“LIFT THE VEIL TO SELL” CONCEPT TO VISUAL MERCHANDISING: CASE OF A SUPERMARKET

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Abstracts
As the current political scenario is different and new rules are coming for FDI in India, in either case the retailers have to realign their USP and make strategies to meet the current customer requirements. In the list first comes the store experience now that we are talking of cleaning India as a movement we need to ensure the same in a retail store which will immediately enhance the store experience. As in case here we will see the minimum things we would need to sell better and make the merchandise visible rather than other distractions.

This paper is about exploring why and how to design the planogram for visual merchandising of the supermarket for regional indigenous retailers, by taking reference of the other retailers and also common merchandising techniques widely acceptable. The study was done by observation and feedback of the retail professionals. This is case of a retail store found in the main road where small changes can make customer experience better which can be used in other retail outlets also small, big, new, old anyone in such case.

Research paper

Keywords: Retail, Category flow layout, Supermarket, Visual Merchandising, Product display, Planogram

Introduction

“Lift the veil to sell” means do not hide the flaws behind lift the veil and correct the errors. It is well known that high inventory hides all ailments but its not permanent solution we need to focus on all aspects of the store and enhance the experience for the customer to ensure our presence and fight the Big retail giants as small native retailers. Usually exhibits are supported by the layout. Where innovation can be done in both to enhance the experience and ambience of the store. So if ever centimeter square of the store can be planned then it will be really great for managing operations also. So visually appealing store is eye candy where lights and windows do dazzlings. A good store has both visual appeal and proper management like category flow, shopping equipments in place, basic amenities like drinking water, toilets in supermarkets and yes they must have the really good and energetic sales team.

Display can help sales guys may through a dangler or shelf talker but still personal touch is what any human would need. That is why even with so many online options people still visit stores and buy also. Its not only other retailers in brick and mortar also online stores are competitors, that extra mile is to be achieved by using a proper plannogramming tool and ensuring basics in place which is usually absent with indigenous retailers.
Literature Review

Francis Buttle, (1987) in his paper "Can You Afford to Ignore Merchandising?" says, Impulse buying- can it be predicted or even encouraged? Merchandisers are known as the “silent salesmen” and their skills cannot be ignored.

This explains that the merchandise can explain itself and do not need any salesman to sale it which is possible only if they are properly arranged and follow a Planogram and product layout.

Cathy Hart, Mark Davies, (1996) in his publication titled "The location and merchandising of non-food in supermarkets", says the supermarkets in UK has emphasized the need to improve how and where the products are presented to the customers in non food areas inside the store. And service retailers as dry cleaners or opticians; have traditionally been situated as separate “shops” behind the checkouts. Contrastingly, product range such as stationery, clothing and entertainment category have tended to be incorporated into the main shopping aisles. He has attempted to identify whether consumers would prefer these non-food ranges to be differently or more specifically merchandised, and explained that consumer preferences are different between retailers? He says alternative display formats may be used .The paper tells about displaying non food category and services according to customer requirement in a specific location. And the product display layout would change from location to location and preferences of consumers.

Chris Janiszewski, (1998) says Although there has been a considerable amount of research on goal-directed search processes, little attention has been paid to exploratory search routines two behaviours of visual in-
formation search. Exploratory search routines are interesting because they help explain some of the variability in the amount of attention people devote to a particular piece of information in a display.

Whereas a goal-directed search model predicts that the amount of time spent viewing a piece of information is a function of its salience and/or relevance given a search goal, an exploratory search model predicts that attention is a function of the competition for attention created by non-focal information. He did four studies where in study 1, a layout manipulation was used to vary the competition for attention experienced when viewing any one area in a display. Areas placed in more visually competitive environments received less attention. In study 2, increasing the competition for attention generated by information surrounding an area was shown to decrease the likelihood that viewers would remember the information in an exploratory search task. Study 3 demonstrated that the relationship between the visual competition created by non-focal information and memory for attended information persists even when all areas in a given display are visually competitive or non-competitive. Study 4 provided evidence that an exploratory search model can explain differences in attention and sales of products on a catalogue page in addition to that explained by a goal-directed search model.

The increased effectiveness of the non-competitive displays relative to the competitive displays has one significant practical implication.

