

A Study on Working Women Customer Expectations on Retail Apparel Store Merchandising

Sana Ashraf.T¹ , Dr.V.Savitha ²

¹ *PhD Research Scholar, Bishop Appasamy College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.* sanafdr@gmail.com

² *M.B.A, M.phil, Ph.D, Assistant Director, Self-Finance Programmes- Campus II, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Home Science and Higher Education for Women(Deemed to be University), Coimbatore.* savithababu2009@gmail.com

Abstract: A well-designed and expertly kept retail environment can draw in more customers, keep them interested, and ultimately result in a more fulfilling shopping experience, raising the likelihood of repeat business and patronage. It takes time and effort to merchandise a store effectively. Evaluation of strategy efficacy frequently, follows market trends, and adjusts to shifting consumer preferences. By doing this, it make shopping enjoyable for customers, entice them to buy again, and ultimately increase sales and brand loyalty. The influence of store merchandising and customer expectations on the success of a retail store is a crucial aspect of retail management and marketing. Visual merchandising is a potent technique that companies use to draw customers in, make their shopping experience memorable, and ultimately encourage impulsive or unexpected purchases. This research study explains the working women customer expectations on store merchandising with respect to store exterior and store interior.

Keywords: store merchandising, customer expectations, Visual merchandising, Impulse, retail environment.

Introduction

Fashion market has been seen radical modifications in structure of business from past decade. Even fashion cycle graph quickly change due to the economic development and competitive market. Hence long term extreme plans and initiative inputs of business can be destabilized (Namita & Akanksha, 2014). In a market, branding is crucial since it shows consumers that a brand favours their products or services. Aim of every company is attaining the final goal in financial worth by founding trust and acceptance of brand name in mind & heart of consumers, sellers, opinion leaders and prescribers. Branding is a method focused on generating customer value that aids in winning total worth (Sulekha. D, et al, 2021). Changes in consumer behaviour also impact the industry, either directly or indirectly. For firms to attract and retain customers, they must establish a range of business strategies. For a business to succeed, its strategy must take into account the continually altering patterns of consumer behavior (Sheetal & Maria , 2016). Branded goods play an essential position in the global marketplace, particularly in the Indian market. The economic growth of the nation is changing quickly, and since globalisation, people's lifestyles, purchasing habits, and purchasing power have all been on the rise. One of India's fastest-growing sectors, the garment industry contributes 4% of the country's GDP (K. Maran, et al, 2017).

Customers who purchase items at self-serving types of stores learn how to evaluate themselves and select the best products. The setting of the store helps customers learn. Better store atmospherics would draw more customers and result in a more satisfying shopping experience. Retail store atmosphere is an important aspect for businesses engaged in the retail industry, which use it to differentiate themselves and provide customers with positive value (Kotler.P, et al, 2013). Visual merchandising is strategy techniques of every branded store to motivate customers for impulsive purchase. While undertaking these ideas, marketers and brand build up the promotional activities as well as brand image to sustain customers for future also. its ads, signboards, interior mood, planogram, department divisions and other elements that influence impulsive or unplanned buying. (Balaji & Babu, 2016).

Review of Literature

According to (Ajith .K.T, et al, 2018), Customers are more likely to make impulsive purchases when they are exposed to these visual signals. This demonstrates how these visual merchandising approaches significantly influence consumers' impulsive buying behaviours by functioning as indicators that stimulate desire, ultimately, the need motivates a buyer to make an impulsive purchase. Customer's tendency to make quick decisions appears to be positively influencing in-store browsing, which in turn promotes customers' favourable emotions and tendency to make purchases.

Working women's impulsive purchasing habits contribute to an important portion of formal dress expenditures. According to studies, promotions, floor merchandising, and window displays have a greater impact on working women. (Ravinder.K, et al, 2022)It demonstrates that updated visual merchandising, or "store experience," has a significant connection with the store's image, which is a crucial component of brand equity. Visual merchandising needs to change with the times since fashion is an always changing phenomena in order to keep up with the tastes of younger generations. (Akhilendra & Aravendan, 2023).

