b

    d) None of the above

Summary

- Indian economy ranks 5th in the global market.
- The retail industry in India is one of the pillars of its economy and accounts for 10% of India's GDP.
- The retail trading of India has received Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) funds worth US$ 1.66 billion between April 2000–March 2019.
- The word 'retail' means 'the sale of goods to the public in relatively small quantities for use or consumption rather than for resale.'
- About 60% of the Indian economy is benefitted from the food and grocery sector.
- Retail marketing involves the planning, promotion, and presentation of a product.
- Retailing offers a wide range of job opportunities.
- Retailers participate in the cataloguing process by collecting an assortment of products and services from a wide range of suppliers and offering them for sale.
- Retailers provide a vital link between producers and ultimate consumers.
- A lot of customers are attracted to a store because of its window display.
- The colours, display, light, sound, and scent – all contribute to attracting customers by influencing their minds.

Activity

1. Visit various retail shops from multiple categories. Observe the interiors, product placement, the use of numerous tools like light and sound, discount offers, mannequins on display, window display, etc. Note them down and, with the help of these, formulate your ideas for setting up a store and show the same to your trainer, in the next class, for verification.

2. Prepare a list of reasons why you wish to pursue the course of a visual merchandiser and what are your expectations from the course.

Notes

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Exercise 📝

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Which of the following is NOT a type of retail marketing?

    a) Internet marketing   b) Window shopping

    c) Word-of-mouth marketing   d) Public relations marketing

2. A visual merchandiser is NOT responsible for setting up:

    a) Window display   b) Light

    c) Sound   d) Cash management

3. About _____% of the Indian economy is benefitted by the food and grocery sector.

    a) 60   b) 50   c) 70   d) 80

4. Which method of selling goes hand in hand with cross-selling?

    a) Pro-selling   b) Upselling

    c) Down selling   d) Point-of-purchase selling

5. A retail store, which sells general merchandise, has been decorated in red-coloured props and displays on the occasion of the Valentine's Day. However, it does not offer items for sale that suit the Valentine's Day theme. What products can be added to the merchandise?

    a) Artificial jewellery   b) Flowers

    c) Chocolates   d) All of these

B. Study the below case. Answer the questions by choosing the correct option.

It is the time of Navratri and the visual merchandisers at store A and store B gear up to deck up the stores and replenish the merchandise. Both the stores sell general merchandise and are located in a neighbourhood that mainly comprises vegetarian customers. A major element of the merchandise of both stores is food. The visual merchandiser at store A replenishes the stock of all categories of its merchandise and puts them up for display. The visual merchandiser at store B replenishes the stock of a few selected categories only. After Navratri, it is found out that store B has performed better and earned more revenues.

1. What is/are the possible reason/s behind store A's poor performance?

    a) Store A replenished the stock of non-vegetarian food items, which got sold less during the Navratri

    b) Store B stocked up vegetarian items more

    c) Store A suffered a loss since the unsold non-vegetarian food items went bad and had to be disposed of

    d) Both a and c   e) Both a and b

2. What measures should be taken by store A to avoid the recurrence of such incidents?

    a) Study the local market before such festive occasions

    b) Invest more in themed decorations and promotional activities

    c) Invest more in products under demand

    d) Both a and b   e) a, b, and c

Scan the QR codes or click on the link for the e-books

Common Types of retailers	Development of Retail Sector in India	Retail 2020 | 5 Technologies that will change the way you shop
https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=Np090VKTzt	https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=lmuKoz9aWGY	https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=iRvaWHk3A8k

2. Enhance Store Visibility by Implementing Attractive Visual Displays to Support Store Profitability

Unit 2.1 - Industry Trends

Unit 2.2 - Planning Proper Display of Products

Unit 2.3 - Setting up the Store

Unit 2.4 - Merchandising Designs and Themes

RAS/N0401

Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, the participants will be able to:

1. Identify the trends of the retail industry with respect to products and marketing
2. Analyse the trends of the retail industry to identify target customers
3. Identify sales patterns and market trends at the store
4. Summarise customers' needs
5. Evaluate the effect of trend identification on the product display
6. List the criteria for planning product display at the store
7. Prepare a plan for merchandise display at the store
8. Create a merchandising theme for the store
9. Organise the display of products as per the merchandising theme
10. Set up the retail store as per the merchandising theme

UNIT 2.1: Industry Trends

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Discuss key trends in retail
2. Summarise the features of creative merchandising and cross-merchandising
3. Compare creative merchandising and cross-merchandising
4. Demonstrate the rule of three during visual merchandising
5. Establish the effect of implementing industry trends in visual merchandising
6. Demonstrate the steps of identifying trends

2.1.1 Introduction

The role of a visual merchandiser is very critical in the field of retail. A store cannot be set up randomly. Its business operations have to be based on the industrial and organisational trends related to the respective product, customer needs, sales pattern, and many more.

2.1.2 Definition of Industry trends

Industry trends are patterns or tendencies that occur within a specific industry. These trends may be related to:

- price
- cost
- purchasing behaviour
- marketing strategies
- manufacturing
- sales methodology
- seasonal variations
- latest fashion
- changing technology

Like any industry, trends exist in the retail industry and can provide stores with essential data to help them stay competitive in the marketplace.

A few examples of trends in the retail industry are:

- **Involvement of the senses via creative merchandising**
  o Carrying out "out-of-the-box" visual merchandising and maximising sales at the store
  o Implementing dovetailed matrketing techniques to tap a specific customer base
- **Everything under one roof**
  o Customers would love a "one-stop" shopping destination where they would find all they need under one roof
  o Thus, they can find all they need with minimal efforts

- **Eco-friendly practices**
  - Adopting and spreading the awareness of practices that would benefit the environment as well as the store
- **Use of the internet and e-commerce**
  - Effective presence of stores on the social media help stores interact better with existing and potential customers
  - The use of internet marketing can be very fruitful in tapping new, tech-savvy customer base
- **Gender and PwD Sensitisation**
  - Embracing practices that are beneficial for and sensitive towards all genders and persons with disability

2.1.3 Importance of Industry Trends

A visual merchandiser analyses industry trends for making apt predictions on changing customer preferences and purchase trends. Studying industry trends includes observing:

- technological developments
- changing consumer behaviour
- market competition
- existing practices of competitors and peers
- development of new products and services
- changing government policies and norms

The below example explains how the understanding of trends can help a visual merchandiser.

For example:

A retail store, specialising in general merchandise, has been suffering from dwindling revenues for quite some time. Despite all efforts put in by the employees and the management for carrying out aggressive promotional activities, things have not looked up. The management recruits a team of researchers to carry out a survey among the customers. The survey results revealed that the store has not been focusing on identifying specific categories of customers visiting the store. The store is visited primarily by women and college students. The marketing techniques adopted by the store are not "effective". The promotional activities are costly but are not aimed at these two categories of customers. Also, the merchandise is not as per the preferences of these two categories. As a result, the footfalls from these two categories have been dwindling, and revenues have been dropping.

To escape this situation, the retail store comes up with an action plan, which guides the below changes:

Proposed changes as per the action plan	Impact on the store	Impact on the revenues
The store layout is expanded and a section of the store is dedicated for an in-store café specialising in trendy food and beverage items	Footfall of college students increase	Positive

Proposed changes as per the action plan	Impact on the store	Impact on the revenues
The in-store café changes menu every Wednesday and on the weekend	Footfall of college students increase	Positive
	Families start visiting the store	
The store starts selling items like college stationery	Footfall of college students increase	Positive
The store starts selling ladies' ethnic and western apparel	Footfall of female customers increase	Positive
The store starts selling ladies' innerwear and accessories (shoes, jewellery, scarfs, watches, etc.)	Footfall of female customers increase	Positive
The store starts selling moderately-priced cosmetics	Footfall of college students increase	Positive
	Footfall of female customers increase	
The visual merchandiser changes the store's theme and visual displays frequently (for example, the store adapts its visual displays as per the Valentine Day theme)	Footfall of college students increase	Positive
	Families start visiting the store	
	Families and college students eat at the in-store café	

Table 2.1.1: The action plan for improving store revenues

A few major trends in retail

Many trends can be observed in the retail industry. Even though visual merchandising is a dynamic concept, learning about some of the trends would give a proper idea about the retail industry.

Involvement of the senses - The display should be more appealing to the five senses. For example, the products can be arranged in a visually appealing way to attract the customers, or the sight of the food being prepared can attract customers to a restaurant. Below are a few examples of how creative ways help visual merchandising grow attractive.

- **Creative visual displays:**

Fig. 2.1.1: Creative visual merchandising at a retail grocery

- **Cross-merchandising:**

  Cross merchandising is the strategy of marketing or displaying products from different categories together in order to generate excess revenue for the store. It is aimed at linking different products that complement each other or can be associated logically.

  A few other examples are placing oil alongside flour, lunch boxes next to water bottles, sugar next to tea and coffee, etc.

Fig. 2.1.2: Cross-merchandising vegetables and salad dressings

- **Rule of three**

  Merchandise can be displayed following the "rule of three". For example, clothes can be arranged in sizes of small, medium, and large, bottles of mineral water can be arranged in small, medium, and large sizes, etc. Grouping the same product in sizes of "three" is visually appealing and has the potential of generating multiple sales on products a customer would consider purchasing together.

Fig. 2.1.3: Various items combined in groups of "three"

Eco-friendly practices- A shift of preference towards eco-friendly products can be observed among customers of all age groups. Customers feel connected and a sense of pride by attaching themselves with such stores that are going green and adopting eco-friendly practices like safe waste disposal, energy and water conservation, selling organic food items sourced from local farmers, etc. In this competitive retail market, going "green" is a useful and innovative strategy for retail stores to stand out and enhance the brand image.

For example:

A few retail stores have already been incorporating sustainable and eco-friendly practices into their daily business operations.

Name of the store	Sells	Green initiatives
In2Green	Eco-friendly home furnishings	• Recycling scraps from cotton mills • Converting them into coloured threads • Spinning the threads into cotton blend yarns • Making high-quality pillow covers, throws, pet sweaters, etc. From organic and recyclable cotton blend material

Name of the store	Sells	Green initiatives
SkinnyFatties	Tie-slimming services	• Recycling existing ties • Converting them into modern and trendy patterns • Donating a portion of each sale to an NGO that provides skill-based training and professional attire to low-income men
Essio	World's first aromatherapy diffuser for baths and shower	• Selling 100% organic essential oils • Using recyclable packaging • Minimising waste and reducing the carbon footprint (the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of a store's activities)
Gecko Clothing	Selling clothes made of organic cotton	• Selling clothes and accessories made of organic cotton • Sourcing organic cotton from local farmer cooperatives • Selling clothes that are dyed with Global Organic Textile Standard certified dyes • Using tags made of recyclable wild seed paper
Blue River Diamonds	Eco-friendly jewellery	• Selling "green" jewellery made of recycled gold, silver, platinum, and gemstones
The Vegg	A 100% plant-based egg	• Replacing egg yolk with a 100% plant-based substitute using natural ingredients • Proving that producing plants for obtaining 1 kg of "vegetarian" egg requires less land and water resources than producing crops for feeding and raising hens

Table 2.1.2: Sustainable and eco-friendly practices

Everything under one roof- Retailers are trying to provide everything under one roof, which is very beneficial for the customers. They have to put in the least effort to find everything that they need or want.

For example, customers arrive at retail stores to buy clothes, and they are also able to purchase jewellery and electrical appliances at the same place. Such "chainlike" buying behaviour promotes the sales growth exponentially at stores. Furthermore, word-of-mouth and good customer feedback make such stores extremely popular.

Internet and E-commerce- Use of the internet and e-commerce portals is a game-changer. Now, buyers prefer shopping online, and the retail industry has clung to the trend. Publicity, via word-of-mouth, is the fastest for social media.

For example, company X has been attracting a lot of customers due to its active presence on social media. It posts information on ongoing and upcoming offers/campaigns and also manages a discussion forum where it invites existing and potential customers to share their ratings and suggestions, respectively. Furthermore, it sells its merchandise on the e-commerce platform. Of course, it has been and is earning more revenues than company Y, which sells the same type of merchandise, because it is not present on the social media and does not sell on the e-commerce platform.

Experiential shopping- Visual merchandising is growing more experiential day by day. For example, if a customer can provide the feedback on his/her shopping experience at a retail store, on social media, or get to know about an ongoing or upcoming sale offer, he/she is more likely to purchase from that store.

Seasonal trends in retail

Every shop, if you see around, sells specific items that are based on the needs of the customers of the locality. These products are primarily dependent on the seasonal market.

For example, you will observe:

- Mannequins in the window displays of garment stores are decked up in bridal attires during the wedding season
- In the winter season, winter garments are available in abundance
- Availability of electronic gadgets, lights, crackers, garments, and many such items during festive seasons like the Diwali and the Dussera
- The use of colours during Holi
- Electrical devices and home appliances like air-conditioners and refrigerators are sold more in the summer, while geysers and water heaters are sold in winter

Future Fashion Trends

- A visual merchandiser, in an apparel store, must stay aware of future fashion trends and take care of the visual merchandising accordingly
- His/her objective would be to spur interest, about these fashion trends, in the minds of the customers, so that they are interested in buying the same
- This would, in turn, help the store boost sales and revenues
- Future fashion trends are utilitarian and practical
- People, in future, would look for comfortable clothes that would help them adapt with the changing environment and the workplace needs

The below images show a few fashion trends that will be popular in the future.

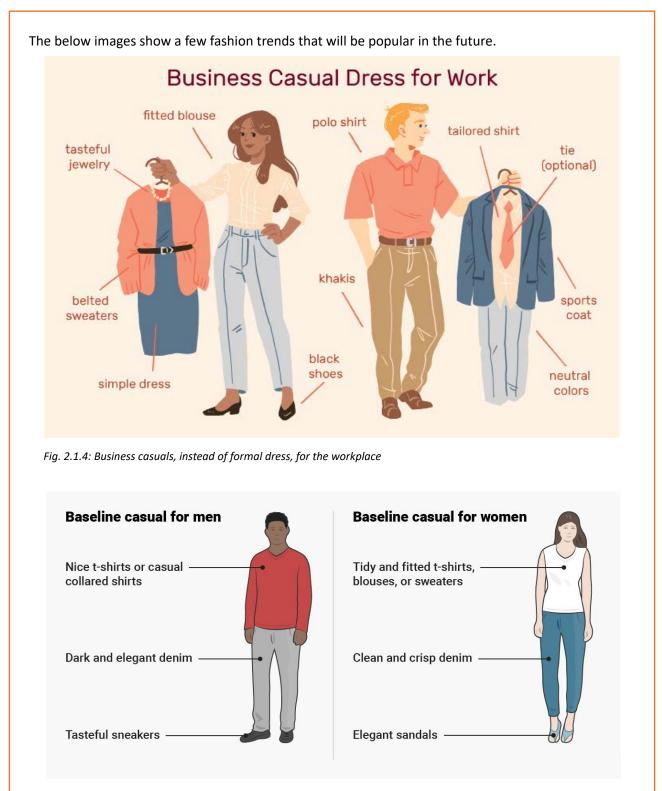*Fig. 2.1.4: Business casuals, instead of formal dress, for the workplace*

Fig. 2.1.5: Business casuals for both men and women

Thus, we can see that the retail market depends on what does the customer need, and when does the customer need a given category of items. Accordingly, it is essential to analyse categorical sales patterns along with past sales records.

Why trends are important for Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandisers must be aware of the current trends to get the desired outcome. There are many reasons why trends influence the way visual merchandising is done.

1. **Customers buy what they understand**
   - If the customers understand the relevance of the product or service, they are more likely to be interested in purchasing things.
   - A PwD customer would be interested in buying special aids. A new mother would buy matenity clothes and baby grooming products.

2. **Customers look for a perfect balance**
   - For example, a customer must be fully satisfied with the methods of communication as well as the product utility.

3. **Customers love current trends**
   - Current trends in visual merchandising help the way things can be portrayed and conveyed to the customer.
   - Customers generally want to purchase things based on current trends.

4. **Customers' attention must be grabbed**
   - Shoppers have a very short attention span, so visual merchandising based on new trends help stores grab the shoppers' attention via small talk by sales executives and offering them product catalogs

2.1.4 Identification of Industry Trends in Visual Merchandising

For a better understanding of trend analysis, first, it must be understood what a trend is and what is the meaning of analysis. The trend is a general pattern in which something is developing or changing, and analysis indicates the detailed examination of the structure or components of something.

Trend analysis explains trends and helps traders define the direction of the trend. The best way to identify trends is via the use of trend lines, which connect a series of highs or lows.
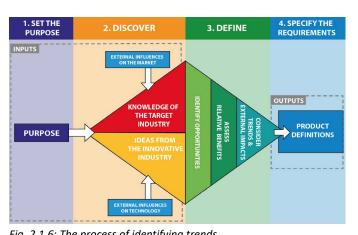
But what is the way to identify trends?

Fig. 2.1.6: The process of identifying trends

Process of identifying trends:

• Determine the purpose of the study
• Look at the industry's outlook
• Identify target customers
• Compare your ideas with your competitor's
• Gather additional data
• Analyse your findings
• Implement your findings

This can be better explained with the help of an example.

Store A and store B, offering general merchandise, are located in the same semi-urban neighbourhood. Both stores offer the same categories of merchandise. Also, they experience similar footfalls daily. However, store B has been performing better than store A for over a quarter. An analysis of the quarterly sales trends of both stores reveals that store A has been holding onto a few slow-moving and stagnant categories of merchandise, which are unsuitable for the neighbourhood, and remain unsold over several quarters. This has been leading to losses for store A.

On the contrary, store B has a good practice of declaring sales offers on its slow-moving and stagnant merchandise at the end of every month. The store advertises about the monthly sales offers on the local newspaper and also on its social media pages. Furthermore, the visual merchandiser at store B organises the display of such items in a very attractive manner. He/she also applies the "rule of three," cross-merchandising, and creative merchandising, so that store B is able to get rid of the slow-moving and stagnant merchandise and also earn revenue from the same.