So there are optimal ways to display multi-item information. For example, suppose a supermarket wants to encourage customers to maximize their attention to items in a display, thus increasing the likelihood they will to switch from an exploratory search routine to a goal-directed search
mode. Currently, the most popular method of increasing attention to an item in a multi-product display is to increase the salience of the item by increasing its relative size or removing other items from the view. Each of these strategies benefits the featured product at the expense of the remaining items in the display. This method is suboptimal, especially if the goal is to maximize attention to all items in the display.

Matthew L. Tullman (2004), In-store marketing and merchandising can be enhanced with more balanced arrays of sensory communication, as it will result in significant reductions in visual liability and fair improvements to store and brand performance as it will have better focus.

Seyed-Mahmoud Aghazadeh, (2005) in the paper titled "Layout strategies for retail operations: A case study" studied the retail layout of a local supermarket. After discovering that the local supermarket needed some improvements as it was not doing well, it was recommended to improve the supermarket from the customers’ point of view. The other objective of the study was to determine if the supermarket floor space utilization to maximize square foot return. The findings focused on the appropriate layout implementation. This is a very viable approach to understand retailing and make it more profitable.

Simone Pettigrew et al. (2005) in their publication titled "The three "big issues" for older supermarket shoppers", has worked on the major issues identified included the behavior of supermarket staff, the functionality of shopping equipments like trolleys and baskets, and the appropriate placement of products on supermarket shelves. Respondents considered these issues to be personally relevant and important to seniors in general. Practical implications of the paper is Supermarket managers should devel-
Op strategies to ensure staff are recruited and trained in such a fashion as to enable them to engage in satisfying interactions with older customers. Other areas requiring attention include thorough product stocking to prevent over-reaching and the provision of well-designed and functioning shopping aids in the form of trolleys and baskets. More discussion on merchandise quality, adequate access to and within the store, in-store amenities, home delivery options, senior citizen discounts, and avoiding extended queuing. These service aspects are very important to older shoppers. So it can be said that access to the merchandise and proper functioning of the shopping aids like trolleys and baskets depends on the floor layout and store design. A proper layout always supports the movements of all customers’ especially older people.

Pierre Chandon, (2009) describes the drivers of attention at the point of purchase can be classified as in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Drivers of attentions (Source: Pierre Chandon, 2009)**

Further it is also explained that out-of-store factors influence visual attention but much less than in-store factors. Main result of the study is that
the number of shelf facings strongly influences visual attention and, through attention, brand evaluation. In the best-brand scenario, for occasional users of a low-market-share brand, doubling the number of facings improved noting by 26% (from 63% to 80%), re-examination by 33% (from 43% to 58%), consideration by 22% (from 24% to 29%), and choice by 67% (from 3% to 5%). For the average brand and consumer, doubling the number of facings increased noting by 28%, reexamination by 35%, and choice and consideration by 10%. The following planogram is proposed by the authors in figure 2 below.

**Figure 2. Planogram design and coding (Source: Pierre Chandon, 2009)**

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Note: Each number represents a block of 6 items. For example, 12 stands for 12 items. The planograms are designed to reflect visual merchandising concepts.
Hasmukh K. Gajjar, Gajendra K. Adil, (2011) in their publication titled "Heuristics for retail shelf space allocation problem with linear profit function", says Shelf space is often retailer's critical resource. Growing number of products has posed a challenge to the retailers for efficient allocation of available shelf space to them. The paper aims to consider a retail shelf space allocation problem with linear profit function and aims to develop efficient heuristics to solve this problem. In an empirical study of 320 randomly generated instances of problems with size (products, shelves) varying from (25, 5) to (200, 50), it was found that all three new heuristics are competitive with existing heuristic. The best amongst three heuristics found solution with average objective value of 99.59 percent of upper bound in a reasonable central processing unit time. The proposed heuristics are applied to a case of existing retail store which gave more profit than the current allocation scheme. So it can be said that the retail stores are overloaded with SKU’s. So their arrangement is getting critical. This paper gives an idea how the retail shelf space is constant for period of time but the number of Skus varies so it can be said that retail shelf space is directly linked with the stores profit.