Brand attitude and finally purchase intention are impacted by visual merchandising cognition, which in turn influences brand recognition. The alternate pathway illustrates how perceptions of visual merchandising are influenced by aesthetic cognition, which in turn impacts brand views and buying intent. Fashion merchants are very sensible in implementing customer attentive visual merchandising elements in the store. They intend to engage the customers with satisfied shopping experience, there for expect them to come back again (Hyun.H.P, et al, 2015).

Many Private label products which are kept for sale by other brand private limited companies are advised to exhibit in-store through attractive pictures and wall displays rather than leasing space to well-known brands. Although renting out this space to well-known worldwide companies generates cash, this is an intelligent move of companies to promote their product at in-store brand and encourage people to buy it. (Satya . S, 2011).The women of today's India are educated, progressive, and tech-savvy. They enjoy shopping, especially for clothes, and frequently indulge in impulsive purchases driven by emotion. Given their increasing expenditure on clothes, the trend is positive for the upcoming years. According to the study, female customers are very sensible to the visual appeal of store environment. Store ambient fragrance can prolong them in comfortable time spending inside store. Efficient sales executives, organised shelves and racks increase the impulsivity of purchasing decisions (Vinish.P et al, 2020). It is clear from the findings that organised retail establishments are rated on five retail store qualities by semi-urban and rural clients. These include the atmosphere of the store, ease of shopping, the calibre of the service, the range of products, and the post-purchase support. Buyers place the greatest emphasis on store atmosphere when choosing any organised retails (Souren. K et al, 2022). The top visual merchandising preferences were predicted to be fragrance, environment, and layout. Future of visual merchandising depends on 3 dimensional screens, virtual stores, kiosks and AI applications. Customers will be experiencing more digital interesting concepts at retail stores (Mohanraj & Gopalakrishnan, 2020)

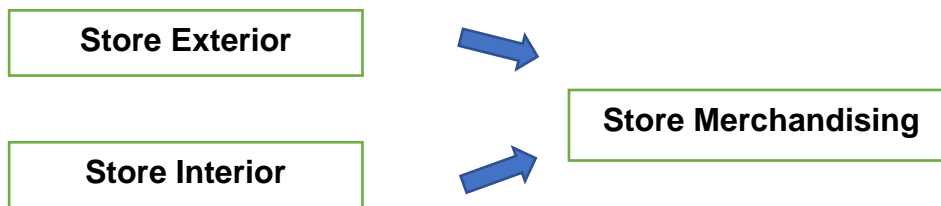
Significance of Study

Past studies identified the impact of visual merchandising as retail strategy plan. Many studies have focused on the area of store attributes, store ambience and visual inputs of store. Hence study proved the importance of store merchandising through visual merchandising implementations, But studies has not concentrated in depth of expectation of women customers in present competitive scenario of branded retail industry with online market. This study is intended to understand right expectation of customers about store merchandising. Study support retailers to plan right store design.

Objectives

1. To analyse demographic study of women customer apparel purchase at branded store.
2. To study women customer expectations of branded store merchandising.
3. To understand purchasing behaviour with influence of Store merchandising.

Conceptual Frame of the Study



Hypothesis of the Study

H0: There is no significant difference in between store exterior and store interior of store merchandising.

H1: There is significant difference in between store exterior and store interior of store merchandising.

H0: There is no impact between store merchandising and store exterior

H2: There is impact between store merchandising and store exterior

H0: There is no impact between store merchandising and store interior

H3: There is impact between store merchandising and store interior.

Research Methodology

Present study has conducted at Coimbatore city with 97 samples collected. Simple random sampling technique used for survey. Data collection prepared by using well-structured questionnaire survey. Five point likert scales has used as measuring instrument to analyse the rate of customer expectation and perception of store merchandising. Responses were collected through Google form as well as direct survey forms. Only working women are participated for the survey. Store exterior and store interior chosen as independent variables, store merchandising taken as dependent variable.

