

Merchandising Exposure; Backbone of Sales Promotion

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Abstract

In the present era, almost all of the activities of the economies and business organizations are market related. Demand and supply are the two forces driving the markets. Demand is generated from the consumer side and the corporate works to meet the customer needs by providing them specific products according to their demand. Marketing discipline plays a role to maintain the system of demand and supply in the markets. Marketing works as a bridge linking the corporate and the markets by generating sales. Selling is considered as a communication between/among consumers and the sellers. For influencing the purchase decision of a customer or a group of customers, organizations design personalized confrontations. For the improvement of commercialization of a product, merchandising exposure strategies are used by the sellers. These strategies are adopted inside the stores to attract the potential customer towards a particular product for the purpose of making sales.

Keywords: Sales promotion, product exposure, customer attraction, retail stores, display

INTRODUCTION

Usage of visuals for sales promotion

Visuals always attract the human beings. Hence the visual presentation of the products inside the stores is considered to be the most striking way to catch the customer attention. This is considered as a store's language to communicate with the customers. Even though, this approach is closely related to the retail, but a lot of ways are there to show off different types of products for boosting their sales. For example, celebrities and models are used for the advertising of clothes. Highly crafted trays are used to display the bakery items and for the attractive presentation of vegetables and fruits, sellers arrange them according to their colors (fig 1)



Fig 1

Attractive designs of the products play a vital role for selling them. A properly designed product exposure strategy can have outstanding impact on sales, customer attraction can be directed to go for unplanned purchases by applying this strategy (Bytyçi, 2018).

It has been studied that the stores influence the customers' preliminary presentation more than any other variable. The front design of a store leaves the first impression on the potential customers. Most of the customers make decision to go inside for shopping after observing the front look of the store. Bytyçi, (2018) stated that more than 50% of the female purchasers are influenced by the product exposure from the front display windows especially for purchasing the clothes.

Customers' emotional feedback and perceptions affect their purchasing behavior and organizations design the stores using different elements of attraction including colors, visual communication, music and lighting. Customers like to touch the products before making a decision to purchase that. Customers get the information while viewing a product and they make the emotional connection by touching. Researchers defined that "seeing believes, but touching is feeling" (Claus & Garaus, 2015).

Nonetheless, some of the retailers use the closed windows for display that do not allow the customer to touch the products nor see closely. Customers sometimes need to check the products physically rather than only observing from packaging before making a decision to purchase. So it is recommended for that stores where such kind of products are available to display some of those products in unpacked form for the facilitation of their potential buyers. Here, the example of electronic stores can be taken to display the cameras for customers for providing them an opportunity to check the product physically and then making the decision to buy. It is customers' psyche that they feel more comfortable and satisfied if they are provided the freedom of choice. So the visual exposure method is best strategy to adopt (Bytyçi, 2018)

KINDS OF PRODUCT EXPOSURE

It can be frequently seen by the customers that the some cartoon or animated movie character is displayed in toy shops. This is an example of product exposure and used by the highly famed brands of giant corporations for marketing the products. Retail organizations are highly engaged to adopt these methods of product exposure for communicating with their potential customers as well as to create the element of differentiation to compete their rivals.

The choice of a customer for purchasing a specific product is mostly dependent on the display and presentation of different products inside the stores. Various retail stores use to display the products in the form of “stack” and present them longitudinally. Varley, (2014) categorized this type of presentation as Gondala. This terminology is used for such a display which allows the customers to walk through the stacks where the products are displayed on both sides of the stacks. This method is useful to attract the customers as customers turn from the corners to check out the products displayed on the other side of the stack.

Sometimes different types of baskets, bins and tables are used to display the products. This type of display is normally used to display a large number of products available on discount. These tables or baskets loaded with varieties of discounted items. To increase the sales from shelves, facing plays an important role. Researches shows that sales are boosted upto 25% by increasing the quantity of faces. The sales of the products rotated frequently are more than those which are not rotated as much.

Another way for product exposure is called “rounders”. In this method, the products are displayed in circles. For example, the belts are displayed on a stand allowing the circular presentation. In this type, a variety of products are displayed and customers can check the products from each side while rotating the stand.

The way of display of the products available for sale is also included in the product exposure i.e. either the products are placed on racks, windows or hanged. The product purchase withdrawal is affected by the variety of the products available for sale. For example, the display of the cloths in a store must be arranged according to their brands, styles and sizes. On the other hand, the arrangement of grocery items in a grocery store is based on the other factors including their expiry dates, types and weight etc. Claus & Garaus, (2015) stated that some of the

factors must be considered prior to mention some important kinds of merchandising application.

- The presentation or display of the products should be arranged in a logical way. For example shirts uppers, coats etc. should be displayed at the top and the presentation of trousers and pants should be at the bottom. This display must be arranged according to their sizes.
- The product display also plays its role to facilitate the customers for making their buying decision. Some additional products should also be displayed with the category wise exposed items to enhance the sales level. For example there should be the rack of spices items near the display area of meat in the grocery stores. This will work as a reminder to the customer that he/she forgot to purchase it.
- The height of the shelves should be suitable enough so that the purchasers can easily access the products. It should not be so high or even very low.
- The shelves should not remain empty when the products placed on them are sold. These must be filled instantaneously.