Laura carroll ( 2012) says there are some basics for doing Visual merchandising to sell more like the first 500 feet of the store should talk about the store , the information, the promotions as to introduce the tone of the shop. Second is ensuring a positive emotional response may be by creating fuzzy feelings by incorporating unusual displays. Third, always group similar products together, that is selling a concept rather than things only. Lastly, keep switching things around the store periodically, which help customer to explore and feel new about the store.
Liz C. et. al. (2012) in their publication titled "An empirical investigation of the influence of optimum stimulation levels in retailing", says a person's optimum stimulation level (OSL) reflects one's desired level of environmental stimulation and predisposition to act in the presence of environments. The purpose of the paper is to propose a comprehensive model, which illustrates that consumers with different levels of OSL have differing evaluations of retail store elements, shopping value and subsequent shopping behaviors. Taiwanese shoppers with a high OSL were found to have more favorable evaluations of a store's ambient, design, layout and density elements than did consumers with a low OSL. Additionally, the high OSL shoppers reported higher hedonic and utilitarian values from their shopping. Most importantly, the shoppers with a high OSL spent more time and money in stores. This research emphasizes on ambient, design and layout elements of the stores. Retail stores can concentrate on these so, they might be able to attract more consumers with a high OSL and entice them to spend more money. So it can be said that the store layout, design and display play a vital role in consumers mind so they have to be very minutely designed. Each factors like lights, Ac, colors used or display themes has to be well organized.

Aruna K Mishra (2012) says effective layout where customer can pick his requirements from the offering clearly demarcated. The main objective of a retail layout is to maximize profitability per floor space. The purpose in any layout is to maximize the utilization of floor space in the store.

The following important point’s needs to be considered while designing the layout of a store:

• Locate the high draw items around the periphery of the store.
• Use prominent locations for high impulse and high margin items.
• Distribute what is known in the trade as power to both sides of an aisle and disperse them to increase the viewing of other items.
• Use end aisle locations for high exposure rate.
• Convey the mission of the store by careful selection in the positioning of the leadoff department.
• The fixture should be plotted in the layout such that the cleaning is easier seeing the real store space.
• The product category flow layout is subject to periodic changes according to store sales and customer buying behavior. Utilization of maximum store space is paramount in any layout.

The authors have proposed a category flow layout for the supermarket as shown in Figure 3 below.
Wann-Yih Wu (2014) says store layout design has significant impacts on emotional arousal and attitude toward the website, and thus has a positive influence on purchase intention. In addition, atmosphere has a more influential effect on emotional arousal than store layout design.

**Research Objective:**

Here the pictures of a retail store is taken which is supermarket of 2500 sqft and needs attention on the adjacencies of merchandise, look of the store and also the category layout, precisely Plano gram needs to be designed for which essential feedbacks are to note on work sheet. So here we
have developed a work sheet to promote the concept to visual merchandising techniques.

**Research Methodology:**

Critical incident techniques, Expert opinion and general fact study is used to derive conclusions in this paper, where the main objective is decide how a supermarket can look better to sell more. Plannogramming tool used to make the planogram to present colour blocking techniques.

**Analysis:**

From literature review and experts opinion it is found that visual merchandising has some basic principles,

Like.

1. Like things should be grouped together.
2. Color blocking always helps
3. Category adjacencies need to be addressed properly.
4. Shelf facings have be optimized as per contribution
5. Periodic changes in display and planogram helps sell more.
6. Particular and elaborate display is always better.
7. Dedicated shelves for impulse items which are clearly defined.
8. Proper fixtures to be used for any particular product.
9. Clutter free store is the best store, but very clean store may not create a value to money proposition to Indian Buyers who are used to local bazaar experience.
10. Façade is the main attention seeker which decides the future of the store and sales.
To make a planogram various software are available like planogram builder, shelf logic, JDA planogramming, etc. But the show needs to proper according to the catchment and then it can yield better.

Representation of improper display

a. Store front / Façade

**Figure 4.** Store front of Supermarket (Source: Self Photography with permission)

Here as clearly seen the supermarket is on a high street, but with large façade, but the front doors are blocked and look is not at all proper. The hanging from the tree looks so odd,

**Figure 5.** Front windows of the supermarket (Source: Self Photography with permission)
As we can see its front view of the store, wires, cartons, back pasted offer signage; storage of cold drinks is visible which is clearly giving negative vibes about the discipline and offerings of the store.

b. Aisles and Shelves

The aisles and shelves are the focus points where the merchandise is sold so basically point of sale, this has to clear and easily understandable, so that picking becomes easy and customer donot toil much.

**Figure 6. In store aisles of supermarket** (Source:  Self Photography with permission)
2 ft aisles at the pillars are clear failure of layout design and planning the store fixtures properly. How wise is it to keep the merchandise on the floor in the racks, as it is not convenient nor very expressive display. Customer may find it as clutter at times, and cartons on the floor as a storage area is never allowed or permitted on the floor. As it makes the zone dead even it comes in first 6 ft of the store.