Result & Discussion

Table: 1 Demographic Detail

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	21 – 30	43	44.3
	31 – 40	25	25.8
	41 – 50	16	16.5
	51 – 60	12	12.4
	60 - Above	1	1.0
	Total	97	100.0
Marital Status	Married	65	67.0
	Unmarried	27	28.0
	Divorced	3	3.0
	Widow	1	1.0
	Living with Partner	1	1.0
	Total	97	100.0

Educational Qualification	School Level	5	5.2
	Graduate	48	49.5
	Post Graduate	37	38.1
	Others	7	7.2
	Total	97	100.0
Occupation	Govt Employee	21	21.6
	Private	57	58.8
	Retired	4	4.1
	Business	10	10.3
	Others	5	5.2
	Total	97	100.0
Monthly income In Rupees	Below 10000	12	12.4
	10001- 15000	9	9.3
	15001- 20000	18	18.6
	20001- 25000	13	13.4
	25001- Above	45	46.4
	Total	97	100.0
Area of residence	Urban	74	76.3
	Rural	23	23.7
	Total	97	100.0

Table 1 shows that from 97 samples working consist of 44.3% of respondents are from age group of 21-30, 25.8% belongs to 31 – 40, 16.5% from 41 – 50, 12.4% from group of 51 – 60, 1% from 60 – Above. 67.0% working women are married, 28.0% are unmarried, 3.0% are divorced, 1.0% widowed, 1.0 % living with partner. 5.2% respondents are belongs to school level qualification, 49.5% working women are graduate, 38.1% have qualified post-graduation, 7.2% respondents have other qualification. 21.6% of respondents are working as government employee, 58.8% are belongs to private employee, 4.1 % are retired, 10.3% are business women, 5.2% women are in other category. 12.4% working women earns income below Rs.10000/month, 9.3% earns in range of between Rs.10001-15000, 18.6% working women income belongs Rs 20001-25000, 13.4% earns Rs.20001-25000 range, 46.4% working women earns above 25000. Majority of working women (76.3%) are residence at urban area, existing 23.7% from rural area.

Table: 2 Reliability Test

Variables	No.of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
Store Exterior	7	0.8258
Store Interior	9	0.9233
Store Merchandising	17	0.9204

Cronbach's alpha is used to assess the internal reliability of a measurement instrument. In other words, it determines whether the items in the instrument are measuring the same concept or trait. The dependability coefficient generated by Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1. Greater within constancy is pointed out by a larger beginning grade. Alpha values above 0.70 and above 0.80 are typically regarded as satisfactory and good, respectively. Table 2 represents the alpha value of all the three variables 0.8258, 0.9233, 0.9204 respectively which indicates that all have a good level of study acceptance.

Table: 3 Descriptive statistics

	Statement – customer expectation on store merchandising	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	A well-designed window display can grab the attention	97	1	5	3.691	1.093
2	Window is the first impression for potential customers and play a crucial role in drawing people into the store	97	1	5	3.928	0.982
3	Attractive and creative windows give excitement to check products inside the store	97	1	5	4.052	0.834
4	An organized store is visually appealing and can create a positive impression on customers.	97	1	5	4.124	0.916
5	Proper shelf arrangements and organization contribute to a seamless shopping experience by simplifying the process of selecting the right size and color.	97	1	5	4.155	0.983
6	Easy to find dresses in wall display	97	1	5	3.794	0.946
7	Arrange dresses in a visually appealing way, considering factors like symmetry and color coordination.	97	1	5	3.918	0.759
8	Clear and informative signage to indicate the categories of dresses on each floor stand.	97	1	5	3.732	1.046
9	Good lighting in the display area to highlight the dresses and make them more attractive to customers.	97	1	5	3.99	0.952