Thus:

Steps of identifying trends	Explanation (w.r.t the above example)
Determine the purpose of the study	Finding out why store B is performing better than store A
Look at the industry's outlook	Slow-moving and stagnant merchandise must be sold on offers so that they leave the store and also help the store earn revenues
Identify target customers	Same semi-urban customers for both stores
Compare your ideas with your competitor's	Comparing ideas with that of store B
Gather additional data	Gathering ideas about creative and cross-merchandising
Analyse your findings	Creative and cross-merchandising, associated with sales offers and advertisements, would help store A solve the issue
Implement your findings	Putting the idea to use

Table 2.1.3: Process of identifying trends

Activity

1. Write down the elements of the window display for the festive seasons of Holi and Id.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Which of the following is not a step for identifying trend patterns?
    a) Identify target customers

    b) Copy your competition's ideas

    c) Gather additional data

    d) Implement your findings

2. A seasonal market is dependent on
    a) Weather

    b) Environment

    c) Climate

    d) Seasonal themes

3. Identification of industry trends is not dependent on
    a) Consumer behaviour

    b) New product development

    c) All of these

    d) Technological advancements

UNIT 2.2: Planning Proper Display of Products

Unit Objectives 🎯

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Define displays across various sectors like apparel, general merchandise, etc.
2. Summarise the importance of displays in visual merchandising
3. Summarise the role of effective display techniques at retail stores
4. Demonstrate common display techniques for effective visual merchandising
5. Identify common visual merchandising guidelines
6. Practise implementing common visual merchandising guidelines at the store
7. Establish the importance of awareness of display policies
8. Detect possible problems and work out ways of sorting them
9. Recognise related categories for cross-selling
10. Create detailed floor plans to assist in cross-selling and upselling at the store
11. Identify faltering categories, slow-moving categories, and ageing products
12. Compare faltering categories, slow-moving categories, and ageing products
13. Prepare visual merchandising plans to get rid of faltering categories, slow-moving categories, and ageing products

2.2.1 Introduction

The success of visual merchandising depends on proper display. Humans are visual beings, and a better display can help the customers see what they are looking for. However, planning is very crucial, and it takes years to be good at displaying things that a customer may be satisfied with.

Defining displays

Displays at a retail store are the props and fixtures that are used to display merchandise.

Importance of proper display in Visual Merchandising

• The proper display enables customers to locate products easily
• The proper display helps the salesperson pitch the product to a potential customer
• The proper display makes things more organised; for example, if a customer wants to buy jewellery, he or she is more likely to buy from a place where the display is attractive and easily accessible

Common display techniques

A few examples of the common display techniques used at apparel retail stores have been discussed below.
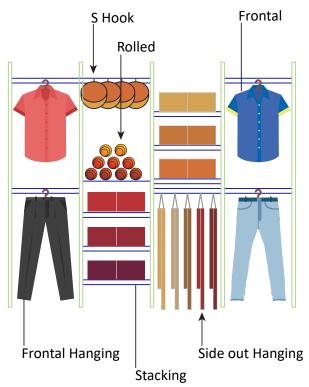
Fig. 2.2.1: Display techniques at retail stores

Types of display techniques

Hanging

• Ideal for products that need a full frontal view are embroidered and are printed on the front and back
• Also suitable for products that require displaying the shape, fit, and fall of the merchandise (like clothes)
• Hanging can be frontal or side-outs

Stacking

• Ideal for packed items like formal shirts that do not require details of fit, shape, and fall, and need to be stacked
• Suitable for the core merchandise of a store

S-Hook

• Ideal for types of denim
• S-Hooks give the casual and rough look that suits pieces of denim

Rolled

• Items like pieces of denim and capris can be rolled

• This technique shows that pieces of denim and capris are items of casual and daily use

• Core merchandise of limp material can be displayed using this technique

Wall elevation

• Items must be displayed on visuals or busts next to them

• All hanging clothes must be neatly ironed

Fig. 2.2.2: Wall elevation

Gondola

• Allows for stacking and hanging

• Packed products like formal Shirts

• that do not require shape, fall, and fit details should be stacked

• Ethnic Kurtis, party wear and fashion items should be hung on gondolas

Fig. 2.2.3: Gondola

Nesting table

Fig. 2.2.4: Nesting table

• Placed right next to the aisle

• Stores high stacks of promoted items and latest collections on tables

• Light is focused on the tables

• Bust-displaying items are shown

• Fashion items are cross-merchandised, styled, and displayed so that the cut, print, or embellishments are visible

Browsers

| 2-way | 4-way | 8-way (for children) | 16-way (for infants) |

Fig. 2.2.5: Browsers

- Waterfall browsers are used when the store wants to focus on the items at the
- back to display colours or design detail
- Straight arm browsers are used when the items are long, and the height of the browser will be too high if the waterfall is used
- Step arm browser resembles the side view of a step and allows for two styles to be displayed on a single-arm

Sale bins

- Sale bins form important parts of point-of-sale display
- Sale bins display a wide variety of merchandise
- Placed near-cash counters and POS to grab the customers' attention
- Used only during the sale
- Gives the feel that the items are heavily discounted

Common visual merchandising guidelines (apparel)
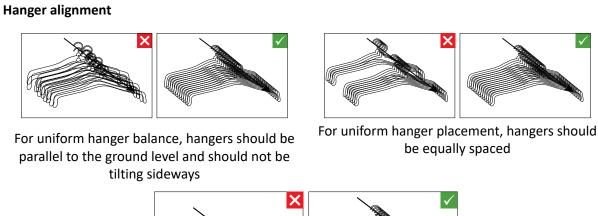
Hanging
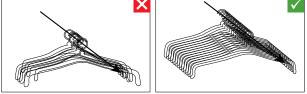
- Colours should go from light in the front to dark at the back
- Each browser arm sh0uld carry a maximum of 10-12 pieces
- On a 4'-long hanger, there should not be more than 40 pieces
- On a 2'-long hanger, there should not be more than 20 pieces
- Merchandise of the same price/style must be placed together
- Sizes must be placed in the sequence XS ->S->M->L->XL->XXL and so on

Fig. 2.2.6: Hanging

Hanger alignment

For uniform hanger balance, hangers should be parallel to the ground level and should not be tilting sideways

For uniform hanger placement, hangers should be equally spaced

For uniform direction, all hanger heads should be aligned to one direction

Fig. 2.2.7: Hanger alignment

Size-wise display

Fig. 2.2.8: Size-wise display

• Merchandise must be arranged in the increasing order of size from front to back during frontal hanging
• During sideways hanging, the order should be XS->S->M->L->XL->XXL
• An exception occurs when block stacking (only one size per stack) is done by size - XXL comes on the top, followed by the smaller sizes below, in decreasing order of size

Stacking

Size tag / Price tag Alignment:

• All the folds should be neat with the price tag hanging out only from the top merchandise
• All the size sticker should be on the same side
• Merchandise is placed with a bigger size at the bottom and the smaller size on top

Fig. 2.2.9: Stacking
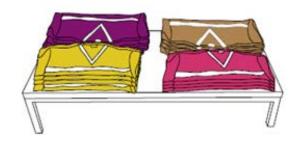
Spacing and Placement:

• The stacked table or shelf should look
• symmetric
• A maximum of 1 to 2 inch of space should be ideally maintained between two stacks
• The spacing between the stacks should be equal

Special folding

Vertical folding is done when the product comes with chest prints

Horizontal folding is done when the product comes with interesting details at the hem of the base or at the arms of the item

Fig. 2.2.10: Special folding

Hanging trousers

Front-facing out (pieces of denim)   Front-facing out (sportswear trousers)
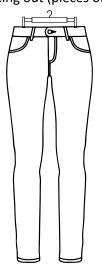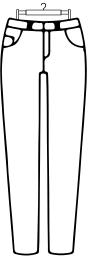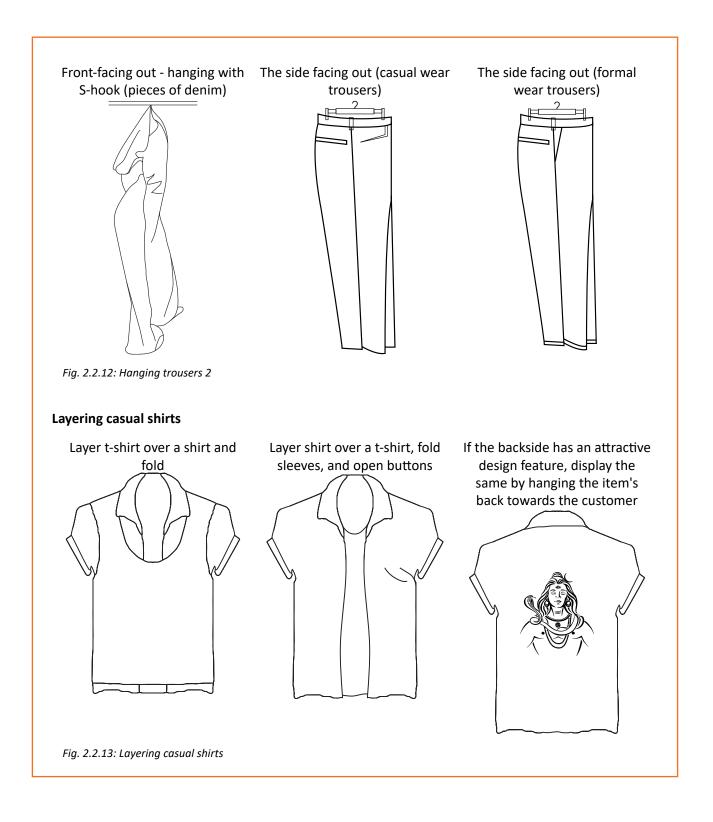
Fig. 2.2.11: Hanging trousers

• The side of sportswear, if with detail, can be facing out
• Pleat the seat of the trousers, if necessary
• The width of the trousers should be adjusted to that of the hanger

Front-facing out - hanging with S-hook (pieces of denim)

The side facing out (casual wear trousers)

The side facing out (formal wear trousers)

Fig. 2.2.12: Hanging trousers 2

Layering casual shirts

Layer t-shirt over a shirt and fold

Layer shirt over a t-shirt, fold sleeves, and open buttons

If the backside has an attractive design feature, display the same by hanging the item's back towards the customer

Fig. 2.2.13: Layering casual shirts

Examples of Visual merchandising display techniques for general merchandise

Fig. 2.2.14: Curved layout

Fig. 2.2.15: Shelves in electronic retail

Fig. 2.2.16: Display of garden tools and equipment

Fig. 2.2.17: Display of gift and decorative items

Fig. 2.2.18: Gondola display for food items

Fig. 2.2.19: Display of metalware

Fig. 2.2.20: Plinth (raised platform) used for visual display

Fig. 2.2.21: Mannequins placed on plinths

2.2.2 Awareness of display policies

Defining display policies

Display policies are sets of industrial and organisational norms and guidelines that visual merchandisers must adhere to.

Working in a retail store can be a challenging job, as well as exciting. It requires a creative mind and a hawk's eye for detail. But it involves a lot of obligations. A visual merchandiser, however innovative or attractive his ideas about setting up his store might be, has to stay put within his limits.

Importance of display policies

- A significant part of the store, a visual merchandiser is expected to be fully aware of all the company's norms, legislation, standards, policies, and procedures and apply them wherever necessary
- All brand partners, whose products are sold in a store, also have their policies and guidelines regarding their branding and promotion
- Visual merchandisers must be fully aware of them and set up the merchandise accordingly

Some examples of display policies:

A few examples of business policies that are common in most of the companies are:

- **Recycling –** In the case of the packaging of merchandise, use bio-degradable products for packing them. Avoid using plastics.
- **Waste management –** In the restaurant and fast food chains, a considerable portion of food is wasted daily. Many NGOs have taken the initiative of launching a program of delivering this excess food to people in need.
- **Reduced use of paper –** Nowadays, we see in ATMs the transaction receipts are no longer printed on paper. This is done to reduce the usage of paper, thereby reducing deforestation. Similarly, in the retail industry, while billing at the POS, encourage customers to go for online/card payment and also refuse customer's copy of the invoice.
- **Eco-friendly equipment –** The food and beverage industry has already adopted bio-degradable equipment like wooden spoons and forks instead of plastic ones, paper straws instead of plastics, bio-degradable paper plates. Other retail sectors have also started using re-usable jute and paper bags instead of plastic bags. Stores which do not have bio-degradable bags, charge a certain amount for plastic bags so that customers refuse to take it.

Health and safety related to visual displays

Visual displays may be hazardous and may pose risks for both the staff and customers. A visual merchandiser must ensure such risks are well within limits.

For example:

An electronic retail store uses plinths for visual display. These pose grave tripping and bumping hazards for both the staff members and customers. A few customers and staff members have tripped and fractured their limbs. Furthermore, the plinths are covered by a carpet for the entire floor. The store receives an improvement notice from the local authorities and the visual merchandiser needs to clearly identify all plinths and other raised areas in the store.

The store is closed for a few days and this time is utilised for a reasonable makeover. The visual merchandiser replaces all plinths with other suitable and safe displays like mannequins, tables, shelves, wall displays, gondolas, etc. The store reopens after the renovation not a single case of tripping accident has been heard ever since.

2.2.3 Identification of Potential Problems and Their Solution

Managing a store comes with a lot of responsibilities. Identifying the problems and finding the most plausible solution is a significant task. Failure in the identification of the store needs can lead to a decrease in sales of the store.

So, what kind of problems can come in the way of a visual merchandiser?

Problems may arise in:

• putting layouts together

• cross-selling and upselling

• creating floor plans

• dealing with vendors

Process of making a shop floor visually appealing:

1. Determine the type of products that are to be displayed
2. Create an inventory of the products
3. Select the area for placing and displaying a given product
4. Identify the various props that can be used for the relevant display
5. Group similar or related products together for cross-selling
6. Choose shapes, colours, and groupings that are suited to the purpose and style of the display
7. Place posters about offers or seasonal discounts

The following example will help you understand better.

Suppose you are the visual merchandiser of a renowned supermarket. You are in charge of creating a floor plan for the women's garment section. So, how will you do it?

Process of creating a floor plan for women's garment section:

1. Create an inventory and stay aware of the stock of the products
2. Place requisition with the vendors for the products that need replenishing
3. Select areas on the floor for placing apparel appropriately
4. Group similar and related products together like:
   a. Formal wear, like shirts, with coats and jackets
   b. Partywear, like dresses, with tops
   c. Ethnic wear, like salwar kameez, with kurtis
   d. Nightwear, like nightgowns, pyjamas with underwear
5. Place products that can be used for cross-selling like underwear, shoes, and accessories nearby
6. Place make-up and cosmetics along with fragrance
7. In case of seasonal wear like winter garments, make separate sections for them
8. Accessorise the mannequins with the garments, thus depicting the latest fashion trends
9. Place posters of offers or festive discounts
10. Select appropriate lighting, which makes the clothes look bright. In the case of formal clothing, use warm light.

2.2.4 Handling Faltering and Slow-Moving Categories

Every store has some ranges of products whose sales volumes are not as high as that of the others. These products fall under the "faltering category." The products that have a huge no. of stock on hold and have not been sold or shipped are called "slow-moving categories."

You should keep yourself updated with detailed information about such products. To do so, follow the following steps:

• Check past sales records

• Prepare inventory list

• Identify products with slow sales

• Place these products on display with lucrative discount offers to promote sales

The below example explains how faltering and slow-moving categories can be efficiently sold via smart visual merchandising techniques.

A renowned retail store, with a prominent online and physical presence, has been suffering losses due to its slow-moving and faltering merchandise. The visual merchandiser at the store comes up with the following strategy to resolve the problem:

Category of merchandise	Steps adopted to increase sales (online and physical) at the store
Faltering and slow-moving	• Studying the monthly sales trends • Identifying the merchandise performing poorly • Marking the poor-performing merchandise as "faltering" • Proposing price reduction for the identified merchandise • Submitting the price reduction proposal to the supervisor • If the price reduction proposal is accepted, making suitable price reductions/adjustments for the merchandise and revising the prices for both physical as well as online stores • If the price reduction proposal is rejected, submitting a proposal for a supplementary promotion plan to the supervisor • If the proposal is accepted, preparing the planogram and setting up the merchandise accordingly • Tracking the weekly sales volumes (both physical and online) of the merchandise and noting down the positive differences

2.2.5 Risk Management in Retail Stores

Process of avoiding hazards:

• Follow the store's policies regarding health and safety standards

• Avoid keeping tools, equipment, and ladders unattended

• Avoid keeping sharp objects, unless for sale, out in the open

• Be aware of the building and floor evacuation plan

• Place the evacuation plan in visible areas, especially near elevators/escalators

• Be aware of all the fire exits and ensure that they are marked with proper signage

• Put up the evacuation plans on display for each floor marking the exit points for common use

- Keep fire extinguishers nearby for putting out fire and report to the concerned personnel in case of expired products or a refill
- Keep emergency oxygen mask and cylinder and first aid kit
- Report to immediate supervisor in case of any emergency

For reporting to your superiors in case of an emergency, you can take an example of the following form.

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

EMPLOYEE DETAILS

Name: _____

Department: _____   Contact Number: _____

DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

Location: _____

Incident Details

Date:

Time:

Police Notified:

Yes ☐

No ☐

(How the incident happened, factors leading to the event, and what took place. Be as specific as possible)

Incident Causes:	Follow Up Recommendations:

| *Incident reports are necessary for documenting details of the occurrence while they are most present in the minds of the witnesses and incident reporter. The information that is included in the report can be useful for decision-making on future incidents, identify behavioural patterns and identifying larger issues. To maintain a safe and healthy work environment, a thorough investigation should be undertaken following an incident in order to initiate corrective actions.* | REPORTED BY:

Name:

Position:

Department: |

Fig. 2.2.22: Sample of the incident reporting form

Activity

1. Suppose there is a fire incident in the perfume section of your supermarket. List the steps that you will take to evacuate the customers. Also, mention how you will prevent such a situation in the future.

Exercise ✎

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. What should not be done to avoid a hazard?

   a) Be aware of the building and floor evacuation plan

   b) Put up the evacuation plans on display for each floor marking the exit points for common use

   c) Keep fire extinguishers and sand in handy for putting out fire and report to the concerned personnel in case of expired products or a refill

   d) Leave sharp objects unattended

2. Which is the correct group similar to related products?

   a) Formal wear, like flip flops, bikinis

   b) Partywear, like dresses, tops

   c) Ethnic wear, like shirts, skirts

   d) Nightwear, like lingerie

3. What kind of problems cannot come in the way of a visual merchandiser?

   a) putting layouts together

   b) cross-selling and upselling

   c) cash management

   d) creating floor plans

UNIT 2.3: Setting up the Store

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Create displays that attain the visual effect as per company policy
2. Compare customer needs to their benefits
3. Identify the resources needed to set up a retail store
4. Assess the risks associated with setting up a store
5. Demonstrate the steps of setting up a retail store as per plan
6. List the elements of an effective display at a store
7. Define hot, warm, cool, and cold colours
8. Compare the uses of hot, warm, cool, and cold colours in visual merchandising
9. Implement colour blocking and colour coordination techniques for effective visual merchandising
10. Identify various zones at the retail store
11. Identify various elements of customers' buying behaviour
12. Assess customers' buying behaviour to modify visual merchandising plans
13. Demonstrate various techniques of handling customers
14. Practise visual merchandising techniques as per norms

2.3.1 Introduction

Setting up the store in an aesthetic way is very important and part of visual merchandising. Customers are drawn towards a well-organised store. The more people come, the more the opportunities to sell products increases.

