7.1 Importance of Visual Merchandising

Visual Merchandising is a tool to:

- Educate the customers about the product/service in an effective and creative way.
- Establish a creative medium to present merchandise.
- Enable long lasting impact and recall value.
- Set the company apart in an exclusive position.
- Establish linkage among fashion, product design and design by keeping the product in prime focus.
- Combine the creative, technical and operational aspects of a product and the business.

Visual Merchandising results in:

- Increasing sales
- Increasing operational efficiencies
- Saving salesperson's and the shopper's time
- Being a 'silent salesperson'

Significance of a Display

Displays make the shopping experience more:

- Comfortable
- Convenient
- Customer-friendly

Displays make it easier for the shopper to:

- Locate the desired category and merchandise
- Self-select

Visual merchandising:

- Makes it possible for the shopper to coordinate and accessorise
- Provides information on sizes, colours and prices
- Informs shoppers about the latest fashion trends

Challenges for Visual Merchandising

The main challenges are:

- Budget constraints
- Rising costs of materials
- Availability of talent
- Application of technology
- Meaningful and creative content

Display Basics

Themes: Christmas, Diwali, Denim Festival, Cotton Carnival

Key Copy: Copy card (signage) in the display area/tells-and-sells the story/few words/catch phrase/memorable/simple and direct

Image Promotion: Clarity, keep it simple

7.2 Elements of Design

The **elements of design** are building blocks that can be manipulated to create an effect.

The **principles of design** are guidelines that can help you use the elements effectively. The principles of design can be thought of as what we do to the elements of design.

The elements of design can be thought of in terms of those things that make up a painting, drawing or design.

The elements form the 'vocabulary' of the design while the principles of design constitute the broader structural aspects of its composition.

The elements of design are:

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

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

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

Line: A line is an element characterized by both, length and direction. Lines create form. They are often used to convey a specific kind of feeling or to point to an important feature in a design.

Lines are also used to create perspective; and dominant directional lines are often adopted to create a sense of continuance in a composition.

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

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

Characteristics of a Line

The characteristics of a line are:

- **Width –** thick, thin, tapering, uneven

- **Length –** long, short, continuous, broken

- **Direction –** horizontal, vertical, diagonal, curving, perpendicular, oblique, parallel, radial, zigzag

- **Focus –** sharp, blurry, fuzzy, choppy

- **Feeling –** sharp, jagged, graceful, smooth

Types of Lines

Different types of lines are:

- **Horizontal line -** suggests a feeling of rest or repose.

- **Vertical lines -** communicate a feeling of loftiness and spirituality.

- **Diagonal lines -** suggest a feeling of movement or direction

- **Horizontal and vertical lines -** in combination communicate stability and solidity.

- **Deep, acute curved lines -** suggest confusion, turbulence, even frenzy, as in the violence of waves in a storm.

Form, Shape and Space

The simplest definition of a shape is a closed contour, an element defined by its perimeter.

The three basic shapes are: circle, rectangle (square) and triangle.

Form is the shape and structure of a dimensional element within a given composition. Form can be both two-dimensional and three-dimensional.

The terms form and shape are often used synonymously.

Texture

Texture is the surface quality of an object. It refers to the smoothness or roughness of an object.

Colour

Primary colours: The three basic pigment colours from which all other colours are derived. Those colours that cannot be created by mixing others.

**Seconday colours**: They are obtained by mixing two primary colours.

Tertiary colours: Obtained by mixing a primary with a secondary colour.
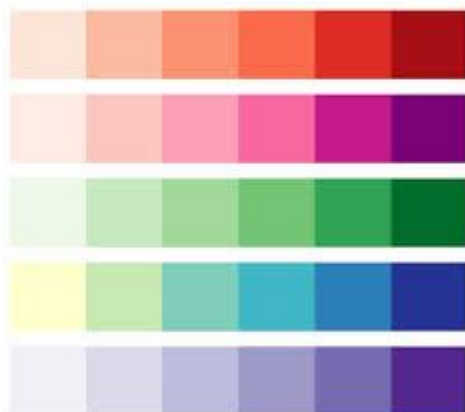
The Three Main Components of Colour

Hue: Differentiates one colour from another as Red from Blue from Yellow from Orange. What we usually mean when we ask "What colour is that?"

