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Innovative Techniques in Store Atmospheric by Retailers for Favourable Customer Perception

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ABSTRACT- *The most unconventional techniques in marketing is “Guerrilla marketing” it is most impacted concept which is growing in the marketing techniques which is used in the industry. An extra ordinary and trending modern technique in marketing the product and promoting that makes use of unconventional or unusual means of promoting the product to the market. Making use of various marketing techniques to entice more customers and to attract and convince them to buy among the various range of products offered by the retail stores. As guerrilla concept is defined from a very old and unconventional techniques which was used by the militants in the wars to maximum utilization of their workforce. In retail stores there are many techniques used to create an atmosphere for purchases as in when the customers walk in to the store.*

As the store is based on designing, point of sale, convenience, visual appearance, an appeal that impacts the customers towards the purchase and decision making.

There are various design used in store like Three store layout design, lighting, visual communication boards, display fixtures, idea oriented techniques, presentation based on styles, colours, pricing presentation and pricing segmentation's, spacing techniques, techniques used for locating the merchandise, prioritizing the categories based on the needs and availability and use of these techniques to handle a diversified range of products in the store. And making use of these techniques the retailers have an impact on customers buying and decisions making as well as on their perceiving behaviour. Exploratory research is undertaken in this study to undertaken and to bring to a conclusion about the relationship between innovative ideas and consumer perception.

The main objective of this study is to understand the connect between the innovation and the customer perception, to analyze influences of this innovation on customers and footfall, to bring a conclusion for retailers to work on innovation as it is the only aspect which helps them to sustain in the market.

Research methodology used in this study is towards a specific aim that to understand and learn more about the consumer perception through innovative ideas and implementation of it on the ground where the merchandise has to be located. It is not only the environment when we start comparing it's all about the senses. An human being has 6 sense to observe, feel, react same like that store environment is also based as seeing, physical appearance, scent, feel ,reaction though decisions and impacts of environment through perception. Focus group is suitable to the study as it is focused on particular subject where the study is brought up in a more effective manner.

Keywords- *Unconventional Techniques, Guerrilla Marketing, Prioritizing, Store Design and Layouts, Visual Communication, Consumer Perception.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Retail and store atmosphere is an interdependent variable where each one is dependent on other, retail business is dependent on store outlook and environment of store as it influences the customers to make purchases and also influences the customers buying decision, good store atmosphere is very important to create as it reflect the store image and brand image also. Store atmosphere not only the image of the store but overall experience of customers in the store. Today retail store atmosphere has become an art

of convincing the customers to the managers and retailers. The unconventional ideas and techniques used in presentation and layouts are refining day by day as the customers are more sensitive and knowledgeable their main focus would be only service and the atmosphere and this atmosphere is created and maintained and on the other hand it is also developed using techniques which is very innovative and helpful to the customers where the customers feel good and want to spend time in the store this has a positive impact on sales.

There are many unconventional attributes that influences the customers buying decision and their behaviour, the most important attributes in the store atmosphere are lighting, music, colour combination and visual merchandising and other attributes are In-store design, themes, flooring, signage's, layouts, decor and texture, ambiance and employees presence in the shopping area.

In the year 1973, Phillip Kotler first introduced this concept called store atmosphere in this he clearly stated that the importance of physical appearance of a retail outlet and how this affects the emotions and give rise towards customer behaviour. As the trends and innovation in different stages of retailing from 1990s to 2016 has immense impact on customers and their buying behaviour, store atmosphere is the strongest part for the retailers where they can create a meaningful experience for customers in their store. this concept is not just a particular study on retail but also a deep ocean when it comes to each aspect of store atmosphere. A small change can lead to a biggest revolution and innovation is the lesson what we can learn from this study. There is a difference between idea and innovation as same as visualization and execution.

“Loyalty of customers and perception are the two important pillars in retail to make the retailers survive in the market”.

The unconventional techniques in retail atmosphere are dependent on the creative and commercial discipline which includes various fields of experts in designing and building a retail space. It is specialized form of architecture and designing the interior of a retail store such as interior decoration, flooring, paints, graphic design, in store advertisements, signage's and displays.

The main purpose of unconventional techniques in designing the store is to promote the retail store in an meaning full and in negative manner and to provide an enjoyable experience to the customers. The space in the store should be properly utilized in order to match the products sold in the store.

Retail design should focus on the important principles of store design while designing the retail store and those principles are totality where cross promotions are made available, that means promotion of one product of a brand is promoted with the another product of the same brand. Second principle would be focus which means focusing or concentrating on the promoting a particular brand to avoid space and shelving problem. Third principle while designing a retail store is ease of shopping which means easy and convenient shopping, focus on the mobility of the customers. And the last principle to be considered while designing the retail store is change and flexibility where the design should be strong enough to meet the changes in future, some of the design would be for temporary or for season based so as to meet the changes in future retail design should be flexible.

Another technique of retail design includes atmospherics and aesthetics where flooring's, lighting's, graphics, signage's and fixtures play a vital role.