Importance of setting up the store
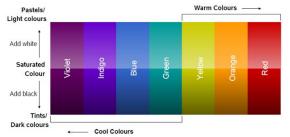
- There are many benefits that a well-set store provides. Some of them are:
- Humans are visual creatures. If the store is set up in a better way, footfalls will increase
- A better-organised store is an easy experience for the customer. For example, older customers can point out what exactly they want if it is displayed right in the front
- It helps in pitching products as salespeople can get the product in hand easily. For example, if a customer has asked for something and salesperson is not able to find it, it leaves a very bad impression
- Better service for a brilliantly set up store brings customer loyalty that is very important in the long run. For example, if the customer is happy with the experience in store A, they are less likely to go for store B

2.3.2 Design and visual effects

In the retail industry, the first impression is the last impression. A product, which is appealing to the eyes, gets sold first. So, as a visual merchandiser, your first and foremost responsibility is to make your store's products get displayed in an eye-catching, attention-grabbing, and appealing manner.

Colour Blocking

- Colour blocking involves placing basic merchandise based on its colour
- Colour blocking is carried out vertically so that the customer can see a wide variety of colour options available
- Colour blocking is done by VIBGYOR (violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red), where the lighter colour are arranged on the top and the darker ones at the bottom

Fig. 2.3.1: The VIBGYOR concept in colour blocking
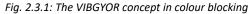
Fig. 2.3.2: Light colours on the top and darker colours towards the base

Colour Coordination

Colour coordination involves organising and displaying merchandise that belongs to a given family of colours.

Hot and warm

- Hot colour refers to fully saturated red colour
- All colours containing red are warm
- Adding yellow to red creates warm colours

Cold and cool

- Cold colour refers to fully saturated blue
- All colours containing blue are cool
- Adding yellow to blue creates cool colours

Colour family	Used where and when
Warm colours	• Used while coordinating upper and bottom wear • Comprises all shades of red, orange, yellow, beige, and brown
Cool colours	• Used while coordinating upper and bottom wear • Comprises all shades of green, blue, beige, and grey

Table 2.3.1: Use of colour family

Process of creating visually appealing displays:

1. Create the ambience delightful by keeping the store spacious and uncluttered
2. Use proper lighting to focus on popular products
3. Use the design brief to identify the focal points of the display. Focal points should have a current trend.
4. Create window displays using props like posters that highlight new offers, festive discounts, new collections, etc.
5. Generate visual displays based on the requests set by the marketing department
6. Choose aesthetically soothing colours for interiors
7. Put up callouts and placards inside the store with catchy quotes
8. Implement and stick to plots and themes according to the above variables to make maximum returns for the desired category in the store
9. Check that the completed display meets health and safety guidelines and legal requirements
10. Assemble and dismantle the visual displays, if and when required
11. Always comply with the company policies

Zones

A floor in a retail store can be divided into three different zones based on floor visibility.

Fig. 2.3.3: The three zones on a floor

Zone	Where	Characterised by
Zone 1	Right next to the aisle	• Maximum visibility to the customers • Characterised by combo offers on display and entry price points • New arrivals and items on offer are placed here
Zone 2	Between the fixtures touching the aisle and the back wall	• Not visible at first glance • Basic and little old items are displayed here
Zone 3	The back wall	• Quite visible from a distance • Characterised by the latest theme • Old items and cut pieces are placed on the bottom-most shelf on the wall

Table 2.3.2: Creating visually appealing displays

2.3.3 Customer's Buying Behaviour

Understanding, analysing, and keeping track of customer behaviour is very critical for a retail store to hold its position in the market. Various factors influence them. Some of them are:

• **Purchasing Power –** A customer generally analyses his/her purchasing capability before purchasing a product or service. If the product is excellent but is way above the purchasing power of the customer (the customer cannot afford the product), it affects the sales of the store. Segmenting customers based on their purchasing power will help in determining eligible customers to achieve better results.

• **Group Influence –** There are two types of influential groups. The primary influential group consists of family members, classmates, and immediate relatives. The secondary influential group comprises neighbours and acquaintances. These groups have a strong influence on the purchasing power of a customer.

• **Personal Preferences –** On a personal level, consumer behaviour is influenced by personal likes, dislikes, priorities, etc. In the retail industry, own view and style can be a dominating factor in influencing a customer. Though advertisements can help in influencing these factors, individual choices exert a more significant influence on the end purchase.

• **Economic Conditions –** The financial situation of the market is the most significant factor that makes a customer think before making a purchase. This is mainly in the case of vehicles, houses, and household appliances. A positive economy makes a customer confident in buying products without undergoing financial losses.

• **Marketing Campaigns –** Advertisements play an important role in influencing the purchasing decision of customers. The marketing promotions done regularly can change the customer to such an extent that they may end up buying a different brand than they usually do.

2.3.4 Customer handling

Customers are what the retail industry is based on. To satisfy the needs of the customers is the primary motive of the retail sector.

Process of handling customers:

• Comprehend the general need of the local customers by checking the past sales record of the store

• Survey the market and understand the trends

• Within a store, always convey correct and relevant information to a customer about the product in question

• Inform the customer about multiple discounts offers according to the store policy

• Direct the customer to sales executives handling particular categories of products

• Identify cases of customer grievance and make sure to work on and resolve them

• Encourage customers to give feedback on the store products and services

2.3.5 Dos and Don'ts of Visual Merchandising

While setting up a store, there are certain Do's and Don'ts that a visual merchandiser has to follow.

Dos:

• Know your objective

• Use the seasons as your prop or starting point when developing a display

• Create visual displays that stimulate a customer's interest by peaking the senses – sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch

• Create compelling presentations using the six viewpoints – space, story, time, emotion, movement and shape

• Customers like to be a part of the decision. So include a way of self-selection

• The easier it is for people to understand and purchase, the more sales you will make

• Display a price list or add it on the products to help people make a decision

Don'ts:

• Don't create busy displays as it overwhelms people and makes them walk away

• Don't display excess stock as people won't be able to see past the clutter. Keep it clean and simple. The whole set should be visible.

• Don't turn the lights off. Keep the lights focussed on the displays even after the store closes.

• Don't block walkways. Ensure there is adequate space for people to walk around the displays.

• Never assume someone knows how to use a product. People want to be well informed when they make a purchase. Provide all the information needed.

• Stick to the brand guidelines

• Use minimal and straightforward words like 'Save,' 'Free,' 'Healthy,' 'Multi,' and 'Quick.'

Activity

1. Based on your locality, make a list of merchandise that will have high sales records.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Fill in the blanks by choosing the correct option:

1. Encourage the customers to give a _____ on the store products and services.
   a) Feedback
   b) Identity
   c) Category
   d) None of these

2. Comprehend the general need of the customers by checking the _____ of the store.
   a) Productivity
   b) Services
   c) Past sales record
   d) All of the above

3. Always comply with the company _____.
   a) Merchandise
   b) Services
   c) Customers
   d) Policies

UNIT 2.4: Merchandising Designs and Themes

Unit Objectives ⊙

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Summarise the impact of store designs on visual merchandising
2. Identify the ongoing theme at the store
3. Prepare a visual merchandising plan as per the identified theme
4. Set up the store based on the theme and visual merchandising plan
5. Demonstrate the steps of assessing store sales
6. Evaluate the performance of the store based on the theme

2.4.1 Introduction

In different ways and methods, retail stores are designed in such a way that the business is benefitted from it in the long run. Visual merchandising helps to position products in such a way that it blends with the ambience of the store.

Impact of store designs on Visual merchandising

Store designs are done in several ways as part of visual merchandising, and there are countless benefits.
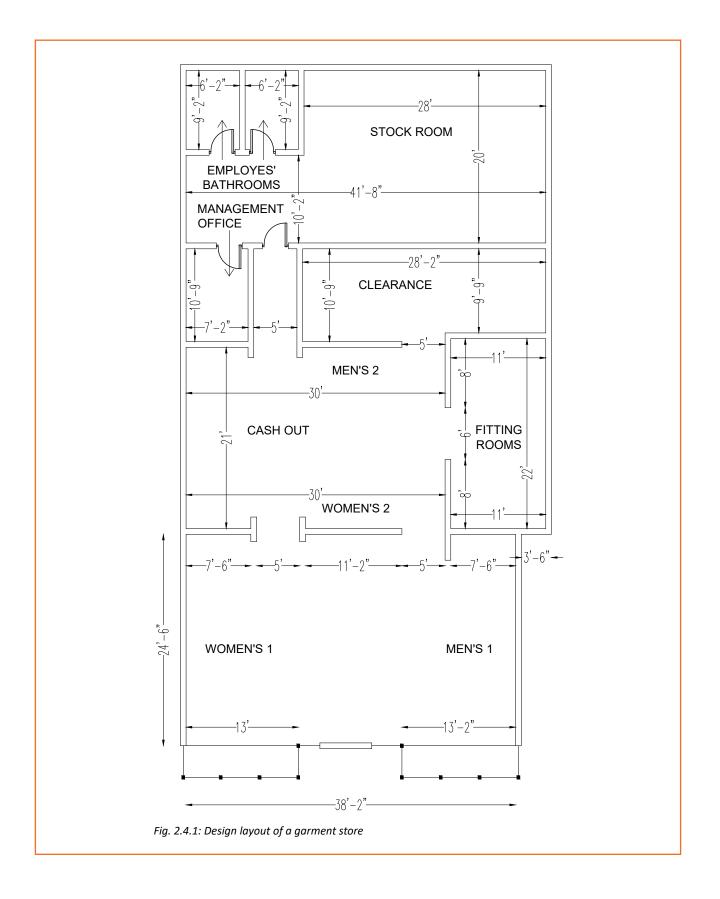
- Thematic design of the store sets the mood of the customer in sync with the ambience. For example, retailers decorate stores with flowers and balloons on Valentine's Day to lure customers.
- Designs build a deep connection between the brand and the customer. For example, if the design of company X is better than company Y, customers are more likely to prefer the former
- Designs have become more crucial to attract customers to visit stores as everything is available online nowadays. For example, the overall experience, design, theme, etc. can be a determinant factor of customer attraction and later customer retention

2.4.2 Store designs

Apart from all the topics discussed above, there are multiple other parameters that a visual merchandiser has to keep in mind. Some of them are as follows:

Design layout of stores – Every store has a different plan depending on the floor area it gets. The visual merchandiser is responsible for setting up the merchandise and managing the available space efficiently. As a visual merchandiser, one should be able to study the design drawings and put the layouts together.

For example, in a multi-floored garment store, usually, the ground floor comprises the women's wear and kid's section. Then the 1st floor is allocated to the men's section. This may vary from store to store depending on the number of levels available and the number of segments they wish to put up.

Fig. 2.4.1: Design layout of a garment store
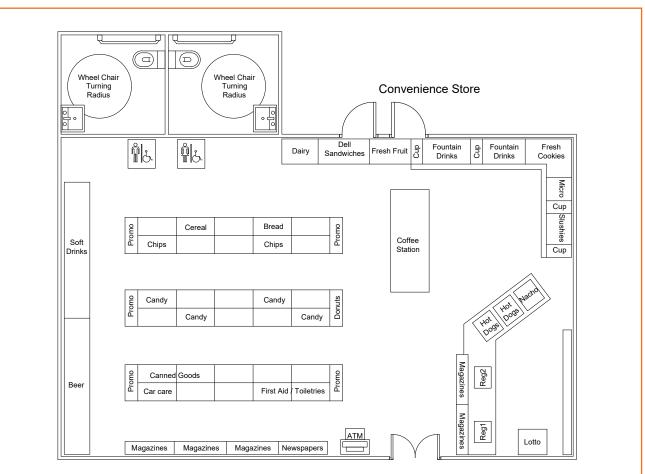
Fig. 2.4.2: Design layout of a convenience store

Shelf space – Every store has a fixed area where the merchandise has to be put up. Every section has limited shelf space. Now it is up to the visual merchandiser how much space to allocate to which category.

Display units – There are several display units like shelves, tired tables, stands, gondolas, etc. that are used to set up the merchandise in the store.

Fig. 2.4.3: Various display units for putting up garment display

A, B, C – Ring stand

D, E, F, G, H – Four arm stand

I, J – Peg units

K, L – Two arm stand
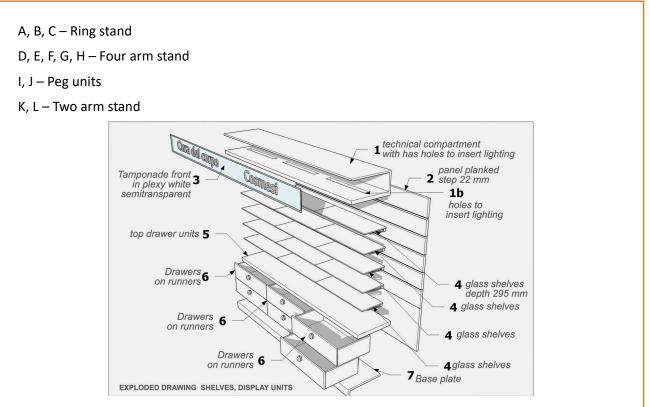
Fig. 2.4.4: Schematic diagram of shelves with drawers used for garment display

The question remains, how displays can achieve add-on sales, and why is this important? Ever wondered what the need of putting up small items like make-up, perfumes, chocolates, toys, etc., near the billing counter is? This method is called impulse shopping. At the point of checking out, the customers are lured into buying attractive items. This increases the sales of the store.

2.4.3 Setting up a store based on merchandising themes

Setting up a store according to a particular theme can be fun as well as challenging. The main task is to identify the competitive edge of the merchandise and try to place them accordingly.

For example

Consider that it is Christmas, and you are the visual merchandiser of a renowned garment store. You have been entrusted with the responsibilities of setting up the store as per the holiday theme. So how will you set up your store according to the theme?

Process of set up a garment store according to the theme:

• Hang up red and white decorations as per the theme
• Set up Christmas trees in the window display
• Put up mannequins decked up in "Santa" costume
• Every category of apparel has its style of dressing technique
• Play holiday-themed music in the background
• Place the USPs of the products with appropriate information
• Put up discount offers according to company policy

2.4.4 Implementation and evaluation of the merchandising theme

Every theme that is decided to set up has to be implemented and evaluated.

Steps to evaluate store sales based on merchandising themes:

1. Implement the approved merchandising ideas and plots with relevant offers
2. Group merchandise appropriately as per the purpose and style of display, the selling features of the merchandise and the visual effect
3. Ensure the availability of required resources for executing the merchandising plan
4. Assess the merchandising strategy and record observations accordingly
5. Measure performance of merchandising plans/themes
6. Get merchandising themes and plots validated by supervisors
7. Evaluate the performance of merchandising plots and themes post-implementation

Activity

1. Suppose Valentine's Day is approaching. List down the ideas for a window display of a garment store.

Exercise ✎

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Group merchandise as per

   a) Style of display

   b) Selling features of the merchandise

   c) Both a and b

   d) None of these

2. Christmas theme colours include

   a) Red and white

   b) Blue and black

   c) Yellow and green

   d) Brown and grey

3. How should you not evaluate store sales?

   a) Implement the approved merchandising themes and plots with relevant offers

   b) Ensure the unavailability of resources required to execute the merchandising plan

   c) Assess the merchandising strategy and record observations accordingly

   d) Get merchandising themes and plots validated by supervisors

B. Fill up the below table:

Type of merchandise	Display to use	Is the display hazardous? (Y/N)
Luxury watches		
Jewellery		
Couture dress		
Shoes		
Fast food items		
Toys		

Tips 🔍

- Visit various retail stores and study the visual merchandising techniques used
- Try creating innovative themes apart from the common ones (like festive seasons, national holidays, etc.)
- Fix up an interview with the visual merchandiser of a nearby retail store and ask him/her how he/she mitigates visual display risks at the store

Summary

- Industry trends within a specific industry are used to make predictions based on price, purchasing, marketing, manufacturing, sales methods, and many more.
- Steps of identification of trend patterns are solely based on the purpose of your study.
- The designing of the store during seasonal trends should reflect the specific theme in question.
- Failure in the identification of the store needs can lead to a decrease in sales of the store.
- The best possible way to attract customers into the store is to make it visually appealing.
- The displays of the store should follow the company policy.
- Customer satisfaction is the foremost priority in the retail industry.
- Window displays depicting a particular theme, play a significant role in attracting customers into the store.

Activity

1. Prepare a list of items that can be cross-sold with a denim jacket.
2. How will you set up the interiors of the store for Christmas?
3. Consider a scenario where you have been recruited, as a visual merchandiser, by a general merchandise store. The store sells general food items, groceries, dairy products, plastic items, and cookware. Prepare a visual merchandising plan stating:
4. The criteria for segregating the merchandise
5. The displays for each category of merchandise
6. The benefits you seek to derive from each display decision

Notes

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Exercise ✎

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Which of the following can be considered a prop for decorating a store during Diwali?
    a) Oil lamps   b) Jingles

    c) Bridal attire   d) Beachwear

2. How should you not treat a customer in case he/she cannot find a particular item?
    a) Try investigating what the problem is

    b) Shout at him/her for not being able to find the item

    c) Lead him/her to a sales executive of that particular department

    d) Apologise to him/her for the inconvenience

3. Which of the following should not be present at a window display of a wedding season?
    a) Bridal lehenga   b) Heavy jewellery

    c) Christmas tree   d) Festive discount offers

4. Which of the following is not a safety measure?
    a) Following the evacuation plan

    b) Learning first-aid

    c) Be aware of all fire exits

    d) Keeping all sharp objects and tools unattended

Scan the QR codes or click on the link for the e-books

What does a visual merchandiser actually do?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpTQml8OyHs

Merchandising Display Techniques

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4bKPBCEVWc

Visual Merchandising - What it is, Types, Techniques, Five senses, Advantages, Examples

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV89T3FMlLc

Important Elements of Visual Merchandising in Retail

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-Ng8wPd9Z4

3. Store Policies, Merchandising Norms and Statutory Regulations While Executing Themes and Plots

Unit 3.1 - Policies and Guidelines in Visual Merchandising

Unit 3.2 - Availability and Supply of Merchandise

RAS/N0402

Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, the participants will be able to:

1. Identify the steps of preparing visual merchandising budgets
2. Summarise the impact of not following the visual merchandising budget
3. List the statutory guidelines w.r.t visual merchandising
4. Summarise the impact of not following statutory guidelines at the store
5. Classify the store's policies and norms
6. Demonstrate the steps of complying with the visual merchandising budget and statutory guidelines
7. Prepare a list of vendors for the store
8. Design strategies of maintaining good terms with vendors
9. List the key decision-makers at the store
10. Check the suitability and availability of merchandise with the relevant decision-makers

UNIT 3.1: Policies and Guidelines in Visual Merchandising

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Summarise the need for store policies and visual merchandising budgets
2. Identify the standard policies of the store with respect to visual merchandising budgets
3. Discuss the steps to be adopted in case of non-compliance with store policies and visual merchandising budgets
4. Summarise the standard visual merchandising polices of the store that needs to be followed
5. List the store's vendors
6. Summarise the impact of non-compliance with vendor guidelines
7. Discuss category and brand norms at the store

3.1.1 Introduction

A policy is a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organisation or individual.