Value: Lightness or darkness of a colour is its value.

- Colour + White makes a tint

- Colour + Black makes a shade
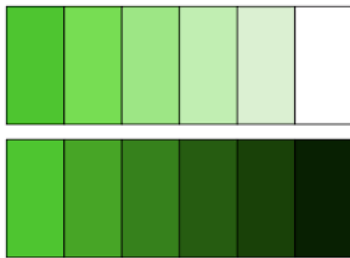
Intensity: Brightness or dullness of a colour

Analogous/Adjacent Colours

Colours that exist harmoniously next to each other on the colour wheel because of shared characteristics. Y, YG, G, GB.

They reinforce each other, are compatible and usually can be counted on to create a close harmony.
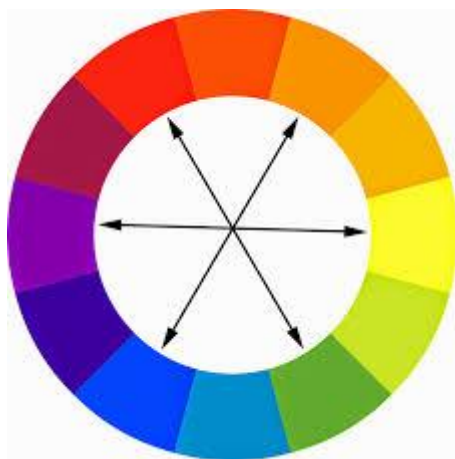
Analogous

Complementary Colours

These colours are found or located directly opposite each other on the colour wheel such as, RG, BV, YO.

They do not make for close harmony or gentle combinations. Create maximum contrast.

Monochromatic Colours

These are colours that are shades and tints of the same hue. They can be restful, easy to accept and provide a controlled setting for the merchandise.

Triad Relationship

These are three colours equidistant to each other on the colour wheel.

Warm Colours

Warm colours are said to advance towards you, for example, hues from Red through Yellow. Arouses and stimulates.

Cool Colours

Tend to recede. Calm and relax.

BG to BV

Neutral/Achromatic Colours

Black, White, Beige, Grey. Make good backgrounds and allow the merchandise to have full impact.

7.3 Principles of Design

The principles of design are:

- Balance

- Proportion

- Rhythm

- Dominance

Balance: Balance is an equilibrium that results from looking at images and judging them against our ideas of physical structure.

There are two types of balance:

Symmetrical and Asymmetrical balance.

If a design were cut by half by an imaginary line drawn through its centre and one half were an exact replica or mirror image of the other side that would be a classic example of a **symmetrical or formal balance.**

Rhythm: It is the repetition or the alternation of elements, often with defined intervals between them.

Rhythm can create a sense of movement, and can establish pattern and texture.

There are many different kinds of rhythm, often defined by the feeling it evokes when looking at it.

Regular rhythm: A regular rhythm occurs when the intervals between the elements, and often the elements themselves, are similar in size or length.

Flowing rhythm: A flowing rhythm gives a sense of movement, and is often more organic in nature.

Progressive rhythm: A progressive rhythm shows a sequence of form through a progression of steps.

Proportion: It is the comparison of dimensions or distribution of forms. It is the relationship in scale between one element and another, or between a whole object and one of its parts.

Differing proportions within a composition can relate to different kinds of balance or symmetry, and can help establish visual weight and depth. It is the relationship of the size, scale or "weight" of elements and between each element of the entire composition.

Dominance: It relates to the varying degrees of emphasis in design. It determines the visual weight of a composition, establishes space and perspective, and often resolves where the eye goes first when looking at a design. Dominance can be by any way like by colour, size or texture.

Three Stages of Dominance

Dominant: The object given the most visual weight, the element of primary emphasis that advances to the foreground in the composition.

Sub-dominant: The element of secondary emphasis, the elements in the middle ground of the composition.

Subordinate: The object given the least visual weight, the element of tertiary emphasis that recedes to the background of the composition.