10	Placement of the accessory racks or displays in close proximity to the garments they complement.	97	1	5	3.608	0.985
11	Use signage or banners to promote the fact that these items are discounted.	97	1	5	3.928	0.893
12	Categorized dresses based on factors like style, size, color, or occasion.	97	1	5	3.845	0.939
13	I believe that dummies [mannequins] are the major element in display	97	1	5	3.763	0.998
14	Position of mannequins at prominent and high-traffic areas within store.	97	1	5	3.835	0.943
15	High point displays make efficient use of vertical space, allowing you to maximize your store's floor space for other purposes or additional displays.	97	1	5	3.825	0.99
16	Add-on purchases can be done at counter display	97	1	5	3.392	1.085
17	Highlight of on-going promotions, discounts, or special offers prominently on the counter.	97	1	5	3.722	0.976

Table 3 indicates descriptive statistics method for understanding customer expectation on store merchandising system. Highest Mean value (4.155): proper shelf arrangements and organization contribute to a seamless shopping experience by simplifying the process of selecting the right size and colour. Second highest value (4.124): an organized store is visually appealing and can create a positive impression on customers. Third highest value (4.052): Attractive and creative windows give excitement to check products inside the store. Lowest Mean value (3.608): Placement of the accessory racks or displays in close proximity to the garments they complement.

Table: 4 F-Test: Significant difference between store exterior and store interior

	Mean	Variance	Observations	df	f	P(F<=f) one tail	F critical one tail
Store Exterior	1.1315047	0.005604	7	6	0.784	0.394	0.24115
Store Interior	1.1701031	0.0071478	9	8			

H0: There is no significant difference in between store exterior and store interior of store merchandising.

H1: There is significant difference in between store exterior and store interior of store merchandising.

Statistical F-test to analyse the significant difference between store exterior, and store interior with regard to responses. Table 4 indicates p value (0.394). That means significance value is ($0.394 > 0.05$), so there is no significant difference in between the store exterior and store interior of store merchandising in customer expectation. Hence H1 Rejected and H0 Accepted.

Table: 5 T-Test for Influence between variables

Variables		df	t Stat	P(T<=t) two-tail	t Critical two-tail
Store Exterior -	Assuming Equal Variances	22	3.300	0.003	2.0739
	Assuming Unequal Variances	21	4.338	0.000	2.080
Store Merchandising -	Assuming Equal Variances	24	4.345	0.000	2.064
	Assuming Unequal Variances	24	5.168	0.000	2.064

H0: There is no impact between store merchandising and store exterior

H2: There is impact between store merchandising and store exterior

H0: There is no impact between store merchandising and store interior

H3: There is impact between store merchandising and store interior

Table 5 statistics is for testing the influence between variables store merchandising, store exterior, store interior. Study point out the result the impact between variables store exterior and store merchandising obtained p values (0.003, 0.000) respectively for two-tailed significance level. Hence obtained p values < 0.05 Level of significance is high. H0 Rejected H2 Accepted. The study of impact between variables store interior and store merchandising obtained p values (0.000, 0.000) respectively for two - tailed significance level. Hence obtained p values < 0.05 Level of significance is high. H0 Rejected, H3 Accepted.

Conclusion

Effective store merchandising is a powerful tool for apparel retail stores to influence customer behaviour, create a positive shopping experience, and ultimately increase sales. It requires careful planning, creativity, and attention to detail to make the store environment inviting and conducive to making purchases. The findings of the study highlight the no significance difference between store's interior and exterior in influencing patron behaviour and expectations. Store merchandising has great influence on both store exterior and store interior. Retailers should make investments in both areas to develop a comprehensive and compelling shopping experience that draws customers and motivates them to make purchases. Increased sales and customer happiness can result from a cogent and effectively implemented merchandising plan that takes into account both the internal and external aspects of the store. By staying attuned to the expectations of fashion-conscious women and consistently delivering an exciting and up-to-date shopping experience, retail stores can encourage more sales and foster customer loyalty in this dynamic and competitive industry.

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