*Figure 7. In store equipment’s display of supermarket (Source: Self Photography with permission)*

How wise is it stock near a freezer where moisture is high and even it is advised to keep refrigerator indoor units away from walls and other surface for better cooling. And staples near freezer is somewhat okay but so close to freezer is really not acceptable.

*Figure 8. In store Point of purchase (Source: Self Photography with permission)*
Cash counter near staples is of course decreasing sales rather it should have impulse or high value items to increase sales and motivate the beauty of the store.

And some back drops can be used at cash counters to make them look good and presentable than giving a look of interior kirana shop.

c. Adjacencies and grouping of like merchandise

The adjacencies means which product should be kept by which side as per literature review there is category layout given which can be followed to keep the category in place and not jumble products in store which is confusing, if there is any chance of higher sales due to small swapping of merchandise it can be adopted by the store personnel depending on their understanding of business and data available if any. Grouping of like items helps demonstrate all brands and varieties or options rather clubbing unlike products which decreases sales of item.

**Figure 9. In store product adjacencies (Source: Self Photography with permission)**

Figure 9 clearly shows how hair care skin care is grouped with phenyl, it clearly a never situation as they are not like merchandise and Phenyl is poisonous in nature which shows that there has been no plano-program done to arrange adjacencies or grouping of product.
As we can see in the picture above hair oil, kitchen cleaner phenyl and toilet cleaner are clubbed together with wash care as well. Though all of them are cleaner’s still laundry care, toilet care, and kitchen care have to be kept separate to ensure all brands and variety explained to customer elaborately we don’t just sell products but selling concept is what matters.

So here horizontal display pattern should be changed to vertical if there is issue with shelves space.
We see the signage’s use are not proper and hiding behind the pillars, even there is no uniformity in Font size and they are hanging beyond the shelf markers. Panels used there is overstocking in one and lower in other which can carry a negative effect of brand like it is not being selling product is not good, or supermarket orders this more etc, which cannot be avoided so its better to maintain uniform stocks but give less or more facets to promote any individual product not making hotch potch as done in the above pictures.

Figure 12. Placement of merchandise (Source: Self Photography with permission)

OTD (over table drugs) are meant to be kept near cash counter in impulse items not in baby food category that too in lass shelves which gives them no visibility to customers and even small kids may pick them up quickly which can be harmful, as they are keep out of the reach of children (KORC) items. Thus it clearly says that the store need to focus on categories properly, may be it will help in better display power.
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All the products which are small needs special attention for protecting it from theft and also come into customer eyes so they can be sold. Thus all these products which are basic needs have to be given special racks where there is surveillance. Out box thinking should no induce out of business which has to address very specifically in placement of merchandise.

**Planogram and Case study worksheet:**

In order to make the shelves look proper as they should in this case where the retailer is small scale operator and has no proper planogramming tool,

Planogram can be designed with help of free software available online, where the product shapes can be well guessed along with the assortment, it can also calculate profitability etc.

As in retail store it cannot be always perfect looking if it super market due to stock variance and improper refilling accepted world wide, so its always better to plan the shelves with vertical colour blocking to ensure higher visibility of products.

**Figure 13. Free online planogram builder software**
**Figure 14.** Add bay elements in case you want to add software

**Figure 15.** Choose product to add
Figure 16. Vertical colour blocking to ensure more products ensure better visibility

Figure 17. Product distribution may be uneven still all products can be identified and focused better with shelf headers
Thus from the above figure its clear vertical color blocking if possible should be always be followed.
CASE STUDY WORK SHEET

Idea:
Supermarket in a prime location needs revamp in visual merchandising. Basically by implementing common requirements in place rather complicating the store by usage of money spent on consultant.

Company "must meet" criteria (by Decision Maker(s)):
• A proper place with minimum 2500 sqft area.
• A visible façade and well maintained façade
• Competition and feasibility analysis
• Format of the store.
• All required permissions
• Merchandise and required fixtures.
• Good services and quality.
• Store should run on standard operating parameters.