Colour Blocking

Colour is the biggest motivation for shopping.

Colour can immediately create a mood.

Each person may have a distinct reaction to a colour.

There are also cultural and regional differences in colour preference.

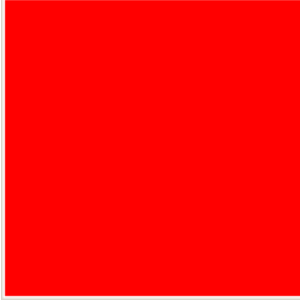Public taste in colour changes, sometimes dramatically overtime.

Colours are also associated with human emotions.

Colours are also associated with human emotions.

Yellow: Caution, cowardice, treachery, madness
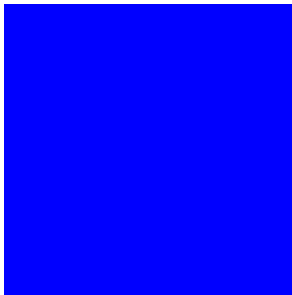
Red: Passion, love

Orange: Knowledge, warmth, energy, force

Violet: Royalty, depression

Blue: Fidelity, sobriety, fear

Green: Wealth, outdoors, luck, nature
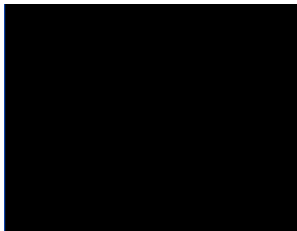
Brown: Maturity, humility

White

White stands for purity and truth

Black

Black stands for death, depression and sorrow

There are many approaches to colour blocking. The most common and widely accepted is the VIBGYOR.

Guidelines for Colour Mixing

For coordinated colour displays, never mix colours between groups (bright and pastels) e.g. yellow top and peach skirt.

Select colours from within a group – warm and cool – and these can be coordinated e.g. yellow top and blue skirt.

Each colour group can be combined with neutral colours e.g. yellow skirt with a blue skirt and a black belt.

Colours can be used to communicate moods in displays.

Colour blocking can be either vertical or horizontal.

Vertical colour blocking allows greater exposure to merchandise than the horizontal approach.

7.4 Window Displays

Promotional Display vs. Institutional Display

A promotional display can be single-item, range-of-goods or any other type of display. It focuses/concentrates on a particular concept, trend or item; and quite simply, it promotes. It can extend to all forms of communication. An institutional display promotes an idea, rather than an item or product. The display presents the store as a worthwhile and interested member of the community.

Window Display Construction

Window Glass

Greatest challenge is the glare/reflection in the window-glass which blinds shoppers from viewing the display.

Window Glass – Solutions

Solutions tried

Tinted glass, angled sheets of glass, curved glass and deeply recessed windows. Tinted glass affects the colour of the merchandise, angled sheets or curved glass tends to heighten the reflection. Deeply recessed windows are wastage of prime space.

Better solutions

Decorative awnings

Placement of the merchandise further away (5-6 feet) from the glass

Coat the display glass with a film i.e. non-glare glass coating (3M)

Floor

Most window display floors are raised 6" to 24" above the average floor/street level. This helps dramatise an object as it forces the viewer to look up. It lends prestige to the display. It can be viewed or glimpsed from over the heads of the stream of window shoppers. Creating levels in the floor can effectively display small articles like shoes, watches, cosmetics and handbags. Use of platforms or raisers can help create groups of articles or mannequins for greater visibility, separation and dramatic impact. Most window floors have board or wood or are carpeted. Some are lit at the base for extra impact. Special padded flooring may also be used.

Back of the Window

Removable panel/ Constructed back wall. The back wall of a window – the side that faces the inside of a store can be used for selling.

Window Ceiling

All the lights on the ceiling should be moveable so that they can be focused as per display needs. Invest in a ceiling grid or channels in the ceiling. This helps to create various levels in a given display. Props need to be ordered according to the weight a grid can actually bear.

Side Walls

Can be painted or used as a part of the display theme. Grids, panels on side walls can be effectively used for various displays. These walls can be backlit to provide extra lighting in the window. Side panels can be at an angle, adding to the perception of depth to the window. Some side walls/panels are installed only to create smaller windows within a large one.