Every store has a set of policies and guidelines. Since visual merchandisers are expected to attract more customers by incorporating different visual changes into the store, they must know the store policies and guidelines. Merchandising should be at par with the policies and procedures of the store.

Importance of policies and guidelines

It is very crucial to understand the importance of policies and guidelines. There are many benefits in the long and the short run that helps to create a customer base and a sustainable revenue model.

• Policies are used to guide visual merchandisers in their role and line of work
• Guidelines and policies help visual merchandisers work within the limits of the sanctioined budgets
• Policy adherence ensures that visual merchandisers are consistent in their services towards the store

3.1.2 Store Policies and Statutory Guidelines (Visual Merchandising)

For every visual merchandiser to function correctly, it is mandatory to adhere to specific guidelines. Visual merchandisers must abide by both visual merchandising guideliens and generic (common for all store employees) guidelines.

Specific guidelines (related to visual merchandising)

Visual merchandisers are required to follow a few specific guidelines related to their line of work – visual merchandising. A few examples are:

- **Legal and organisational requirements for storing stock, including health and safety requirements and the removal of out-of-date stock –** Visual merchandisers must adhere to standards and rules for storing stock (related to visual merchandising and displays), health and safety requirements, and removing out-of-date stock. Such rules and standards may be organisational or even may pertain to the retail industry as a whole.

  Below are the examples of a few standards that apply:

Storing mannequins

Visual merchandisers should:

- store mannequins in the original packing boxes
- wrap mannequins in bubble wraps if the original packing boxes are unavailable
- store the mannequins' limbs, with extra padding, separately
- use styrofoam or polyfoam for cushioning and as fillers
- arrange for dismantling and cleaning of mannequins before putting them back for storage

Storing gondola shelves

Visual merchandisers should:

- avoid overstocking gondola shelves, to their full stocking capacity, to prevent damage and bowing of shelves
- make sure that the gondola shelves are utilised as per their stocking capacity
- perform or arrange for regular cleaning operations
- store metal shelves in a dry place

Storing lights

Visual merchandisers should:

- arrange for check-up operations by licensed electricians before storing lights after use
- arrange for replacements and repair, if needed, before storing lights after use
- dismantle lights, if possible, before storing them
- pack the fragile components of lights in cardbox boxes
- use peanuts and bubble wraps for packing and cushioning
- avoid stacking lights because they are fragile
- avoid winding up wires and cables, while storing, since this may damage the cables

Health and safety compliance with respect to signages and displays – Signages and displays may pose health and safety-related risks to staff and customers alike.

Examples of hazards related to signages and visual displays:

- overhead signs that may drop
- signs at a height
- electrical cables and wires that extend past the display zones
- unsecured mannequins that may topple and hurt people
- plinths, gondolas, and display tables that customers may bump against
- faulty lights and exposed/frayed wires

Risks involved (for staff, and customers):

- electrical fire from short-circuits
- fire from discarded cartons, cardboard boxes, paper packages, etc.
- electrical shocks (from exposed and frayed cables/wires)
- burns from hot lights
- trips and falls from inappropriately placed

Health and safety dos and don'ts for visual merchandisers:

Do

- ensure that the signs suspended from ceilings allow enough space for customers to walk beneath them
- use grids and ceiling grills to suspend signs and displays
- use toggle bolts for securing signs and displays with plaster ceilings
- secure all parts of mannequins well with special focus on the rod, which attaches to the ankle, and the base plate
- tighten support rods to prevent toppling of mannequins
- wire mannequins to the floor (striking a mannequin) if base plates are not used
- secure props and wall displays by screws and heavy-duty nails
- attach three-dimensional letters with the help of headness nails (brads), hot glue, or double-face foam tape

Don't

- never use pins for long-term support of props against walls
- never use unprotected spotlights while installing visual displays since these may cause severe burns
- never keep signs and lightings within the customers' reach

Generic guidelines (related to the store)

A few common examples of generic store policies, which visual merchandisers should be aware of, are:

- **Confidentiality and nondisclosure policy -** This focuses on confidentiality and prevents terminated employees from taking the clients of the company or starting a rival business.
- **Anti-discrimination policy -**This keeps visual merchandisers compliant with anti-discrimination laws of the country. Some laws extend protection to expecting women, nursing mothers, and persons of varied ethnicity, caste, creed, religion, skin colour, gender, etc.
- **Employment at will -** This means that either the employer or the employees are free to terminate the employment relationship.
- **Compensation and benefits -** This includes the payment schedule and payday, along with perks and allowances.

In case of non-compliance

If the designs or changes are not at par with the company guidelines, the employees can:

• locate the store manager
• get hold of the handbook of store policies/guidelines
• read the manual thoroughly
• check in the guide whether the prop you wish to put up is mentioned in the instructions or not
• seek assistance from your supervisor in case of discrepancies

3.1.3 Communication with Vendors

The visual merchandiser (VM) sources merchandise and props to be featured in visual merchandising displays. For this, the VM has carry out the following:

• make decisions regarding the alternative selections of merchandise and props with the designated person, when the ones originally specified are unavailable or unsuitable
• make arrangements with vendors or suppliers for delivery of merchandise and props
• make plans so that all merchandise and props arrive at the store before installing the display
• check the progress of deliveries of merchandise and props
• take initiatives to resolve the situation in case the deliveries of merchandise and props are delayed
• update stock records to account for merchandise on display
• describe, to vendors, the signage and graphics required by the store
• source signage and graphics from vendors to meet visual merchandising needs of the store
• place orders for signage and graphics
    o within the required timescales
    o within the available budget
    o from suppliers who have confirmed they can meet the specified requirements
• monitor the progress of orders for signage and graphics
• assess the delivered signage and graphics to ensure they meet the agreed requirements

Things to remember

• The VM checks if the merchandise is available as per the VM theme/plan/design brief and procures that from the store internally
• However, the VM must check with the store staff that the promoted products (for sale) are already in stock
• In case the said product is not there at the store, there exists no question of placing orders for and procuring the related props from the vendors
• VMs must also note that, for setting up the visual displays, the merchandise is additionally procured from the store's internal departments

Process of selecting vendors

• Check the list of products to be promoted and displayed
• Check if the said products have been stocked at the store

- List the props required for displaying the said products
- Make a list of the props or visual merchandise that need a refill
- Fill out the requisition form
- Contact multiple vendors and get an estimate of the price of the items
- Select the most cost-effective vendor
- Place orders with the selected vendor

Although it does not fall under the direct duties of a visual merchandiser to deal with the vendors, still it beneficial to know about the ordering process to get an idea about the estimate of products to be ordered.

For example:

Following is an example of a requisition form template of a renowned apparel store.

Visual Merchandise Supplies Requisition Form

Vendor Name:	
Requested By:	
Delivery Location:	

Sl. No.	Display Props	Quantity (No.)		Price (Rs.)
1.	Mannequins	x		
2.	Shelves	x		
3.	Gondolas	x		
4.	Hangers	x		
5.	Cabinets	x		
6.	Display tables	x		
7.	Hangers	x		
8.	Signages	x		
9.	Foldable shelves	x		
10.	Plinths	x		

Signatures:		
1.	Visual Merchandiser	
2.	Lead Visual Merchandiser	

Date of Order Placed:	Date of Delivery:

Fig. 3.1.1: Template of a renowned apparel store

3.1.4 Familiarity with Different Brand Norms

In this fast-developing commercial sector, every category of product has multiple brands that are in cut-throat competition with each other to make their position in one of the top-selling brands in the market. Consequently, they take specific steps to promote the name of their brand. So, accordingly, a visual merchandiser of a store has to comply with the norms of that brand and follow their guidelines.

For example:

Suppose you are the visual merchandiser of a famous restaurant and you need to promote your food delivery partners. There are specific steps that you need to follow according to their brand policies.

- Make yourself aware of various food delivery partners
- Tie up with these brands and install their software in the restaurant computer
- Make your restaurant products available on their domain
- Put up stickers or posters in your store to according to the promotional policy of the food delivery brands that your restaurant is partnered with
- Make your in-house customers aware of these delivery partners by word of mouth
- Comply with your company policies as well as those of the delivery partners

Activity

1. Suppose you are running out of casual shirts and need to fill out a requisition form to place an order to the vendors. Make a copy of the requisition form and fill out the details of the desired products in proper groups that have to be sent to the vendors.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Common store policies include
   a) Nondisclosure policy
   b) Anti-discrimination policy
   c) All of these
   d) None of these

2. What type of vendors should not be selected?
   a) Most cost-effective vendor
   b) Vendors making late deliveries
   c) Vendors maintaining a good rapport with the company
   d) None of these

3. Compensation and benefits in a company include
   a) Pay schedule
   b) Perks
   c) Allowances
   d) All of these

UNIT 3.2: Availability and Supply of Merchandise

Unit Objectives ⊚

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Check availability of merchandise
2. Practise reaching an agreement with decision-makers
3. Discuss the actions to be taken when merchandise is not available at the store
4. Identify the key decision-makers with whom the VM must agree on the visual merchandising plan

3.2.1 Availability of Products/Merchandise

A VM msut carry out the crucial role of checking the availability of products/merchandise required to set up a visual merchandising display. It is the responsibility of a visual merchandiser to stay updated with the stock of the merchandise and props in the store as well as the delivery schedule of ordered props. If the required merchandise is unavailable, he/she must make arrangements for replenishing the stock. However, checking the availability of the stock to be promoted (via visual display) would help the VM immensely in effective planogramming.

Importance of Product/Merchandise Availability in Visual Marketing

If the products/merchandise/props are not available during a particular trend, the visual display suffers, the highlighted products are not promoted, and the store is unable to meet its target revenues.

For example:

Consider a scenario where the visual merchandiser of a garment store plans for visual merchandising based on the Navratri theme. The VM plan includes placing mannequins in the window displays and in-store plinths and dressing them up in the traditional attire. The mannequins need to be poised in such a manner that they show Dandiya poses. The VM places orders with a few vendors accordingly. However, due to the huge rush of orders during the Navratri, the shipments get delayed by almost a couple of days.

This is why VMs should check the availability of visual merchandise items in advance and plan accordingly so that such scenarios do not occur.

How to ensure product availability:

• Preparing the inventory taking count of the available stock in the store and the storehouse
• Taking note of the stock that needs to be restored
• Comparing the selected merchandise with the display requirements
• Contacting vendors and place the order of the stock
• In case of unavailability of the stock, reporting the situation to your supervisors
• Taking the necessary steps for making the products available without compromising your deadlines

3.2.2 Agreement with Decision Makers

Decision-makers, like in any other industry, play a crucial role in retail.

The key decision-makers in the retail industry are –

• **Initiator:** A person who decides to start the selling process like the Director of the company.
• **Influencer:** A person who tries to convince others that they need the product like the Sales team.
• **Decider:** A person who makes the final decision to sell a product like the superiors, stakeholders, shareholders.
• **Buyer:** The person who is going to pay for the product like the customers.

Being in charge of visual merchandising, sometimes, you will have an idea about decorating the store that might not be supported by the relevant decision-makers. What should you do in that situation?

Steps to be taken to reach an agreement:

• Make a list of the ideas that you wish to apply
• Make realistic time frames
• Follow the company policy
• Discuss your plans with your supervisors and get them approved
• In case of non-agreement, produce valid reasons as to why your ideas will be beneficial for the promotion and productivity of the store
• Produce evidence to support your cause
• Reach an agreement and negotiate with your superiors in case of a dispute

Activity

1. List the steps that you should take to initiate a discussion and reach an agreement to an argument with the decision-makers.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. The following steps for refurbishing the stock of merchandise are jumbled up. Choose the correct order.
    • Taking the necessary steps for making the products available without compromising your deadlines
    • In case of unavailability of the stock, reporting the situation to your supervisors
    • Contacting vendors and place the order of the stock
    • Taking note of the stock that needs to be restored
    • Comparing the selected merchandise with the display requirements
    • Preparing the inventory taking count of the available stock in the store and the storehouse

    a) i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi   b) vi, iv, v, iii, ii, i

    c) Vi, v, iv, iii, ii, i   d) i, iii, vi, iv, ii, v

2. Who is not a decision-maker in the retail industry?
    a) Broker   b) Initiator

    c) Decider   d) Influencer

3. The people who supply the merchandise you need for display are called_____.
    a) Supplier   b) Producer

    c) Vendor   d) None of these

Summary

- Always try to abide by the statutory guidelines as described by the store
- Communicate with the vendors as per company policies
- Choose the vendor whose tender seem cost-effective
- Get acquainted with all the norms of the multiple brands that your company is responsible for selling
- If you are sure about a particular idea, pitch it to the decision-makers with proper supporting evidence
- Make appropriate arrangements for stock when unavailable
- Seek the assistance of supervisors in case of any discrepancy

Activity

1. Suppose you are in charge of the display of the winter stock of a garment store, and one of the orders has got misplaced. List the steps that you will take to recover the situation.
2. List the changes you will make in the store when a particular idea is not following the company policy but is popular with the customers.

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Exercise ✎

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Which of the following is NOT correct?
   a) Disregard the store policy and put up decorations according to your free will

   b) Discuss with the decision-makers concerning making arrangements for the supply of products

   c) Meet the deadlines

   d) Choose a vendor who quotes the least tender

2. Which is NOT the correct manner of promoting the brand partners?
   a) Be aware of the terms and conditions of the brand partners

   b) Spread false rumours about the brands to in-house customers

   c) Display posters and stickers of the brands in the store

   d) Use proper methods of collaboration according to company policy

3. Fill the blank:
   For every store to function correctly, it is mandatory to adhere to the _____.

   a) Decorations   b) Clothes

   c) Store guidelines   d) Profit

4. Suppose you are not sure whether a specific item that you want to put up for decorating the store is following the company policy or not. So what should you do in that situation?
   a) Put up the item anyway   b) Don't put up the item

   c) Get in a quarrel with your supervisor

   d) Check in the handbook whether the prop you wish to put up is mentioned in the guidelines or not

Scan the QR codes or click on the link for the e-books

What is Planogram In Retail? | Importance of Planogram

https://youtu.be/vWsZPIOF31k?si=IF0oySX298kuff50

4. Collect and Analyze Data to Track the Visual Impact of Promotions and Events

Unit 4.1 - Collection and Identification of Data

Unit 4.2 - Interpretation and Analysis of Data

Unit 4.3 - Miscellaneous Responsibilities

RAS/N0403

Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, the participants will be able to:

1. Establish the requirement of data at the store
2. Identify tools of data collection at the store
3. Collect data using appropriate tools and techniques
4. Classify the store data
5. Predict the visual impact of all promotions and events organised by the head office/brands/store
6. Identify the parameters to be observed and recorded to assess the impact of promotions and events
7. Compare current and past data trends
8. Evaluate the effect of displays and layouts w.r.t suitable standards
9. Interpret customers' responses to store displays
10. Identify improvements in the way visual merchandising is done at the store
11. Report findings and recommendations to the store's decision-makers
12. Assess information fairly while reviewing the effects of displays and layouts
13. Examine if all the parts of the display meet requirements
14. Check if the displays are accessible, safe, and secure
15. List safety and security risks associated with the display
16. Select appropriate ways of mitigating risks at the store
17. Check the display's visual effect from the customers' points of view

UNIT 4.1: Collection and Identification of Data

Unit Objectives ⊙

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Survey visual impact of all promotions and events
2. Classify parameters to be observed to assess the impact of promotions
3. Set up standards for evaluating the effect of displays
4. Examine improvements for visual merchandising at the store
5. Point out security risks to the display and ways of reducing them
6. Collect information about customers' responses to displays

4.1.1 Introduction

Visual displays, if eye-catching, can turn the sales records up exponentially. For that, it is imperative to analyse the on-going trends and keep up with the standards.

Data and its Types at a Retail Store

Organised information are called data.

Importance of tracking assessment

- Tracking assessment helps visual merchandisers understand whether things are on the right track
- A visual merchandiser can make the necessary changes. For example, if a particular design or theme has not gone well with the customer, it can be changed to avoid further damage

4.1.2 Tracking and Assessment of Visual Impact of Promotions

To realise whether an idea for visual merchandising is beneficial for the organisation, it is essential to assess the impact of the changes made. Based on the findings, the visual merchandiser makes recommendations, on improvements made to decision-makers, on the way visual merchandising is carried out in the store, based on the the study findings and conclusions. The visual merchandiser must also monitor the sales figures for the products set up in VM display.

The visual impact of promotions can be tracked and assessed by the VM with the help of the below:

The use of various types of evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of visual merchandising

The effectiveness of visual merchandising at a retail store is reflected by:

- **Sales growth –** the positive change in sales volume and revenue from sales
- **Frequency of sales conversions –** the number of confirmed purchases in a given period of time

- **Degree of customer convenience while shopping –** the visual merchandising at the store should be so effective that customers are able to find everything they need without the help of staff members

Valid pieces of evidence are required to prove sales growth, increased frequency of sales conversions, and customer convenience of shopping. These are the types of information, which are most useful for evaluating the effectiveness of visual merchandising displays.

Parameters of effectiveness	Examples of evidence
Sales growth	Periodic sales reports
Frequency of sales conversions	Periodic sales reports, increase in the revenue earned per customer in unit time (say, an hour)
Degree of customer convenience	Customer feedback forms

Table 4.1.1: How effectiveness of visual merchandising is measured

The time when the effectiveness of visual merchandising displays should be evaluated

The effectiveness of visual merchandising displays should be assessed during:

- the performance review of the visual merchandising team
- the incorporation of continuous improvement in terms of visual merchandising
- the analysis of data for creating new and innovative planograms and design briefs

The understanding of the meaning of "validity" and "reliability" with respect to the measurement of customers' responses to visual merchandising displays

Validity determines the degree of accuracy for a given set of data. Reliability determines the level of consistency for the same set of data. Visual mechandisers must check if the customers' responses with respect to visual merchandising displays are both valid and reliable.