Company "should meet" criteria: (by Decision Maker(s)):
• A proper merchandise category plan.
• A proper alignment of the Merchandise in the store.
• Offers and discounts
• Customer requirements
• Availability of products
• Full Information technology support.
• Secured store.
• A planned and trained manpower
MARKET RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY

Activities to be carried out (Task owner: Project manager)

1. Survey of the place
2. Catchment analysis
3. Customer profiling.
4. Owner flexibility.
5. Predefined budget
6. Market competitors search and analysis
7. Merchandise planning according to market standards and customer requirement.

Stage 1 Deliverables (Task owner: Project manager)

1. Catchment analysis report
2. Customer profile report
3. Proper space analysis report
4. Competitor’s analysis report
5. Merchandise category plan.

Comments on Deliverables met from Stage 1 (completed by Decision Maker(s)):

1. A visible facade
2. Format of the store
3. A proper Merchandise category plan.
4. A proper location
DISPLAY DEVELOPMENT

Record Activities to be carried out (Task owner: Project manager)

1. Civil layout
2. Civil work of the project
3. All permissions to operate the store.
4. AC layout
5. Lights layout
6. Fixture layout.
7. Electrical layout
9. Visual merchandising
10. Merchandise layout
11. Brands finalization
12. Manpower planning and training planning.
13. Store Standard operating parameters stamps and registers in store.
14. CCTV Layout according to category layout and fixture layout.
15. Cash point and server layout.

Stage 2 Deliverables: (Task owner: Project manager)

1. All civil work to be complete
2. Ac and lights to be fixed
3. Fixture to be installed along with all accessories and storage space
4. Façade to made and with all look and feel.
5. All the visual display to be done along with all information and signage.
6. All Purchase order releases according to the purchase planning. With offers and discounts applicable.

7. Manpower recruitment and training.

8. CCTV installed.


10. All permissions confirmed from the respective government organizations

11. Target distribution for all the people.

12. Human resource facilities implemented.

Comments on Deliverables met from Stage 2 (completed by Decision Maker(s)):

1. Merchandise and required fixtures

2. Proper alignment of the Merchandise in the store

3. Full Information technology support.

4. Secured store.

5. All required permissions

6. A proper alignment of the Merchandise in the store

INSTORE VISUAL MERCHANDISING

Record Activities to be carried  (Task owner: Store manager)

1. Promotion of the store

2. Alignment of merchandise

3. Aisles and path arrangement

4. Standardized store signage’s in local languages Also.
5. Color blocking
6. Category adjacencies
7. Cleanliness

*Stage 3 Deliverables (Task owner: Store Team)*

1. Store decoration
2. Store cleanliness
3. Carton never on floor
4. Proper merchandise level on floor
5. Fixtures well maintained
6. Stacking and display proper
7. Dusting and cleaning of the store

**VISUAL MERCHANDISING REVIEW (completed by Decision Maker(s))**

*Comments on Deliverables met from Stage 3 (completed by Decision Maker(s)):*

1. Any loop holes
2. Customer feed back
3. Additions or subtractions to any resource.
4. Analyzing the situation and all Standard operating parameters
5. Store budget and expense.
6. Sales target achieved or not
7. Proper reach to customer is maintained or not

**What could have been done differently?**

Usually we do not withdraw a store we try to revamp the strategies with lot of ADDONS like Promotions and offers, marketing and awareness,
loyalty program, competitive prices. A store if has a proper survey and analysis before opening and is customized in merchandising and display from time to time to make it perform the best profitable store.

**Conclusion**

Any store which is indigenous and local is subjected to a lot of internal problems which includes analysis of stock and sales. Using Planogramming software can help a lot to make the store appealing in view of better layout and space allocation.

To avoid customer complain and monotony a store lay out or display or using attractive or different display techniques can be done and re-done but more changes upset customers and less changes make customer accustomed and bore them. So to crack monotony and to give a new look to the store, a product lay out can be done again as when its required by the store reasons can be anything, from better look, high selling items or may be any adjustments required. As we can see even there are a lot of different kinds of fixtures available to stack chips like clip strips, grab tower, dump bin, basket or table top still in kirana or convenience store neighborhood stores it hangs in plenty and makes the store look colorful and abundant, people get attracted easily especially kids.

Any layout which works well should not be much disturbed as to get higher returns. The usage of more space and no clutter is the best for any type of store. The proposed layouts are based purely on discussion and observation of various layouts of regional kirana shops and national level retailers in the different parts of Odisha’s major districts. The ideas given here can be used by retail stores with a slight modification depending on the
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customer buying behavior and the convenience. This will not only enhance experience but also ease store operations.
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