Proscenia

A *"proscenium"* is a Greek word meaning, *'before the scenery'.*

In a window display, proscenia comprises a top valance, which masks the lighting across the top of the window, and side valances which separates one window from the next and also hides any side lighting devices. The main focus should be on the merchandise or the key item which is to be promoted.

That spot/place which first catches the eye of the customer or passer-by is called the **eye-of-the-window.** This is usually created by focusing the lights on the right spot.

Image Mix

Retail Store – Site and Design

The three most important success factors in retailing are – **location, location and location**. The entire concept of the store – including location and interior layout must be designed around its target customers.

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

a) Know which locations offer the most **long-term profit potential** – and which do not
b) Arrange products to **increase multi-product purchases**
c) Understand how the store layout and flow **shape the overall shopping experience**
d) Change product location or store layout in order to **reduce retail theft and loss**

Image Mix – The Top 6 Elements

The top 6 elements that influence a store's image are:

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

1st Element – Employee
Match the selling and image needs of the store.

Density and type of staff would vary accordingly.

Specialty store – lower density (1/500 sq. ft.), speak well, very presentable.

Large Department store – higher density (1/300 sq. ft.), well educated, suitably dressed

2nd Element – Merchandise

Supermarket – very dense (8000 pcs, items/100 sq. ft.)

Large departmental store – less dense (750 pcs, items/100 sq. ft.)

Exclusive store for designer wear – with low density and high margins

10 Ways a Store Can Turn Off Its Customers

1. Dirty Toilets/Washrooms

2. Messy Trial Rooms

3. Loud Music

4. Handwritten Signs

5. Stained Floor or Ceiling Tiles

6. Poor Lighting

7. Unpleasant Odours

8. Crowded Aisles

9. Disorganised Cash Counters

10. Lack of Shopping Carts/Baskets

Planograms

It is defined as the visual description, diagram or drawing of a store's layout and includes the placement of particular products and product categories. It is also referred to as **POG.** It allows for the planning and arrangement of merchandise on a given fixture configuration – so as to support sales through the proper placement of merchandise as per style, option, size and price point.

Meaning and Purpose of a Planogram

Planograms not only present a flowchart for particular merchandise departments within a store layout, but also indicate where an item is located – on which aisle and on what shelf.

A planogram should also illustrate the number of facings allocated for each SKU.

MOCKSHOP is one of the best software available.

Benefits of a Planogram

Planograms provide:

- More effective visual merchandising and product placement that drives sales
- Ease of selection.
- Better buying strategies
- Enhanced merchandise presentation in a neat, organized manner
- Assigned selling potential to every square foot of store space
- Customer satisfaction owing to greater visual appeal
- Tightened inventory control and reducing out-of-stock merchandise
- Ease of product replenishment for the store staff
- Enhanced product positioning
- Effective communication for staff-produced displays
- Are a blueprint that visually communicates how merchandise and props physically fit onto a store fixture or window, to allow for proper visibility and price point options
- Helps in the placement of merchandise which is to arrive at the store

Balance in a Planogram

It is important to ensure that the respective wall, unit, fixture is 'balanced' before releasing the planogram. The mirror image is the most commonly used way to balance a planogram.

Floor Plan

In architecture and building engineering, it is a diagram, usually drawn to scale, of the relationships between rooms, spaces and other physical features at one level of a structure.

It is also called a *'plan'* in architectural terms, as opposed to *'elevation'* which means how the object will look when seen from a side or a *'cross-section'* where the building is shown cut along an axis to reveal the interior.

Merchandise Presentation

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

Principles of Merchandise Presentation

Every category is different and has its own presentation norms. These norms depend on consumers' buying behavior, type of merchandise, sizes of merchandise and price points. The process begins with the art of dividing a category into its sub-categories and sub-categories.

Points to Consider for a Good Merchandise Presentation

Grouping items makes it easy to buy ensembles or related items e.g. coordinate tops and bottoms.