Parameters	Validity	Reliability
Implication	The degree to which the same responses can be obtained when the visual merchandising is repeated under the same conditions	• The degree to which the responses measure what they are supposed to measure – effectiveness of visual merchandising
Assessment process	Checking the consistency of responses across different customers and at different points of time	• Checking if the responses reflect that they are happy with the visual merchandising and they have been able to find the required items easily • Checking if they have made quick purchase decisions

Table 4.1.2: Checking validity and reliability of customers' responses

For example:

The team at a general merchandise store wishes to measure the effectiveness of customer's responses over a week. They collect customers' responses in two ways:

• Customer feedback forms (kept at the POS for the customers' access)
• Face-to-face survey by an in-house survey team

The team carries out the response collection process in various slots during the day and throughout the week. The process involves collecting responses from the same group of regular customers. The responses are found to be valid and consistent.

Checking for reliability

• Set the questionnaire with contradictory questions
• Select a large number of customers for the sample survey
• If the customer answers both the contradictory questions with the same reply, the feedback is invalid
• More significant the number of customers addressing the same grievances or appreciations, the more authentic is the data

The analysis of information from customers' responses to evaluate the effectiveness of visual merchandising displays

The evaluation of the effectiveness of visual merchandising displays is done in terms of:

• the purpose of the display
• customers' responses to the display

For example:

A food retail celebrated the theme of "World Diabetes Day" and displayed various food items suitable for diabetics. The customers' responses were collected via feedback forms placed on the tables and face-to-face surveys at the cash counters. The findings revealed that customers found the theme very innovative and they would love to revisit the outlet soon. In fact, they responded that they would be awaiting the next innovative theme the outlet had in store for them.

Thus:

Factors influencing effectiveness of diaplay	Results
The purpose of the display	• Attracting the target customers (diabetic persons) and their families • Increasing revenue • Growing the customer base • Acquiring repeat customers
Customers' responses to the display	• Very positive • The responses were found to be valid and reliable • The responses reflected the impact of the display

Table 4.1.3: Factors influencing the effectiveness of display

4.1.3 Setting Agreeable Standards for Improving Visual Merchandise

To track the changes you made to the display of the store, it is necessary to set the standards on which you want to assess the performance.

The setting of standards depends on several parameters, such as:

• Locality and its population
• Mind-set and preferences of customers
• Products for sale on the seasonal theme
• Market feasibility of the product
• Competitors in that same genre of sale

But how will you set the standards for your assessment? The best way to set an agreeable standard is to interpret customer feedback.

Process of setting the standards:

• Discuss your idea with the supervisor before making any changes
• Comply with the latest trends of the season
• Identify the target areas of sales
• Survey the market and observe the visual merchandising of the competitors
• Tally the data and interpret the problem areas
• Devise innovative solutions to attract more customers based on their feedback

4.1.4 Reducing Security Risks

Any task, when carried out, has several potential risks. To reduce the intensity of threats is the primary task. In the retail sector, what can be the inherent risks in visual merchandising?

• The idea inspired by an already existing concept of a rival company
• Poor publicity of your company/store due to false rumours
• Attrition of existing customer base
• A new competitor in the market with better sales offers
• Failing design layouts because of limited space and resources
• Theft or robbery and vandalism
• Lack of budget

Process of reducing potential risks:

• Before pitching any new idea, always survey the market whether your rival competitor has already used that idea
• Be creative and innovative
• Plan your design layout based on the number of resources and the space available
• Take customer feedback seriously and try to find out the problem areas and work on them
• Make the customers aware more about what your store can offer and how the customers can benefit from it
• Install security cameras and guards to reduce the threat of theft and vandalism

Activity

1. There has been a theft in the local supermarket, accompanied by vandalism. What steps would you take, as a visual merchandiser, to deal with the situation?

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Which of the following is not a potential threat in visual merchandising?
   a) Lack of budget
   b) Innovative ideas
   c) Vandalism
   d) False rumours

2. The standard of parameters does not depend on:
   a) Mind-set of local customers
   b) Competitors in the same genre of sale
   c) Market feasibility of the product
   d) All of the above

3. Plan your design layout based on the amount of _____ and _____ available.
   a) Resources, space
   b) Customers, consumers
   c) Light, sound
   d) Market, rumours

UNIT 4.2: Interpretation and Analysis of Data

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Compare current and past data trends
2. Report findings and recommendations clearly to decision-makers
3. Interpret information about customers' responses

4.2.1 Introduction

A retail store gets a set of information and data trends that ultimately shape the decision-making of the company. Through analysis, the visual merchandiser knows what works best for a store and what causes a problem. It gives a certain direction on which a visual merchandiser must work to drive the sales.

4.2.2 Data Interpretation

To predict the type of trend, we need to analyse the data. Data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling data to discover useful information, informing conclusions, and supporting decision-making.

Different ways to collect primary data

Primary data is the data that is taken from first-hand sources directly. Primary data is used mostly in dynamic sectors where working with secondary data is not fruitful. The data is more accurate as it is taken directly from the sources.

1. **Closed-ended Surveys –** These involve preparing questionnaires that can only be answered in either yes or no.   For example:
    a. Do you visit the store more than once a week?
    b. Did you ever find the store display inconvenient?
    c. Do you like the store display today?
    d. Would you like the store display to remain the same even during next week?

2. **Open-Ended Surveys –** These involve preparing questionnaires where suggestions in a few lines have to be provided. For example:
    a. What did you buy today at the store?
    b. Were you able to find the items easily?
    c. What did you like or dislike about the store display?
    d. What recommendations would you like to make for the store?

3. **1-on-1 Interviews –** These involve asking individual customers about their preferences.
4. **Focus group discussions –** These involve choosing a handful of customers for the survey and analysing their responses later. For example, the focus group of a pharmaceutical outlet displaying items for mother and child care would comprise expecting mothers, new mothers, mothers of toddlers, etc. The study would involve collecting the mothers' responses on the effectiveness of the visual display at the outlet.
5. **Direct observation –** This method involves observing the behaviour of the customers near the focal point of display; for example, their impulse buying behaviour and how it is triggered by the display.

Ways to analyse data

1. Compare the obtained and expected results and analyse the data to comprehend the sales patterns
2. Frame visual merchandising ideas based on this interpretation
3. Record the findings and report them to your supervisor

For example:

A recent data analysis of retail stores has revealed that automation in retail would impact visual merchandising significantly in the next decade.

Parameters affected	Degree of impact	Future requirements
Merchandising planning	High	Automated historical analytics and predictive scenario analysis system
Assortment	Medium	Recommendation tools that suggest item-wise changes (for example, assesses incremental sales per unit of item)
Sourcing merchandise	Light	Integrated tools to enable cross-functional collaboration (for example, vendor management)
Pricing and promotion	High	Predictive tools consolidated into dynamic pricing system
Space planning (online and physical)	Medium	Automated planogram with real-time suggestions customised to meet local demands
Vendor management	Light	Automated vendor portal, discussion forum, tracking system, and dynamic purchase-order-management system
Stock rotation and replenishment	High	Automated predictive inventory-optimisation and forecasting tools that trigger alerts, prioritise activities based on store sales metrics, and suggest vendor communication

Table 4.2.1: The future requirements of retail stores

4.2.3 Customer Feedback Analysis

A significant source of information about the success of the sales of a store is its customers. Therefore, as a visual merchandiser, it is one of the roles to interpret the feedback given by customers.

The below example shows the steps of customer feedback analysis.

A visual merchandiser decides to dress up the mannequins in the new spring collection and place them in an array on plinths. How does he/she understand if the customers like the display?

Process of analysising the customer feedback:

1. Identify the need of the locality of your store
2. Observe the behaviour of the customers in your store and figure out the best selling products
3. Interact with the customers and ask them what changes would they prefer
4. Encourage them to fill out the feedback form and place suggestions
5. Identify the common grievances based on the feedback
6. Formulate new ideas based on the suggestions
7. Repeat the process for the original concept of visual merchandising

Here is a sample of the customer feedback form for your reference.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK FORM

Name: _____

Contact No.: _____

Email Id: _____

Birthday: _____   Anniversary: _____

How satisfied are you with the following features of our company?

Please rate the following:

1 – Very bad ☐   2 – Bad ☐   3 – Okay ☐   4 – Good ☐   5 – Very good ☐

Quality and quantity of products range   _____

Staff support and knowledge   _____

Customer happiness and satisfaction   _____

Products Pricing and offers   _____

Efficiency and effectiveness of customer service   _____

Suggestions:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Would you like to be notified of our store offers and discount via SMS? (Y/N) _____

Signature of Customer: _____   Date: _____

Fig. 4.2.1: Customer feedback form

Activity

1. Prepare a set of questions for conducting a close-ended survey.
2. Apply for a monthly internship at a nearby retail store. Take active initiatives to plan and participate into the visual merchandising operations. Collect customers' responses on the display. On the basis of the responses:
   a. Compare current and past data trends
   b. Interpret customers' responses
   c. Report findings and recommendations clearly to decision-makers
   d. Determine if the resposnes are reliable and valid

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Which of the following is not a method of conducting a survey?
   a) Close-ended surveys
   b) Focus groups
   c) Direct observation
   d) Abstract ideas

2. Analysis of data is done by checking its –
   a) Validity
   b) Reliability
   c) Both a and b
   d) None of these

3. Which of the following checks the accuracy of responses?
   a) Consistency
   b) Validity
   c) Precision
   d) Reliability

4. Which of the following checks the consistency of responses?
   a) Consistency
   b) Validity
   c) Precision
   d) Reliability

UNIT 4.3: Miscellaneous Responsibilities

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the processes of checking that the display is of easy access, safety, and security
2. Summarise the adjustments to be made within the scope of authority when needed
3. Explain the process of checking the visual effect from the customer's view
4. Discuss the importance of reporting to the concerned authority for problems beyond your scope of responsibility

4.3.1 Introduction

A visual merchandiser has some of the responsibilities other than designing and making everything aesthetically balanced. He or she is responsible for display is safe, secured, and easily accessible, gaining an understanding of the customer's point of view and reporting problems to authority even if it is beyond the scope of his/her responsibility.

4.3.2 Ensuring that the Display Meets All Requirements

A visual merchandiser has a lot of duties to fulfill in maintaining the look of a store. Apart from all the roles mentioned so far, there are multiple other responsibilities that a visual merchandiser has to take care of. The primary ones are meeting the requirements of the task assigned. However, the visual merchandiser must report all his/her findings, interpretations, and recommendations to the supervisor. He/she can change displays only with prior written consent of the supervisor.

Here are a couple of things that a visual merchandiser needs to do to ensure that the display meets all requirements:

How light, color, texture, shape and dimension combine to achieve the visual effects needed for a display

Factors like light, colour, shape, texture, dimension, size, brand name, end-use, price, etc. are a few special aspects of a store's products, which are emphasised on by the visual merchandiser. This emphasis is known as the dominance factor. A few common dominance factors utilised by visual merchandisers are:

- **Colour dominance**
  - The simplest and most effective way of visual display
  - Involves folding, stcking, and hanging products based on colour
  - Colour dominates size and style

- **Dominance by coordination**
  - Based on coordination between products
  - Enables the buyer to visualise how different products can be mixed and matched

o For example, instead of a single dominant colour, a team of colours belonging to the same family (warm, cool, etc.) can be displayed in a coordinated manner

- **Brand dominance**
  o Manufacturers often provide stores with display directives of products
  o Also, displaying brand names helps the store promote and sell the respective product lines and the suitable accessories

- **Size dominance**
  o Enables displaying as per size
  o For example, plus-size wear, children's items, etc.

Price dominance

  o Focuses on the product volume and the amounts that the customers will save
  o For example, a year-end sale offer at a store

Following and monitoring the VM budget

For example:

A visual merchandiser is assigned with the task of setting up the visual display for the autumn collection of a garment store. What are the steps that he/she should follow?

Process for meeting all the requirements:

1. Chalk out the layout of the design in such a manner that it reflects the theme and there is no confusion
2. Position the merchandise in such a way that the store does not look clumsy, and there is ample space in between
3. Stack the products up on the shelves to such a height such that the top shelf is within reach of the customers
4. Don't leave ladders and other tools in the store as it might cause an accident
5. Follow the company protocols

4.3.3 Adjustments within the Scope of Authority

Sometimes, there might be differences between you and your superiors based on your ideas projected. A little bit of adjustment and compromise makes all tiffs easy.

Your role in such a situation:

- Conduct elaborate research to collect proofs
- Support your ideas with valid proofs
- Make your superiors understand the benefit of your ideas
- Make a few tweaks within your scope of authority and adjust

For example:

Suppose there is a situation in a store where a colleague has committed an error like misplaced the bill of payment from a vendor, which has put a pause on the payment process. What should be a visual merchandiser's response?

- Analyse the situation
- Predict the consequence
- Comprehend whether you can make any adjustments that fall within your jurisdiction that might solve the issue

4.3.4 Recognising Customer's Point Of View

You can never understand a person until you consider things from his point of view. You may be biased towards your design. To analyse what appeals to a customer, wear the customer's shoes and look at the visual displays, and explain whether it appeals to you. Now, why do you need to do this?

- Being the creator of the design layout and observing the store through the eyes of a visual merchandiser, you are bound to like it
- You will not be able to find any flaws within the design unless you analyse the design from another perspective
- Since customers are the primary priority of a store, it is best to perceive the idea from a customer's point of view
- From a customer's point of view, whatever you feel inconvenient or if you find new ideas, you can implement them in your design

Activity

1. Visit the nearby department store. As a customer, walk through the store and observe the setup of merchandise. Take notes of how you think the setup can be improved. Also, take notes of the setup which you appreciate concerning visual merchandising. Discuss your observations in the next class.
2. Determine the type of dominance followed by the visual display at various aisles of the above store.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. It is the spring/summer season. Which line of garments should not be put up?

   a) Sweaters   b) Overcoats

   c) Pullovers   d) All of these

2. You are the visual merchandiser of a restaurant that has big glass window panes with a beautiful outside view. The management decides to put up a promotional offer on the window, which is blocking the outside view. What should you do?

   a) Discuss the situation with the superiors and make them understand why the window needs to be clear

   b) Tear down the promotional offers yourself

   c) Stay quiet and don't say anything

   d) Gossip about the situation with your colleagues

3. A colleague has committed a blunder, which can cause chaos in the management. What should be your role in such a situation?

   a) Report to your superiors about your colleague

   b) Analyse the situation and make necessary adjustments within your scope of authority

   c) Keep quiet and do nothing

   d) Encourage your colleague to commit another error

Summary

- For holding the position of your company in the market, it is essential to analyse the industry trends continually.
- Collect the data by conducting a survey, feedback forms of customers, and past sales records.
- Track and assess the impact of your visual display by observing the behaviour of your customers
- Set agreeable standards for improving the quality of designing of your merchandise.
- Carry out tasks in such a fashion that does not cause a threat or risk.
- Imagine yourself as your customer and validate your design to figure out the flaws.
- Keep in mind that all the displays that you put up must meet all the pre-requisites.
- Make adjustments in a few situations that can be done within your scope of the authority without compromising yourself.

Activity

1. A new store has opened up down the lane from your store and is filling with your existing customers. What would you do to win your customers back? List a few steps.
2. List the steps to predict whether this year's spring collection layout will be a hit.

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Exercise

A. Fill in the blanks by choosing the correct option:

1. When the economy is stagnant, it is called _____.
   a) Downtrend   b) Uptrend

   c) Poly trend   d) Horizontal trend

2. Best method to analyse a design is through _____ point of view.
   a) Store manager   b) Designer

   c) Customer   d) Sales

B. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. How should you not collect data?
   a) Closed-ended Surveys and Online Quizzes   b) Making assumptions

   c) 1-on-1 Interviews   d) Focus groups

2. Which of these methods should not be followed to reduce risks?
   a) Copy ideas from competitors and claim them as your own

   b) Plan your design layout based on the number of resources and the space available

   c) Take customer feedback seriously and try to find out the problem areas and work on them

   d) Install security cameras and guards to reduce the threat of theft and vandalism

5. Maintain Visual Merchandising Elements in the Store as per Brand and Store Guidelines

Unit 5.1 - Organization of Prop Display

Unit 5.2 - Staying Updated on the Price List

Unit 5.3 - Updating Stock

Unit 5.4 - Staff Engagement

Unit 5.5 - Customer Satisfaction and Safety

RAS/N0404

Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, the participants will be able to:

1. Inspect tools, displays, fixtures, and props for upkeep and maintenance needs
2. Arrange for new props in case of damaged/distressed props, displays, fixtures, and tools
3. Establish uniformity of displays across stores
4. Collect accurate information on price changes
5. Provide the store staff with accurate and up-to-date price information
6. Check price markings on the merchandise
7. Devise solutions for pricing problems at the store
8. Prepare realistic and updated stock replenishment plans
9. Practise dealing with out-of-date or deteriorating stock as per norms
10. Collect staff opinions regarding potential improvements to visual merchandising
11. List the safety measures adopted at the store
12. Summarise the impact of not following safety measures at the store
13. Comply with all safety measures

UNIT 5.1: Organization of Prop Display

Unit Objectives ⦿

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Implement checks to ensure the upkeep of tools and props of existing themes
2. Prepare new props in case of damaged/ distressed props
3. Establish uniformity of displays across stores

5.1.1 Introduction

Staying put and maintaining the company's position in the market can be a considerable risk if the visual merchandising of the store does not follow the guidelines and policies of the brands whose products are being sold by the retail store.

What is a prop?

A prop is an item that is used in a retail store, which is not for sale but assists in sales of other products. It enlivens the overall experience of the customer, and the products seem interesting.

For example, if a store sells jewellery placed strategically in a beautiful box, customers get attracted to the presentation with a better imagination.

Different props used in Visual Merchandising

• Mannequins, dummies, models, hangers, etc. for displaying clothes
• Using mascots according to themes
• Hanging pictures, wallpapers, etc.
• Placing different decorative figures, plants, etc.

Guidelines for using a mannequin

• Mannequins must be used to display in-house brands
• Mannequins must be used along with lecterns
• Mannequins must never be mixed with forms in a display
• Dress mannequins in well-fitted garments and deck them up with accessories to make the look complete
• Attach suitable wigs on the heads of mannequins
• Wigs, on mannequins, must be brushed with a wide-toothed comb

• Garments, which are put on mannequins, must be steamed or ironed carefully

Fig. 5.1.1: Ironed garments on mannequins

Types of damages in props

• Breaking of props
• Improper handling
• Forming crevices
• Missing props or parts or props

5.1.2 Conducting Check for Damages of Props of Existing Themes

A lot of customers are attracted to a store by how appealing the store looks from outside. But after coming inside the store, if they find props damaged, it leaves a wrong impression of the store on them. So, designing the store is not enough. Maintaining the design is equally important.