A number of different kinds of merchandising applications exist. One of the suitable displays of the products for retail stores is “The Sup Out Presentation” this is the external presentation. Products especially clothing are hanged and their one side is completely exposed from top to bottom. Other type of display is “The Face Presentation”. In this type of merchandising, products are displayed at the main entrance of the stores. In this way, these items are visible to each customer who is entering the store.

This way of display allows the presentation of a large variety of products and covers less space than round presentation. The drawer presentation is also very effective.

This type of display saves the space for the presentation of more and more products. Normally, this method of display is used by the big retail sellers. Products are stacked vertically with all available colors and types. Another way of display is called “T-stay/ free-stay”. By following this style, products are displayed in T style. “Waterfall” is also a method of presentation. This style has its particular name because of its sloping structure. Normally, garments are displayed using waterfall method.

Above mentioned presentation types of the products are responsible for the appealing look of a retail store. But on the other hand, customers find the engagement of models, props and supporters more attractive and influencing. Prop means to disclose the features and functions of the products to the customers, selling it or telling them some story about that particular product. Props are not for sale normally for example the plastic patterns of food available in the supermarkets in fruits and vegetables sections. A mannequin present in a garments shop used to display the dress is also an example of prop. The primary goal of visual merchandising is to get the customer attraction and plums are defined as the most significant tools for attracting the customers.

For the purpose of data collection, 34 different outlets of 11 companies/brands were visited located in different geographical areas. All of the organizations were headed by male entrepreneurs. Data was collected through self administered questionnaires. After analysis, it was found that different organizations and brands are using more than one types for the presentation of different sort of products. About 54% of them were using “Gondola” presentation technique. Sup-Out, T-Stay and Rounder techniques were used by 18.2%, 27.3% and 36.4% respectively. Hence it can be found that these types of display are not being used so often. Face presentation method is used by 72.2% of the organizations. They claim that this method is more attractive for the customers than any

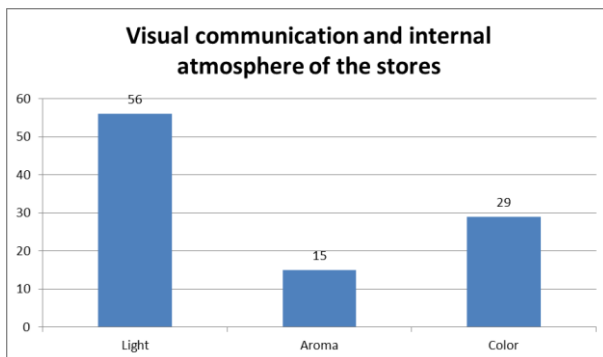
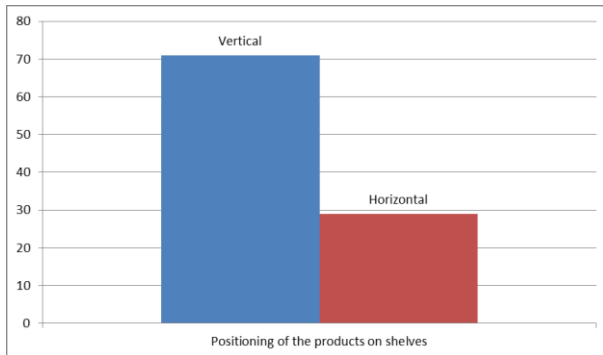
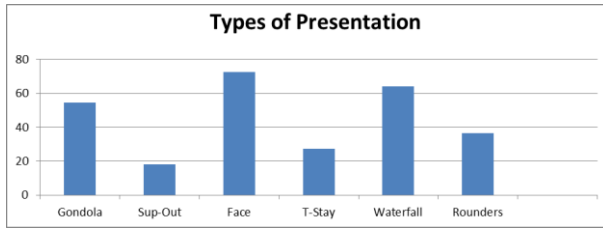
other. While the “Waterfall” presentation type is also most common and is used by 64% of the organizations (Graph 1).

During the survey, respondents were also asked about the effectiveness and attraction of vertical and horizontal presentation of the products. 71% of the respondents claimed that vertical presentation is more effective as compare to horizontal while 29% of them preferred horizontal display on vertical.

In-store environment was also considered during the research. Three different factors of customer attraction were considered responsible for the customer attraction including color, lightning and aroma. For this purpose, data was collected from 100 respondents. All of them were the customers visiting different outlets for the purpose of shopping. Most of them (56%) claimed that they are more attracted by the lights, 29% of them expressed their source of attraction in color and only 15% were more concerned about the in-store aroma.

CONCLUSION

Some of the key elements of sales promotion were studied in present study. The surveyed outlets were located in vast geographical locations so the findings may be generalized to the whole market of the Pakistan. It was found that merchandising is the backbone of sales promotion as customers are attracted towards the products because of their way of presentation even if they did not come to purchase that particular product. Furthermore, the environment of the retail outlets also plays a vital role to get the customer attention. Hence, this study has a significant importance for the retail industry of Pakistan and they can use these techniques to boost up their sales.



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