Place items in such a way that selecting and decision-making is faster e.g. belts with trousers.

Use vertical space, but not too high (customers do not look up nor can reach the product) nor too low (it could be hidden below other products or out of sight).

Know the 'right' fixtures for merchandise.

Place the featured merchandise face-out and colours in capacity on stacks or side-out.

Place merchandise in a way such that the range of styles is visible e.g. shirts in vertical blocks, checks, solids etc.,

Use vertical space for different sizes and for families of the same colour.

Do not be scared to innovate!

Placement of Merchandise

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

Fresh Arrivals/Trends

This type of 'new' merchandise should only be placed on 4-ways and 2-ways and should be featured on the aisle, with appropriate signage, such as 'New Arrivals'. Merchandise can also be folded and massed out on nesting tables so as to make a dominant statement. For example, the table displaying men's shirts should have accompanying bust forms that highlight the items and the signage.

Oddments/Cut sizes

As sizes and styles sell down they should be moved to the back of the department and presented in 4-ways according to their categories i.e. cotton wear, skirts and tops.

Special Offers

Special deals and discounts should always be housed at the back of the department. Ideally, these should be placed on a round rack and marked properly with a special offer sign. If a round rack is not available, a 4-way could be used.

Feature Wall

This serves as a backdrop for the entire selling floor and should be considered as the prime visual and merchandise space.

General Guidelines for Merchandising

Fixtures in a department should be aligned in neat rows, from front to back, creating natural aisles. If it consists of multiple brands, the department should be split into neat rows, clearly marking where one brand ends and the other begins. Fixtures in natural aisles must have spacing of not less than 3 feet between them. These aisles must be a minimum of 3 feet wide, to offer customers a comfortable shopping experience.

Platforms/nesting tables must never be placed on the aisle. Aisles are – strictly – customer areas, to browse through the merchandise. Platforms/nesting tables must always be neatly stacked. As far as possible, each stack must have an open sample of the product on top. Merchandise should be sized small to large, left to right and small to   large, top to bottom – whenever possible.

Dominance Factor in Merchandise Presentation

Dominance factor in merchandise presentation are:

- Colour
- Size
- Coordinates
- Brand Name
- Price
- End-user

Cross Merchandising

Cross merchandising:

- Refers to related products being displayed together.
- Promotes the look of a certain lifestyle for customers to buy into.
- Illustrates the variety of selection or the breadth of product a store carries.

Objectives of Cross Merchandising

The main objectives of cross merchandising are to:

- Promote the total fashion statement.

- Communicate to the customers the availability of coordinated merchandise.

To cross merchandise:

- Display focal points and highpoints with coordinated merchandise at all times.
- Ensure that all the merchandise is labeled with signage/tickets indicating where the coordinated merchandise is available.
- Prevent disruption of display by ensuring that all the merchandise is available on the floors.
- Do not display what is not available.
- Ensure ticketing is done to direct the customer on where to go to get the look.
- Ensure all the coordinates are colour coordinated.

Cross merchandising can be used:

- Behind the cash counters.
- To track the effectiveness of the display, track the sale pattern for each display.

Handling Mannequins

Types of Mannequins include:

- Realistic
- Semi-realistic
- Abstract
- Partial forms
- Alternatives

Realistic: Have 'real' details.

Semi-realistic: Do not have as much detailing as realistic mannequins, but they do have all the basic human features.

Abstract: Mannequins that represent the human body only in broad strokes. They resemble humans only vaguely and look more like robots.

Partial forms or Dress forms: These are mannequin-type bodices for fitted dresses.

Alternatives: Hang rods or fiberglass forms are often used to display merchandise. They do not distract a viewer from the merchandise.

Tips to Handle Mannequins

Change the mannequin garments in the changing/trial room.

Accessorise the display with the right props and accessories.

Ensure the display garment is next to or near the display point.

Arrange garments size-wise and colour-wise on fixtures nearby.

Ensure the availability of the merchandise displayed on the mannequin(s).

Avoid lighting up the mannequin's face.

Chest lighting is the preferred technique. This not only shows off the colour and the detailing of a garment, but also softly illuminates the mannequin's face.