For example

Let us consider that the store is giving a sale on the winter clearance stock. The deal is bound to attract a considerable number of customers. The lights near the trial rooms are not working, the discount offers to hang from the ceiling are torn, the decorations put up during the winter have come off, and body parts of the mannequins are chipped. That leaves a very bad impression to customers.

Process of ensuring the upkeep of tools and props:

1. In case of an existing theme, check the working conditions and durability of the tools and accessories used
2. Inspect each item and examine the defect
3. Make a list of tasks to be done
4. Make a separate list of the things that need to be replaced
5. Fix the damages before the deadline
6. Adhere to the brand and store guidelines

Dos of prop and fixture maintenance:

• Keep lectern in place

• Keep the display well-lit

• Accessorise by cross-merchandising

• Place merchandise next to the display

• Ensure that leg forms should be on a podium and kept near a nesting table

Don'ts of prop and fixture maintenance:

• Keep housekeeping equipment near fixtures

• Place water bottles with merchandise

Fig. 5.1.2: Place water bottles

• Place files or any other inventory on fixtures

Fig. 5.1.3: Place files or any other inventory

• Place unstuffed bags on display

• Place bags on the floor

Fig. 5.1.4: Place bags on the floor

5.1.3 Maintaining Uniformity

A well-organized store looks picture perfect. Properly stacked goods and colour coordinated series of the display is aesthetically appealing to the eye and mind. In such situations, if a section of the store is in chaos with all the clothes from different categories jumbled up and piled up in the centre of the store due to lack of management, what should be done to tackle such a mess?

For example:

1. The visual merchandiser of a retail store has one of the responsibilities to be aware of the display pattern and themes, and all other details of the other outlets. If the store does not set up the merchandise or the theme in a certain way that the other outlets are following, that will impact the reputation of the brand of the store. It is mandatory to maintain uniformity across all the outlets of the store.

2. A multi-outlet fast-food joint has its interior designed in red with the brand graffiti and logo, across the globe. If, in one store, the visual merchandiser wishes to colour the walls blue instead of red, not only will it stand out from all the other outlets, thereby putting the company's reputation at stake but also violate the company policy. Thus, a uniform display must be maintained across all store outlets.

Process of maintaining co-ordination:

• Check whether the merchandise is well-stacked

• Detect whether the clothes of a particular category are stacked according to the colours. All the same colours should be stacked together.

• Maintain this stack even when customers pile up clothes and jumble them

• Promptly inform the store assistants to reorganize the store and restore it to the decided setup

• Ensure there is a uniformity maintained throughout the store

Activity

1. Make a list of all the props that you wish to implement at the end of season sale in a supermarket.

Exercise 🖊

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Which of the following is not a picture-perfect well-organised store?

   a) Different products jumbled up in the chaos

   b) Well-stacked shelves in an organised manner

   c) None of these   d) All of these

2. Damaged gives a _____ impression on the customers.

   a) Positive   b) Negative

   c) None of these   d) All of these

3. A uniform display must be maintained across all _____.

   a) Walls   b) Floors

   c) Store outlets   d) None of these

UNIT 5.2: Staying Updated on the Price List

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the steps of collecting accurate information on price changes
2. Record the updates on price changes in the store
3. Summarise the importance of providing accurate and updated price information to the staff who need it

5.2.1 Price List Changes

The market fluctuates periodically due to the fluctuation of the economy of the country/state. This leads to an increase or decrease in the price of commodities. As in-charge of the display of the stock and placing price tags on them, it is beneficial for the visual merchandiser, to continually stay updated on the market trends, the cost price of the products, and the selling price of all products at the retail store.

Need for updating price-lists

Let us consider a scenario where the price of a particular product has dropped, and the visual merchandiser being unaware of the price change of that product, have put up the price tag of the former price, which is higher. On the contrary, the competitor in the market is selling the product at the new rate as well as allowing a discount on it. The customer, who keeps a tab on these market fluctuations, may inquire why such instances of fluctuations have not been conveyed to him/her, and this may result in the loss of valuable customers.

5.2.2 Relaying the Relevant Information

The price list updates that you collected have to be relayed to:

• Accounts department
• Sales executives of individual departments
• Company superiors

Why should it be relayed?

• The Accounts department is responsible for keeping track of all the sales records of the store. If the price changes are not updated in the company's database, it might harm the overall sales of the store.
• The Sales Executives of individual departments are expected to be updated on the latest price list since they are responsible for direct face-to-face interaction with the customers.
• The company officials are responsible for formulating policies based on the updated prices.

For Example:

The following example will help you understand the context better.

For instance, there is a rise/fall in the stock market that has led to a drastic increase in the value of a particular product overnight. If employees remain unaware of these changes and continue to sell the product at its former price, the company will incur a massive loss because of not being updated on the relevant information.

5.2.3 Price Marking

After making changes in the price list, it is also necessary to update the display tags of the prices of the products. As a visual merchandiser, it is one of your duties to check that the updated prices are displayed in the price tags.

Why is this necessary?

Customers, nowadays, make well-informed purchases. If a specific customer is well updated about the latest market prices of a particular product and finds the previous price marked at the product, it might cause a blow in the reputation of the company.

The following example will help you understand the situation better.

Imagine a situation where the price of a mobile phone has decreased by Rs. 5000. But you are unaware of the price changes, and the product is listed at its former price. The customer who is interested in buying this phone is aware of the latest price and finds the phone marked at a much higher price.

Possible consequences of such a situation:

• Chaos created in the store by the customer due to false information
• Negative rumours spread by the customer about the store thus decreasing potential customers
• A decrease in sales and deterioration of the reputation of the store

Process of checking the prices:
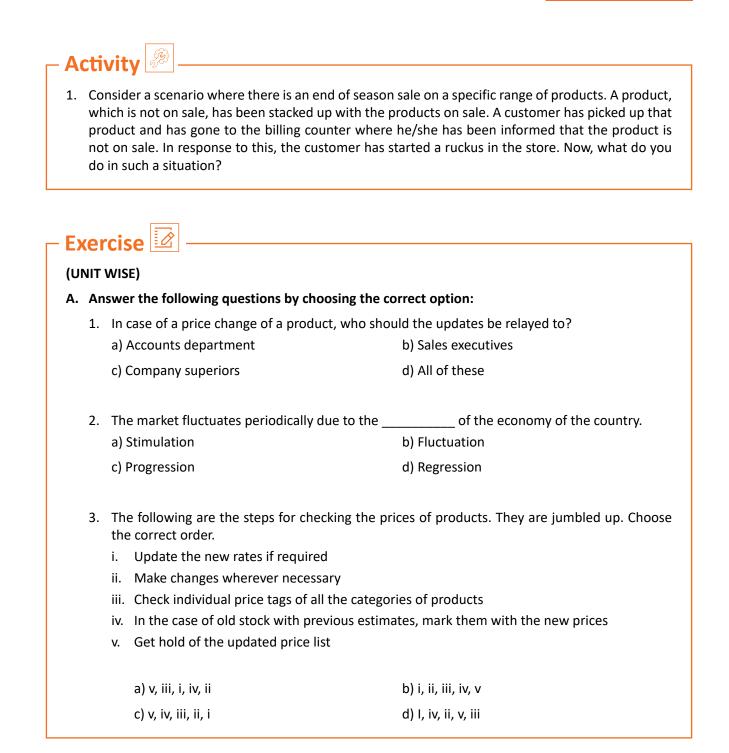
1. Get hold of the updated price list
2. Check individual price tags of all the categories of products
3. Update the new rates if required
4. In case of old stock with previous estimates, mark them with the latest prices
5. Make changes wherever necessary

5.2.4 Power Pricing

- Power pricing is the process of highlighting an offer via repeated communication
- Items are displayed on busts next to power pricing marks
- The same text and graphics are repeated on tabletops, thus strengthening the visual appeal
- Accompanied by high stacks of items
- The zone that displays power pricing is well-lit

Fig. 5.2.1: A gondola, used for power pricing, must be placed upfront

Activity

1. Consider a scenario where there is an end of season sale on a specific range of products. A product, which is not on sale, has been stacked up with the products on sale. A customer has picked up that product and has gone to the billing counter where he/she has been informed that the product is not on sale. In response to this, the customer has started a ruckus in the store. Now, what do you do in such a situation?

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. In case of a price change of a product, who should the updates be relayed to?

   a) Accounts department

   b) Sales executives

   c) Company superiors

   d) All of these

2. The market fluctuates periodically due to the _____ of the economy of the country.

   a) Stimulation

   b) Fluctuation

   c) Progression

   d) Regression

3. The following are the steps for checking the prices of products. They are jumbled up. Choose the correct order.

   i.   Update the new rates if required

   ii. Make changes wherever necessary

   iii. Check individual price tags of all the categories of products

   iv. In the case of old stock with previous estimates, mark them with the new prices

   v.   Get hold of the updated price list

   a) v, iii, i, iv, ii

   b) i, ii, iii, iv, v

   c) v, iv, iii, ii, i

   d) I, iv, ii, v, iii

UNIT 5.3: Updating Stock

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the process of ensuring that stock replenishment plans are up-to-date and realistic
2. Summarise the importance of dealing with out-of-date stock in line with company policy

5.3.1 Stock Rotation

Stock replenishment is an important part of visual merchandising as well as retail management. To stay ahead in a competitive market, retail stores cannot compromise on the stock. Besides, if a customer wants to buy a product and it is not available, it leaves a bad impact on the customer and future relationship with the store.

Visual merchandisers must try to gain the loyalty of the customer for the long-run, and hence the phases of a stock rotation must be followed. There is a figure given below to understand the concept better.
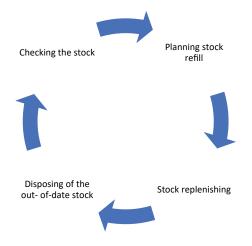
Checking the stock

Planning stock refill

Disposing of the out- of-date stock

Stock replenishing

Fig- 5.3.1: Phases of Stock rotation

The process of organizing inventory to mitigate the stock loss caused by expiration or obsolescence is known as stock rotation. Constant stock rotation entails moving products with impending sell-by dates to the front of the shelf and moving products with later expiration dates to the back.

Maintaining a well-organised store is aesthetically appealing to the eyes. But the repetitive same old display can become dull and monotonous. When a customer visits a store at regular intervals, it becomes a comfort zone for him/her to access his required products.

For example:

If a customer goes shopping in grocery stores, he or she can find things easily where they usually find them. On the contrary, when someone goes for garment shopping occasionally, and on every occasion, he or she visits the display is in the same manner, without any variation. This becomes boring. Displays based on themes attract customers more than the same old display.

5.3.2 Checking of Stock Rotation

Stock rotation plays an essential role in the sale of products. The shelves are stacked with a considerable quantity of the same products that arrive at the store from vendors from time to time. The batches in which the products are manufactured are different, and thus, the same two products can have varying expiry dates, especially in FMCGs. Therefore, in FMCG stores, department stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, where the products have validity or expiry date, the products whose expiry dates are approaching faster have to be placed in front.

Steps of checking stock rotation:

1. Get hold of the inventory and check the number of products on display
2. For each category check the remaining amount of stock on the shelves
3. Check the expiry dates of individual products
4. In case of already expired products, remove them from the stack
5. Make sure different batches of products do not get mixed

5.3.3 Steps of replenishing stock:

1. Set a reorder level on the CRM database of the company
2. When the quantity of a particular product reaches the reorder level, check the existing stock
3. Make a list of the products that need to be refilled
4. Order the stock to such a quantity that fits the budget of the company
5. In case of an excess order, the stock will end up in the faltering and slow-moving categories
6. Update the inventory and categorise the stock based on the methods as mentioned above
7. Check that the expiry dates of the newly arrived stock
8. Stack and organise the merchandise according to the latest market trends.

For example:

1. XYZ is a retailer of gift items. It sells 1500 units daily. Its supplier takes about 10 days to deliver any ordered units.

   The person in charge of the inventory should place an order before the inventories drop below 15,000 units (1500 units of daily usage multiplied with 10 days of lead time) to avoid a stock-out.

2. XYZ has decided to hold a safety stock equivalent to the average usage of 5 days. Calculate the reorder level.

   Safety stock, which XYZ has decided to hold, equals 10,500 units (1500 units of daily usage multiplied by 7 days).

   In this context, the reorder level would be 25,500 units (10,500 of safety stock plus 15,000 units based on 10 days of lead time).

5.3.4 Out-of-date Stock

Doing away with old and out-dated items is a much-needed practice to make way for the new stock.

- Merchandise having an expiry date, if not removed from the shelves, may be consumed by the customers unknowingly
- This may be lead to health issues, some of which can be fatal and even cause death
- If the customer wishes to file a complaint against the company in the consumer forum, it will be in favour of the customer in such a situation
- Such a situation will lead to the defamation of the company and, in turn, incur substantial financial loss

Activity

1. Research and make a list of products that fall under the FIFO and LIFO categories of products in a supermarket.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct options:

1. Stock which have crossed their expiry dates is called _____.
   a) Fresh stock   b) Valid stock

   c) Out-of-date stock   d) Invalid stock

2. Reorder level depends on whether a _____ is maintained by the company.
   a) Expired stock   b) Fresh stock

   c) Out-of-date stock   d) Safety stock

3. CRM stands for _____.
   a) Consumer Relationship Management   b) Customer Relationship Management

   c) Crime Rate Meter   d) None of these

UNIT 5.4: Staff Engagement

Unit Objectives ⊙

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Involve staff in spotting improvements to the way stock is organized
2. Get permission from the right person to improve the way inventory is organized

5.4.1 Involvement of Staff

Staff engagement is a very crucial thing. Work in retail stores is done with a collaborative effort. The collective responsibility ensures that stocks are replenished and organized in a better way. In a team-spirit, employees can push the boundaries and achieve great results.

Types of involvement

•   Involvement of the employees can be divided into two categories:
•   Involvement of staff
•   Involvement with staff

Getting an extra pair of eyes and hands is always of great help when it comes to the completion of a task flawlessly. In a retail store, involving the staff in giving recommendations and ideas about display eases your job.

Reasons for involvement with other staff members

•   Every person has an innovative idea
•   Involvement of more people creates harmony in the workspace
•   It establishes a sentiment in the minds of the other colleagues that they are worthy enough to pitch ideas
•   In case of errors, an extra set of eyes may catch the minute details that you may overlook
•   If all the staff is included, it even consists of the superiors as well. When needed, you can attain the permission from the rightful person and make changes to the visual display to make it look organised and presentable.

Taking help from others and giving back nothing in return is highly looked down upon. If the other staff members are helping you out with your task, it is your job too to be helpful to them.

For example

A visual merchandiser has decided to decorate the store on a theme related to Independence Day. He/she asked for suggestions on the following points:

•   Setting up visual merchandising displays as per the theme
•   Inventory for sale

- Dress code
- Mascot based on the theme
- Customer engagement programs like quiz contests, cultural programs, etc.
- Competition among employees to come up with the best ideas

Taking these suggestions, the visual merchandiser will sit with the retail manager to make decisions to make necessary changes.

Helping other staff members

- Ask the other staff members if they need any help
- Make the other staff members feel comfortable so that they do not hesitate in approaching you
- Extend a helping hand whenever required, if you are not otherwise tied up
- Provide healthy criticism wherever there is a scope of improvement

Activity

1. Consider a situation where you can see that your colleague has missed out on a minute detail, which can be improved. List the steps that you would like to take to deal with the situation.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Your colleague points out a minute error that you have done. How do you react to such a situation?

   a) Shout at him

   b) Tell him to mind his own business

   c) Criticise his work

   d) None of these

2. Always extend a _____ wherever needed.

   a) Hand

   b) Finger

   c) Head

   d) None of these

3. Which of the following is not a correct behaviour with the staff?

   a) Involve more people thereby creating harmony in the workspace

   b) Accept and provide healthy criticism

   c) Abuse other staff members

   d) Extend a helping hand whenever needed

UNIT 5.5: Customer Satisfaction and Safety

Unit Objectives ⊙

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Describe the importance of maintaining customer goodwill at the store
2. Discuss the steps of following safety measures at the store

5.5.1 Maintaining the Goodwill of All

Customer satisfaction should be of utmost priority for a visual merchandiser. The long term growth of a retail store depends on the goodwill and loyalty of the customer. In this regard, the responsibilities of the visual merchandiser are:

• identifying internal and external customers' wishes and expectations concerning visual design in the organisation

• aessesing if the current and recent visual designs used in the organisation meet internal and external customers' wishes and expectations

• creating a customer-focused design

• developing display ideas for improving the organisation's approach to visual design with the help of other staff members

• designing ideas that are relevant to the needs of the organisation and the customers

During the process of restocking the products, there can be a lot of grievances from the customers as well as the staff. These are two very different kinds of scenarios and also have to be dealt with differently.

Dealing with staff –

During the replenishment of stock, the store can be very messy. This can lead to the inconvenience of the staff members in moving around the store freely. There might be chances for accidents due to negligence.

Tips for dealing with such situations

• Request the staff to co-operate during the situation

• While restocking the shelves, don't leave ladders or sharp tools unattended. This might lead to an accident

• Keep the first-aid kit handy

• If there is a delay in the arrival of stock and the productivity of the store is low, boost up the morale of the staff by involving them in various fun activities

Dealing with customers –

When a particular product is sold out and has to be refurbished again, there might be a situation where the product might not be available for days. This can lead to customer dissatisfaction and have adverse reactions.

Tips for dealing with customers

- When a specific product of a particular brand is unavailable, suggest the customer an alternative
- If the customer rejects the option and insists for that specific brand, apologise to the customer for the inconvenience caused and ensure the arrival of the product shortly
- If the customer misbehaves, apologise to the customer and tackle the situation aptly
- Always remember, "The customer is always right."

5.5.2 Health and safety

Process to avoid hazards:

- Follow company policies regarding health and safety standards
- Avoid keeping tools, ladders unattended
- Don't keep sharp objects, unless products for sale, out in the open
- Be aware of the building and floor evacuation plan. Place the plan in visible areas, especially near elevators/escalators.
- Be aware of all the fire exits. Mark them with proper signage.
- Put up the evacuation plans on display for each floor marking the exit points for common use
- Keep fire extinguishers and sand in handy for putting out fire and report to the concerned personnel in case of expired products or a refill.
- Keep emergency oxygen mask and cylinder and first aid kit
- Report to immediate supervisor in case of any emergency

5.5.3 Safety at all times

Apart from physical injuries, safety can be maintained in various other situations like –

- Theft by staff – It is a high possibility that the in-house team may steal the merchandise since they can walk in/out unchecked.
- Shoplifting – Multiple cases of shoplifting have been reported worldwide. Free lying of merchandise attracts customers who are in the habit of shoplifting.
- Company database hacking – Rival companies may hack your company's database steal your data like internal pricing, customer information, strategies
- Stealing ideas – Market competitors may steal your ideas of visual merchandising and implement them in their store with an upgrade.

You can suggest the following to the concerned authorities –

- Installation of security cameras and door frame metal detectors
- Increase in security guards
- Installation of antivirus in the company's computers
- Increasing cybersecurity
- Necessary actions in case of mishaps

Activity

1. Consider the following scenario. The locality in which your store is located is facing a lot of theft situations. What do you do to safeguard your store?

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Customer is always _____.
   a) Left   b) Right

   c) Up   d) Down

2. Which of the following situations is not a risk?
   a) Theft by staff   b) Shoplifting

   c) All of these   d) None of these

3. If a customer misbehaves, what should be your reaction?
   a) Apologise to the customer for the inconvenience

   b) Shout back at the customer

   c) Bann the customer from entering the store

   d) None of these

Summary

- The company's reputation depends a lot on how the interior decorations and props of the store are maintained.
- A well-stacked picture-perfect display of the shelves is aesthetically appealing and attracts a lot of customers.
- Try to maintain uniformity ideas throughout the store as well across all store outlets of the company.
- Staying updated on the price list may save the company from incurring heavy losses in terms of economy.
- Pass on any information that you get to your superiors or the right person.
- Categorise the newly arrived stock based on their date and arrival and shelf life.
- Do away with old and expired stock so as not to cause health hazards to customers.
- Involve all colleagues to get newer ideas for decoration as well as a new set of eyes for catching minute error details.
- Try to maintain the goodwill of customers even when an inconvenience is caused.
- Maintain harmony with all the staff.
- Apart from physical injury, a store needs safety from theft, shoplifting, vandalism, database hacking, property infringement.
- Take necessary measures to secure the store by suggesting new ideas adhering to company policy.

Activity

1. A new service is about to be launched by your company, and the company head wants new ideas for its marketing. How do you involve the staff to get new ideas?
2. A customer has repeatedly been demanding for a particular product which is unavailable in your store. How do you appease the customer and retain his/her goodwill?

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Exercise

A. Fill in the blanks by choosing the correct option:

1. There are _____ major types of categories of products based on the arrival of the merchandise.
   a) 1   b) 2

   c) 3   d) 4

2. Customers stealing products from a store is called _____.
   a) Shoplifting   b) Infringement

   c) Cataloguing   d) Researching

3. Involvement of staff creates _____ in the store.
   a) Chaos   b) Pandemonium

   c) Mayhem   d) Harmony

4. Products having low shelf life are categorised as _____.
   a) First In First Out   b) First in Last Out

   c) Last In First Out   d) Last in Last out

6. Update Self on Industry Trends and Best Practices through Continuous Learning and Innovation

Unit 6.1 - Methods of Self-Improvement

Unit 6.2 - Implementation of Ideas

Unit 6.3 - Management of Responsibilities

Unit 6.4 - Marketing Strategies

RAS/N0405

Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, the participants will be able to:

1. Identify reliable sources to collect business information from
2. Collect information about business operations from relevant sources
3. Assess the potential for improvement within one's area of responsibility
4. Analyse information to reveal any actual or potential problems
5. Collect staff feedback to identify potential improvements
6. Assess potential improvement plans for relevance, feasibility, and ease of implementation
7. Select ideas for suggestion and implementation that would maximise benefits for the store and the client
8. Report improvement needs to the management in the recommended format
9. Identify the resources needed to implement improvements
10. Prepare a resource allocation plan for implementing improvements
11. Communicate appropriately with the decision-makers
12. Provide decision-makers with adequate opportunities to ask questions and seek clarification
13. Identify market trends and running offers from comparative brands
14. Provide the concerned stakeholders with relevant data and reports
15. Create plans for promotions and offers as per the business demand at the store
16. Assess success stories and examples
17. Identify running offers and their returns from wholesale and brand stores

UNIT 6.1: Methods of Self-Improvement

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Collect information to evaluate the potential for improvement of self
2. Analyse data to reveal potential problems
3. Demonstrate commitment to achieving the benefits of the improvement
4. Study success stories and examples

6.1.1 Introduction

Try and try again until you succeed. Nobody is born with the perfect professional skills required to survive in a particular industry. It is gained through experience and continuous practice. So, to succeed in your job role, you have to learn from your failures and work on them. Good practices like updating yourself on the industry trends and formulating innovative ideas help you shine in your profession. This chapter contains all the methods that you can work upon for your improvement, as well as your colleagues.

Importance of self-improvement

Life is a learning curve, and one must always be ready to learn things and constantly improve oneself. Self-improvement is indispensable nowadays.

• It enhances strengths and helps to identify weaknesses
• By pushing the boundaries, self-improvement also makes one get out of comfort zone
• Self-improvement is a big part of the motivation to do better
• An improved self is better decision-maker
• It instills a learning attitude
• Self-improvement gives more clarity of thought and expression

For example

A visual merchandiser from store ABC has constantly worked on his skills and himself, and as a result, his performance has improved. As a result, he got more opportunities for growth, whereas a visual merchandiser from another store has not been able to grow at a similar pace.

6.1.2 Evaluation of Self-improvement

For any person to evaluate the progress of self- improvement, the best possible way is self-realisation of one's mistakes.

Process of self-evaluation:

1. Collect feedback on the visual presentation of your merchandise from the customers either verbally or via feedback forms
2. Ask the customers to rate your performance and point out the problem areas or any grievances
3. Request your colleagues to point out the minute error details that you may have overlooked
4. Ask your colleagues to provide you feedback on ways you can improve
5. Gather all the feedbacks and sort them out to find out the common grievances
6. Categorise the areas where you have to improve
7. Formulate innovative ideas based on the feedback
8. Learn from your mistakes

6.1.3 Commitment to Improve Oneself

Every organisation values employees who are committed to their work and learn from their mistakes without repeating them further. Once you have a detailed analysis of what your shortcomings are, you can work upon them to upgrade yourself. But following this process only once shouldn't be the case. You have to stick to it. Even when you don't realise, your supervisors are always observing your behaviour.

For example:

- Suppose you are responsible for stacking the shelves of bathroom essentials of a supermarket. By mistake, you have placed body lotions instead of conditioners since the bottles look similar.
- How do you prove that you are worthy and committed to your role?
- Learn from your mistakes and apologise for them
- Avoid repeating mistakes
- Be diligent towards your task
- Don't have a laid back attitude
- Be sure to exhibit in your opinion that you are implementing the improvements

6.1.4 Study Success Stories

Success stories are a great way of self-motivation. A lot of motivational speakers and famous personalities have penned down their life struggles. Reading about the struggles of these famous people makes your effort feel insignificant.

Some of the famous personalities whose life struggles and motivational speeches create a positive impact on the general public are APJ Abdul Kalam, Malala Yousafzai, Sandeep Maheshwari, etc.

How will you motivate yourself?

• Research about famous people

• Learn about their struggle

• Gain knowledge about what motivated them to overcome their struggles

• Listen to speeches on self-motivation given by motivational speakers

• Motivate yourself by implementing similar methods whichever is applicable

Activity

1. Listen to a speech by a motivational speaker and make a list of positive approaches that you can apply in your personal and professional life.

Exercise

A. Answer the following by choosing the correct option:

1. Which of the following steps should not be used to evaluate self-improvement?
    a) Don't learn from your mistakes

    b) Ask your colleagues to provide you feedback on ways you can improve

    c) Formulate innovative ideas based on the feedback

    d) Formulate creative ideas based on the feedback

2. How should you not prove your commitment to work?
    a) Learn from your mistakes and apologise for them

    b) Avoid repeating mistakes

    c) Be diligent towards your task

    d) Have a laid back attitude

3. Good practices like updating yourself on the _____ and formulating innovative ideas help you shine in your profession.
    a) Economy   b) Industry trends

    c) Fashion   d) None of these

UNIT 6.2: Implementation of Ideas

Unit Objectives 🎯

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Encourage your colleagues to identify potential improvements
2. Assess improvements for their relevance and ease of implementation
3. Monitor and evaluate information about improvements

6.2.1 Taking Help of Others

Introduction

Ideas shape the world, and they are invaluable. For a visual merchandiser, getting fresh ideas for different aspects of the work is very crucial. However, not every idea comes from within, and there are several ways he or she can get it. A good idea helps to take the work in a different dimension.

Any workplace always has to co-ordinate in peace and harmony to bring out the best performance. As a team player, a visual merchandiser must encourage several types of ideas from his/her colleagues.

Tips on getting ideas

- Collect all the ideas and categorise them based on similarity
- Evaluate the information by checking each design for their relevance and feasibility
- Combine multiple ideas and use the best part from each one
- Consider how practical they are and whether they comply with the company policy or not
- Consider how easy are they to implement and their consistency
- Also, keep the budget in mind

For example

A renowned food-chain store has decided to get fresh ideas from its employees. The visual merchandiser organises a competition among its employees and, through that, generate best ideas which ultimately are implemented for better results.

6.2.2 Monitoring Improvements

Any changes made must be monitored. In any industry where visual display plays a significant role in the marketing strategy of the company, it has to pay minute attention to details of the display that is being put up.

Ways to monitor improvements

- The best judge of all your improvements is the customer.
- Observe their behaviour in the store
- Notice their comments about your display arrangements as well as the props

- Ask them verbally how convenient the arrangement is
- Collect the information from the sales department about the increase/decrease in the sale as a result of the new arrangement

For example

A store of a clothing line has observed customer behaviour and feedback of a specific day throughout. All the observations are enlisted and analysed for further improvement.

6.2.3 Finding out Reasons for Not Meeting Standards

While monitoring the improvements, you will come across certain areas that are not meeting the set rules or deviating from them.

Some reasons that you might come across are:

- Suppose a free item was supposed to be paired with the main product, but the sales executive has not given the free item to the customer and has kept it for himself/herself. The customer can raise a complaint in such a situation.
- Suppose somebody has ordered for a restock of a group of products with an advance in payment. The vendor has taken the amount, but due to specific reasons has delayed the delivery.

Process of identifying reasons for not meeting standards:

- Validate the display that you have put up
- Check whether the display is meeting the requirements of the display
- Monitor the display and their quality
- Verify the sales for the particular product in question
- Compare the display effects with the competitive brands
- Check whether the displays meet international standards
- Encourage the customers to provide feedback on the problem areas
- Take appropriate action based on your validation

Activity

1. Prepare a design for the focal point display promoting the fall collection of the kids' section of an apparel store

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Fill in the blanks by choosing the correct option:

1. The best judge for all your improvements is the _____.
   a) Seller   b) Manufacturer

   c) Retailer   d) Customer

2. Evaluate the information by checking each idea for their relevance and _____.
   a) Feasibility   b) Falsifiability

   c) Factors   d) None of these

3. While planning a display theme, always keep the _____ in mind.
   a) Factors   b) Budget

   c) All of these   d) None of these

UNIT 6.3: Management of Responsibilities

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Select the best ideas which will maximize the benefits of the business
2. Make recommendations for improvements to management
3. Explain the benefits of the improvements
4. Communicate appropriately to the decision-makers
5. Give decision-makers adequate information
6. Explain plans to relevant individuals for effective implementation
7. Seek advice and support when problems come to light

6.3.1 Introduction

A retail store uses different methods to generate revenue for the benefit of the business. A visual merchandiser should know how to manage responsibilities for further improvement.

Impact of improvements

- Better idea generation
- Communicating with superiors builds better coordination
- Effective implementation of plans
- Revenue growth becomes sustainable

6.3.2 Benefits to Business

The implementation of new ideas will be beneficial to company sales or not is a big question. It can be guessed via trial and error method.

Here are some of the steps to benefit the business:

Improvement of ideas

- Identify the problem areas that need improvement
- Select only those ideas which are feasible for implementation
- Make relevant changes to these ideas if needed
- Make recommendations to the concerned personnel for implementation of small changes
- Develop proposals for reform keeping the company policies in mind
- Give a proper explanation to the superiors why the selected ideas will be beneficial to the sales of the company

Communication to superiors

- On approval of the plans, prepare the budget and the list of props needed for the implementation of the ideas
- Clarify all the doubts of the superior authority as to why the new changes are necessary
- Give proper time scales and deadline as in how long will the new changes need to get implemented

Presentation and implementation of ideas

- Dissemination and communication of plans are necessary for application. Clarify the arrangements with the details in such a manner that are easy to understand and comprehensible
- Encourage and support the staffs from the beginning till the end who are responsible for the implementation of the new changes
- Always report to your superiors and seek help whenever needed

Activity

1. Devise a plan where you have to seek the approval of your superiors for the addition of a new seating arrangement for the trial of shoes in the accessories section.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Fill in the blanks by choosing the correct option:

1. Implementation of new ideas will be beneficial the company sales can be guessed via _____ method.
   a) Right and wrong   b) Trial and error

   c) Hide and seek   d) None of these

2. New ideas before implementation should have a proper _____.
   a) Deadline   b) Start date

   c) Approval   d) All of these

3. Seek advice from your _____ whenever needed.
   a) All of these   b) Juniors

   c) Superiors   d) Colleagues

UNIT 6.4: Marketing Strategies

Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Identify market trends and offers from rival companies
2. Share relevant data and reports with the stakeholders
3. Propose promotions and offers as per business demand
4. Identify running offers and their market returns
5. Share data with supervisors

6.4.1 Introduction

In the constant growing and dynamic market, marketing strategy is the need of the hour. A visual merchandiser must implement different marketing strategies to grow the business. It provides a roadmap that helps in making decisions.

Importance of business strategies

• The utilisation of the time and budget
• The better output of the work
• Staying ahead of competitors
• Getting a better and sustainable revenue model
• Making the brand more authentic

For example

As a well-calculated business strategy, a food joint ASD offers a 10% discount every Wednesday for which the sales increased up to 300%. Another food-joint BGT does the same thing except it provides more discounts. The overall sales volume increased at the store. However, due to a lack of business strategy and poor judgment, the profit margin is very little.

6.4.2 Scrutinize the Market

Whether an idea is valid or not and will be accepted by the market depends on how the market is performing at the current moment.

How to examine the market?

1. Visit other stores of the same genre as your store
2. Check out the ideas of display and promotion that they have used
3. Gather insights about what changes you can make to upgrade them in your store
4. Find out all the offers from the wholesalers and the brand stores

6.4.3 Relay the Information

Pass on any information that you get. If you withhold any vital information or forget to pass on the information that you have collected can lead to incurring severe losses due to your negligence.

- Share all the data that you have collected to the superiors in your store
- Pass on the data to the marketing team for the formulation of new strategies of promotion
- Involve and report to the stakeholders since they are responsible for the capital

6.4.4 Offers and their effectiveness

The addition of new offers randomly to increase sales is not valid. The discount offers to put up should be such that it attracts new customers but also increases the sales of the store.

How to plan offers?

- Survey the market and find out what the competitive brands have offered
- Compare your present offers and tally the difference
- Be aware of the international market and their offer
- Plan an offer which is the best in the market
- Do not plan any offer which gives such a massive discount thereby inducing heavy losses on the company

Activity

1. On a piece of chart paper, make design for discount offers. Make them look catchy and attractive. Show them to your trainer in the next class.

Exercise ✎

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. How should one not scrutinize the market?

   a) Visit other stores of the same genre as your store

   b) Check out the ideas of display and promotion that they have used

   c) Gather insights on what changes you can make to upgrade them in your store

   d) All of the above

2. Who should one pass on any information?

   a) Marketing team   b) Stakeholders

   c) Both a and b   d) None of these

3. Random sales offers should not be put up because

   a) They increase the sales margin

   b) The company can incur substantial losses

   c) Both a and b   d) None of these

Summary

- Improving oneself is more important than pointing out fingers at others.
- Always accept healthy criticism from others about your visual display.
- Encourage your colleagues to point out the flaws in your design.
- Ask them for innovative ideas and ways you can improve.
- Gather all the ideas and select the ones which you think can be easily implemented.
- Inform your superiors and explain in details about the plan, cost, deadline, workforce needed for the implementation of the changes.
- Survey the market to gather new ideas about what to do and what not to do.
- Keep your supervisors in the loop about everything.

Activity

1. List the ways you can improve your performance by identifying your shortcomings.
2. You are responsible for finding out the sales techniques of the new store that opened up down the road. How do you approach it?

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Exercise 🖊

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Ways of self-improvement not to be followed
   a) Shout at whoever criticizes you

   b) Read success stories

   c) Accept healthy criticism

   d) Be committed to the improvements

2. What marketing strategies should you not use?
   a) Survey the market

   b) Visit multiple stores of the same genre

   c) Copy ideas of the rival stores

   d) Relay the gathered information to the marketing team

3. How will you benefit the business?
   a) Present the ideas to the superiors with all the supporting information

   b) Present other's ideas as your ideas

   c) Prepare the cost and deadline for implementation of the ideas

   d) Plan your action based on wholesale and brand store offers

4. How do you prove that you are worthy and committed to your role?
   a) Learn from your mistakes and apologise for them

   b) Avoid repeating mistakes

   c) Be diligent towards your task

   d) Have a laid back attitude

Scan the QR codes or click on the link for the e-books

How AI is transforming Retail Industry?

https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=FSHaOdu9tgA

The 7 Essential Pillars of Personal
Development | Brian Tracy

https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=AWGayyX9I6o

Marketing Strategies

https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=Ktoon-r7JAw

7. Liaise Effectively with Internal and External Stakeholders to Effectively Implement Visual Merchandising Plans

Unit 7.1 - Communication with the Stakeholders

Unit 7.2 - Communication with the Store Team

Unit 7.3 - Communication with the Vendors

Unit 7.4 - Resource Management

RAS/N0406

Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, the participants will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively with the stakeholders
2. Establish a collaborative relationship with the staff and work in harmony
3. Communicate effectively with the vendors
4. Manage resources
5. Prepare the plan of action

UNIT 7.1: Communication with the Stakeholders

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Identify the external stakeholders and the nature of their interests
2. Establish and monitor working relationships with stakeholders
3. Recognise difficult situations and issues from stakeholders' perspectives
4. Consult stakeholders concerning critical decisions
5. Fulfill agreements made with stakeholders
6. Identify and resolve conflicts of interest
7. Seek and provide feedback to improve performance
8. Monitor broader developments to identify new stakeholders

7.1.1 Introduction

Communication in the correct manner can win over any situation. Whether in-house or outside the store, if treated with respect, the receiver will feel obligated to respond positively. A visual merchandiser must be good at communication as he/she should be able to express his/her expertise on a range of subjects with clarity. Coordination with other staff members is also very crucial.