Outfit a mannequin the way the customer would want to look, colour coordinated and correct size.

Outfit mannequins with only that merchandise which is stocked (size and quantity).

Remove or hide price tags.

Ticketing/price sign is a must.

Styling

Styling merchandise refers to the unique way of displaying products in a way that the USP of each product is not only brought to fore, but is also enhanced. Styling means displaying a look rather than individual products. Good styling can act as a shopping guide and helps customers save both time and effort while selecting and matching coordinates.

The Importance of Styling

Styling:

- Is the best possible way to tell the merchandise story
- Is a very important and reliable tool for image building
- Shows, coordinates and makes shopping easier for customers
- Helps increase the bill size through cross merchandising
- Brings newness to the store
- Can sell non-moving products along with the fast movers through the right mix
- Makes the merchandise much more appealing and attractive to customers

Props

Props are:

- Anything that assists a display.
- Special elements which help to communicate the concept of a store/company image, and add an accent to the environment that is being created.

Positioning mannequins with props in a triangular shape is more effective than positioning them in a straight line!

Choice and Placement of Props

One theme should be placed for the props in each window. Merchandise must be the focal point of the window/display. Too many props distract both attention and communication. Usage is determined by the available resources/budget. It should work with the design and concept of the store. They should be placed so that they can be easily added to or removed from the window. Very large props should be such that they can be dismantled and reassembled.

Lighting

Primary and Secondary Lighting

Primary/Ambient Lighting is the all-over level of illumination in an area.

Fluorescent lamp tubes are used.

Secondary and Accent Lighting:

- Creates highlights
- Makes a product stand out
- Uses incandescent light
- Makes the colour of the merchandise to appear sharper, more brilliant and textures are defined and details brought into prominence
- Works best when the surrounding area is low-keyed and rather dim

Designing Lighting

The three main objectives of designing lighting are:

1. Ambient lighting
2. Accent lighting
3. Task lighting

Ambient lighting provides general illumination to an area.

Accent lighting enhances or highlights particular (store/product) features

Task lighting is directed at a specific surface/area to provide illumination for visual tasks.

Ambient lighting is used along walkways and circulation routes, as well as in service areas (lifts and escalators).

Accent lighting is preferred within merchandise and display areas to create an atmosphere or enhance the mood.

Lighting an Open Back Window

The lighting in the display area, up front, must be strong enough and bright enough to attract – and keep – the shopper's eye from going past the displayed merchandise, directly into the store and beyond. A string of fluorescent tubes can cause a flat, dull, dead chill over the colours of garments displayed. Only a few sharp spots should be used; focusing the lights away from the glass, directly down onto the merchandise.

Lighting a Closed Back Window

There is far greater scope for magical lighting effects. Lighting can highlight the merchandise, and also use lighting to 'paint' the backdrop in a complimentary or accenting colour, or dramatise the setting by creating a particular ambience – for example, blue and green lighting to stimulate an underwater look. It can be used with certain filters. and can also create textures. Similarly, filters can bring about the feel of rain, snow, sunshine and fireworks.

Lighting the Store Interior

It serves to lead a shopper into and through the store. It can help separate one area from another. The level of light and its colour (warm or cold) creates the store ambience. Includes the general, overall illumination of the retail space as well as the accents. Includes atmospheric touches like a chandelier, or wall and ceiling washers – they may not always show off the merchandise, but they do reflect the attitude.

Suggestions for Using Light Effectively

Avoid bright, white lights directly on mannequins' face, elbows or shoes. Use coloured light to create the right setting for the merchandise. It is more effective to light across a display rather than directly down on it. Hide and disguise electric wires. Windows should be kept clean from dust and dirt. Turn off lights after store hours.

Retail Lighting – Common Misapplications

1. Using incandescent lights for everything
2. Using floodlights, rather than spotlights

3. Random fixture layouts or visual chaos
4. Too many shiny surfaces
5. Black ceilings
6. Dark finishes
7. Accenting everything, emphasizing nothing in particular
8. Spotty lighting. Not enough ambient lighting to clearly examine merchandise