Importance of communication

- Communication is the basis of decision-making. It helps a visual merchandiser in completing day to day operations
- It helps in proper planning and coordination with other staff members
- Effective communication makes people more vocal about their understanding
- It builds mutual trust and confidence
- Communication is a vital part of an efficient and smooth-running enterprise

7.1.2 Public Relations

Having a healthy relationship with all the stakeholders of your company is part of the job.

Who are the stakeholders? Any and every person who is concerned about the well-being of the company is a stakeholder of that company. There are broadly two categories of stakeholders:

Internal Stakeholder – Owner, employees, shareholders, management

External Stakeholder – Customers, creditors, government, suppliers or vendors

Maintaining a healthy relationship with external stakeholders

- Find out the nature of the interest of the external stakeholders that they hold towards the company
- Establish a relationship with the stakeholders like the customers and the vendors, such that they

feel that they are welcome and are a part of the company

- Establish such a connection that they feel they can trust the company
- Understand the issues that the stakeholders are facing
- Analyse the situations from their perspective and try to provide necessary help
- Consult vendors while taking important decisions, including their priorities, expectations and potential risks
- Fulfill all the agreements made with them to keep their trust
- In case of any issues with fulfilling contracts, inform them ASAP
- Assess the effectiveness of the relationship with vendors and customers to identify the grey areas
- Adhere to all the terms and conditions of the agreement signed with the stakeholders
- Search for potential new stakeholders

Maintaining a healthy relationship with internal stakeholders

- Realise the job roles of the respective employee in the company and the company hierarchy
- Construct an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect where co-workers have no authority or shared authority over each other
- Recognise the difficulties that they are facing and try to help them to perform smoothly
- Provide them relevant and valid information that will help them to perform better
- Resolve all internal conflicts to minimize damage to work
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of the working relationship with the stakeholders
- Seek and provide feedback to improve each other's performances

Benefits of productive working relationships:

External stakeholders are as much as part of the company as the internal stakeholders. Maintaining a healthy relationship with everyone makes them feel loved and important.

In case of a dispute with your stakeholders, do the following:

- Customers can boycott your store
- Customers can spread false rumours about your store
- Vendors can refuse to deliver goods
- Vendors can provide damaged goods
- Creditors can refuse to pay for your products and services
- The government can close down your store on unethical grounds

If the visual merchandiser works in harmony with everyone, the job gets done with ease without any hurdles.

Activity

1. Consider the following scenario. You are the visual merchandiser of a supermarket. The nearby local grocery stores have complained to the government officials regarding their decrease in sales due to the setup of your store. The provincial government has sent your store a notice for evacuation. What should you do in such a situation?

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Who is an internal stakeholder?
   a) Customer   b) Creditor

   c) Vendor   d) Owner

2. How many types of stakeholders are there?
   a) 1   b) 2   c) 3   d) 4

3. What should you not do to jeopardise the relationship with your internal stakeholders?
   a) Recognise the difficulties that they are facing and try to help them to perform smoothly

   b) Provide them relevant and valid information that will help them to perform better

   c) Aggravate all internal conflicts to maximize damage to work

   d) Seek and provide feedback to improve each other's performances

UNIT 7.2: Communication with the Store Team

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively in the workplace
2. Enhance awareness about visual merchandising
3. Collaborate with team to create design themes
4. Plan and ensure smooth implementation of events
5. Collaborate with superiors to discuss sales strategies

7.2.1 Introduction

Communication is at the core of visual merchandising, and the work cannot be done without a collaborative effort. Communicating and coordinating with the store team is what makes visual merchandising successful.

Benefits of communication with the store team

• Effective communication is needed when visual merchandisers work on display with the help of staff members

• To leave a better impression on customers, visual merchandisers must be fluent and accurate in their expression

• Instructions are given in an effective communicative method

7.2.2 Elements of Effective Communication

A workplace, however comfortable it might be, must follow some norms which help in better communication. There are several communication basics which should be followed within a workplace, such as:

• Address people by their names, as people feel important once their name is brought into the conversation

• Try and maintain an open conversation channel with each employee that you work with

• Analyse the relationship dynamics that you are keeping with your colleagues. In case there exists any dispute, try sorting them out in time

• Ensure that you maintain a fine line and don't open up too much in front of your colleagues

• Avoid sharing personal life details in the workplace, as it may have a negative impact

• Try and respect other people's own space

7.2.3 Ways to communicate effectively

Active Listening: Active Listening is an integral part of non-verbal communication. It helps in building trust between the two people in a conversation. It makes the other person feel important and accepted within their workplace. Additionally, active listening is an excellent way to analyse the other person in the conversation.

Speak with clarity: While making meaningful conversations, an individual should speak with clarity, as it reduces the chances of any form of misunderstanding. The openness in communication helps address the critical points.

Practise Constructive Criticism: Constructive Feedback reinforces positive work culture as well as helps improve the efficiency of the employees. If a colleague has done great work, they should be encouraged by offering praise. Similarly, if anyone has done poorly, they should be provided with constructive feedback, leaving aside personal rivalries. One should ensure not to become mean or bossy while pointing out mistakes.

Trust and respect each other: You should trust and respect everyone within your workplace. Clear and concise communication helps in building understanding and trust between two people.

Maintain space while making personal conversations: While making private conversations, ensure that you maintain a boundary, as crossing the line can make the other person uncomfortable within a conversation.

Make relevant conversations: The communication made should address the requirements/concern of the other person. Don't engage in lengthy, worthless discussions, as it kills the productive time of the organisation and gives a negative impression of the speaker.

Keep spoken and written communications short: Avoid giving complicated and incomprehensible information. Keep the conversations short and direct as it facilitates better understanding.

7.2.4 Awareness of Visual Merchandising

After maintaining a healthy relationship with your colleagues, it is also necessary for you to make people aware of the work you do and its importance in the productivity of the store.

Importance of Visual Merchandising

Consider two situations – First, someone is working in a grocery store that has a good collection of products but doesn't know anything about visual merchandising, nor does it implement such ideas. Second, someone is working in another store that doesn't have such a wide variety of products but holds high values on visual merchandising and advertisement. Which one will swarm with customers?

The obvious answer is the one that is aware of visual merchandising and implements it as its marketing strategy. Now, why did such a situation arise? Customers who are not regular to either of the shops will be attracted by the various visual merchandising schemes used by the second store, thereby increasing its sales.

Thus, a visual merchandiser must spread awareness about the importance of visual merchandising to colleagues so that the store looks aesthetically appealing, and more and more customers are attracted by it, thereby increasing the profit margin.

7.2.5 Collaboration with the Team

A team that works together stays together. It is not always possible to work alone. At times, you have to take the help of the other staff.

Ways to collaborate effectively

• Approach colleagues only when their hands are not tied in anything else

• Assist them when they seek help

• Ask for their expert opinion about creating new designs

• Try to communicate with them without insulting them or making them uncomfortable

• Respect their personal space and privacy

• Plan ideas together based on the themes

• Develop plans which are easy to implement

7.2.6 Collaboration with Superiors

Working with colleagues is very different from collaborating smoothly and effectively with superiors. The idea should be carefully pitched. In a retail store, who are the superiors? Business managers, sales managers, retail managers, and team leaders are the immediate superiors that you need to collaborate with to discuss sales strategies.

Need for communicating with seniors

The art of collaboration depends on how the collaboration is done and with whom the partnership is done. Let us understand the following situations with a few examples.

• **Professional advice:** Suppose, within the authority of your job role, you cannot tackle a specific situation and need expert guidance, you should approach your immediate superior for professional advice.

• **Customer feedback:** Any grievances reported by the customers in the form of their feedback must be reported to your immediate superior to find possible solutions to the problems.

• **Personal grievances:** If, while working, any situation arises which you are not happy or satisfied with, you are to directly relay your issues to your superior such that the problem can be resolved with immediate effect.

• **Conflict of interest:** When two people, with no authority over each other or sharing power, work together, a conflict of interest is prevalent. If the dispute is with a superior, it is best if you don't forget your position in the company matrix. You can support your ideas with a reliable back up evidence but let the debate not turn into an argument.

Activity

1. Consider the following situation. You are facing some issues at work which you are not satisfied with. How do you resolve the problem?

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Which of the following is not an effective means of communication?
   a) Active listening　　　　　　　　b) Speaking with clarity

   c) The practice of abusive criticism　　d) Trusting and respecting each other

2. Addressing people using their names makes them feel _____.
   a) Important　　　　　　　　　　b) Insulted

   c) All of these　　　　　　　　　d) None of these

3. In which of the following conditions can you approach your senior?
   a) Customer feedback　　　　　　b) Professional advice

   c) Conflict of interest　　　　　　d) All of these

UNIT 7.3: Communication with the Vendors

Unit Objectives ◎

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Identify the vendor support required for store specific events
2. Cooperate with the vendor to ensure the availability of resources
3. Adhere to the checklist for vendor payments
4. Ensure that the vendor meets the terms and conditions of business

7.3.1 Identification of Vendors

A store's reputation is as good as the quality of the products delivered by its vendors. The selection of the correct vendor is essential for the purchasing power of the company.

How to select the correct vendor?

- Make a list of all the vendors available
- Conduct a primary background check of the selected vendors
- Go to the individual vendor for a sample check
- Shortlist the vendors whose product qualities match with your requirements
- Get the price quotes from the selected vendors
- Select the vendor closest to your budget

7.3.2 Cooperation with the Vendors

Vendors are the external stakeholders of a store. As a visual merchandiser, how should you behave with them? Should you be cooperative? But why should you cooperate with the vendors?

Vendors are responsible for providing all the products that are to be displayed on shelves, stacks, hangers, tables, and window displays. To ensure that the services offered by them are prompt and accurate, you need to build a connection between them and the company.

How should you treat the vendors?

- Build a bond between the company and the vendors to gain their trust
- Check whether the vendors deliver the required products in time
- Tally the products provided with the requisition list
- Ensure the vendor gets timely paid for his deliveries
- Confirm that the vendor agrees to the terms and conditions of the business with the store

7.3.3 Vendor Management

Why is it important to communicate with the vendors effectively?

Vendors are one of the external stakeholders of a company. Maintaining a healthy relationship with the vendors is essential for the growth of the company.

- Recognize the interest of the vendors and respect the role they play in the development of your company
- Make them feel important by involving them in making critical decisions. This gains their trust as well.
- Cooperate with them by providing all the information they require
- In case of any conflict, sit with them and discuss the issues they are facing
- Try to resolve the issue by yourself if it is within your scope of authority. Escalate the matter to your superior if needed.

Here is an example of an employee grievance form which you can use to communicate to your superior in case of any discrepancies.

EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE FORM	
GRIEVANT INFORMATION	
EMPLOYEE NAME	**DATE FORM SUBMITTED**
JOB TITLE	**EMPLOYEE ID**
EMPLOYEE HOME MAILING ADDRESS	**WORKPLACE MAILING ADDRESS**
DETAILS OF EVENT LEADING TO GRIEVANCE	
DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION OF EVENT	**WITNESSES** (if applicable)
ACCOUNT OF EVENT	**VIOLATIONS**
Provide a detailed account of the occurrence. Include the names of any additional persons involved.	Provide a list of any policies, procedures, or guidelines you believe have been violated in the event described.
PROPOSED SOLUTION	
Please retain a duplicate copy of this form for your records. As the grievant, your signature below indicates that the information you have provided on this form is truthful.	
SIGNATURES	
EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE	**DATE**

Fig. 7.3.1: Eemployee grievance form

Activity

1. A vendor has not received the payment for his deliveries. He wishes to complain about this issue. Take the help of the grievance form in the given unit and fill it up addressing the issue.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. How to select the right vendor?
   a) Make a list of all the vendors available

   b) Go to the individual vendor for a sample check

   c) Get the price quotes from the selected vendors

   d) All of the above

2. How should you not treat the vendors?
   a) Build a bond between the company and the vendors to gain their trust

   b) Ensure the vendor does not get timely paid for his deliveries

   c) Check whether the vendors deliver the required products in time

   d) Tally the products provided with the requisition list

3. Vendors are one of the _____ stakeholders of the company.
   a) External   b) Internal

   c) All of these   d) None of these

UNIT 7.4: Resource Management

Unit Objectives 🎯

By the end of this unit, the participants will be able to:

1. Identify resources needed for visual merchandising
2. Prepare a plan of action
3. Calculate the manpower required
4. Manage a team during the execution of a plan

7.4.1 Identification of Resources

Identifying the right resources as are necessary for a particular theme is as important as planning the design layout for the theme.

As a visual merchandiser of a retail store, what are the probable resources that you require for the designing of the store for a particular theme?

1. Money
2. Time
3. Props
4. Manpower
5. Inventory

It must be given a thought that the proposed design of the theme must be in place of the international standards, company rules, and regulations.

7.4.2 Planning of Action

Suppose you are the visual merchandiser of a supermarket. It is time for the Diwali sale, and you are in charge of setting up the store according to the theme. How do you make preparations for the completion of the task?

Process of preparing for a plan execution:

• Prepare the budget required for the execution of the plan
• Prepare the time frame needed for the completion of the task
• Calculate the manpower necessary for the implementation of the task
• List out the props as are essential for the decoration
• Check for the already available props
• Prepare the inventory of the merchandise
• Prepare a PERT (Program Evaluation Review Technique) chart describing the plan of execution

For example:

Here is an example of the Plan of Action using a PERT chart.

Project Milestones	Week 1						
	Day1	Day2	Day3	Day4	Day5	Day6	Day7
1.1 Identification of theme	▉						
1.2 Preparation of budget	▉	▉					
1.3 Identification of products for merchandising		▉	▉				
1.4 Identification of props required			▉				
1.5 Checking the conditions for already existing props			▉				
1.6 Preparation of an overall plan of action			▉	▉			
1.7 Briefing team on the plan of action				▉			
1.8 Calculation of time frame				▉			
1.9 Calculation of manpower required				▉			
1.10 Meeting with supervisors					▉		
1.11 Getting the plan approved					▉		
1.12 Meeting with the vendors						▉	▉
1.13 Request for proposal							▉

Project Milestones	Week 2						
	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14
1.14 Delivery of stock to store warehouse	▉	▉					
1.15 Updating inventory	▉	▉					
1.16 Categorisation of merchandise		▉	▉				
1.17 Shifting of stock from warehouse to store			▉	▉			
1.18 Allocating tasks to the team				▉			
1.19 Setting up the merchandise					▉	▉	
1.20 Putting up props						▉	
1.21 Selecting ideas for window display						▉	
1.22 Getting the selected idea approved by the supervisor						▉	
1.23 Setting up the window display							▉
1.24 Quality check of the entire display							▉
1.25 Validation of the display by supervisor							▉

Based on this Plan of Action, here is an example of the calculation of manpower.

Sl. No.	Task	No. of resources fulfilling the role	No. of working hours per day	No. of days required per task	No. of man-hours per task
1.	Shifting of stock from warehouse to store	6	8	2	16
2.	Setting up of merchandise	5		2	16
3.	Putting up props	3		1	8
4.	Setting up the window display	2		1	8
Total no. of man-hours					48

Table 7.4.1: Plan of Action using a PERT chart

Note: The examples given above are only used for illustration. This may vary from store to store.

Assumptions made:

• No. of days working in a week = 6. 1 day is a weekly holiday.
• No. of working hours per day = 8
• No. of manpower required per task is arbitrary. It may vary from store to store.

7.4.3 Directing and Controlling

As a visual merchandiser, it is your duty to merchandise the store appealingly visually. When you are working with a team, it is a difficult task managing the entire team and getting the job done. This is where your management skills are required.

Since you are in charge of the visual merchandising of the products to be displayed, the basic layout for designing is your brainchild. So, how will you guide the others on what you want and how you want them to be done?

Process for the execution of the task:

• Calculate the workforce required for the task
• Allocate the responsibility to individuals whom you seem fit
• Supervise over the functions of the other staff
• Help them out wherever required
• Motivate them in case of difficulty
• In case of conflict of interest, resolve the issue without compromising your authority
• Finish the task before the deadline.

Activity

1. Calculate the number of man-hours and workforce you would require for setting up the stacks of the FIFO category of stock.

Exercise

(UNIT WISE)

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. What does PERT stand for?
   a) Personal Evaluation Research Technique

   b) Program Evaluation Rating Technique

   c) Program Evaluation Review Technique

   d) People Entertainment Rating Task

2. How will you prepare a Plan of Action?
   a) Prepare the budget required for the execution of the plan

   b) Prepare the time frame needed for the completion of the task

   c) Calculate the required workforce for the implementation of the task

   d) All of these

3. How should you not direct and control the execution of a task?
   a) Allocate the task to individuals whom you seem fit

   b) Refuse to help out whenever required

   c) Supervise over the functions of the other staff

   d) Motivate the staff in case of difficulty

Summary

- For maintaining a healthy relationship with your stakeholders, effective communication is the key
- A workplace must always follow some ground rules for communicating with the colleagues
- Making people aware of your job role helps in increasing the sales margin of the store
- Always be conscious of your position in the company matrix
- Seek help wherever required
- Keep the vendors in confidence
- Collaborating with an entire team requires managerial skills

Activity

1. One of your vendors is delaying the delivery of the merchandise. List the possible reasons for the delay and the consequences that can happen due to the delay.
2. Prepare a PERT chart for the categorisation of the new stock.

Notes

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Exercise

A. Answer the following questions by choosing the correct option:

1. Which of the following is not an element of effective communication?
    a) Active listening   b) Speak with clarity

    c) Criticism without consideration   d) Trust and respect each other

2. Who is not an external stakeholder?
    a) Vendors   b) Supervisor

    c) Creditors   d) Government

3. How should you not collaborate with your team?
    a) Impose your tasks on other members of the team

    b) Ask for their expert opinion about creating new designs

    c) Plan ideas based on the themes

    d) Develop plans which are easy to implement

4. Which is a resource for designing a store?
    a) Money   b) Time

    c) Props   d) All of these

Scan the QR codes or click on the link for the e-books

Effectively engage with Stakeholders   Communication and Collaboration

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1k2MF1mGDgQ   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGZSu7RXMH4

RASCI
Retailers Association's
Skill Council of India

8. Employability Skills

Scan the QR codes or click on the link for the e-books

https://www.skillindiadigital.gov.in/content/list

9. Annexure

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