The retail space structure is mainly based on overall design, many a times the spaces would not be proper and effective for the merchandise, in this retail design logistics must be analyzed with structural characteristics like designing rows and columns in the store, stair case, ceiling height, windows, ventilation, and entry and exit (emergency exit), all should be determined in the final retail space design.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reviewing the literature is to identify the previous studies and their outcomes which will be helpful to support this study. Literature review in this research is a ongoing process which involves the analyzing and identification of published and unpublished work, articles, journals and other documentation related to this topic.

According to **Turley and Milliman (2000)**, in his article on store atmosphere has stated store displays and layout includes fixtures and fittings, product grouping, traffic flow, department locations, allocation of floor space and allocations within different departments. He has briefly concentrated on few aspects of customers where the customers are highly motivated to few atmospheric attributes which influences their buying behavior. He concludes his study stating that different departments should be designed according to the type of merchandise in those departments.

Based on a research on “**Consumer Experience**” by **SAS Institute (2013)**, has defined Consumer Experience as “To the practice of designing and reacting to consumer interactions to meet or exceed consumer expectations and thus increase the consumer interactions to meet or exceed consumer expectations and thus increase the consumer satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy. Good consumer experience managements boost revenues with incremental sales, improved the consumer loyalty through valued and memorable store atmosphere, and also can lower the cost by reducing dissatisfied consumer”. this study was purely based on the experiential experience of the customers. This institute has undertaken this research to bring about changes in the consumer experience and their taste and preferences.

Retailers should use the concept of visual merchandising and store design to attract the youth which. As discussed by **Eva Samuelsson (2012)** in her research on “**Creating a second hand store concept for the new generation**”. He has explained how

visual merchandising, retail design and store layout effects the youth in their purchase decision, he had focused store atmosphere on a set of customers who are youth and also concentrating on retaining the existing customers to increase the current sales.

When we talk about the innovative techniques first we should understand the senses versus store atmosphere the connect between the senses and the store atmosphere which results in the outcome and footfall in the store, the customer perception not only depends on the internal but also external cues of atmosphere. As discussed **kim and sullivan (2007)** in their research on “Sensory involvement is an integral part of how consumers experience everything” this study brought a deeper insights for the emotions, experiences through atmosphere which can be utilized for triggering the senses towards the behaviour an perception. Today implementation of sensory aspects are more concerned than ever before as the customer being more alert and informative and gets a attracted towards new things innovation in presentation can help the retailers to maximize their sales and footfalls.

In an **CIPS South Africa conference** held in the year 2011 on “**Advanced Category Management**”, conference presented a deep research based report on category management through effectiveness and use of modern techniques. It considered six main aspect for modification where in it included organizing and structuring, procuring, people (customers and employee), pricing techniques, strategic use of techniques in sourcing the products and placing in the right position, use of technology in those areas of presentation where there is high flexibility mainly near the cash counters, product displays and features through electronic means, communicate messages in a proper communicating process. CIPS has presented a category management process for briefing the study, prepare a plan to take initiative, identifying the need of the customers and prioritization on the basis of requirements and trends, prepare a strategy and present it for reviews, implementing new trends and changes in the settlement of the products, maintain good and effective categorizing chart and process to develop, continuous improvements in the process and enhancements. And life cycle which is from extracting, sustaining and extending in managing the category.

III. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Innovative techniques in store atmospherics by retailers for favourable customer perception, this study focused on the use of techniques an innovations used to present the store in a more mesmerizing way and it has to be done top mange a brand as well as to manage the customers loyalty through their perception.

Innovation is the only key to success in this era and generation as to match with new trends, creativeness is the main core area to develop and adopting this in the retail store atmosphere is very important as shopping has become the fashion statement and due to increasing standard of living it has to be developed in a more systematic way, Retailers looking forward for the development in their future business. In store atmosphere innovations that change the positive decision of the customers has more impact. From this study it is cleared that today there is a need of creativeness to be molded in the environment of the store for the long run and success of the business.

As the trends and innovation in different stages of retailing from 1990s to 2016 has immense impact on customers and their buying behaviour, store atmosphere is the strongest part for the retailers where they can create a meaningful experience for customers in their store. The huge competition in Indian market has influences the retailers to develop and move from small retail store to retail chain or chain stores, with huge involvement of money and investment. As the retailers are focusing on providing the customers good experience they are concentrating on how make it more comfortable for customers and convenient with their layouts, interior store design, and other attributes how to grab attention of customers towards the store.

Store management includes three aspects mainly, visual merchandising, customer service, category management, and consumer behaviour includes decision making, loyalty, perception and attitude towards buying or purchases. Innovation in designing the store has main objectives and advantages: it depicts the store image and strategy, positive impact on customer satisfaction and buying behaviour, cost effectiveness, flexibility in operations. It helps in locating the merchandise for planned purchases of products, exploration of impulse buying in the store. There are various types of store layouts (grid store layout, racetrack, and free form) which can be more innovated in their own way. While designing store key points to be given more importance such as simple, getting things around, prioritize, design based on the type of store and type of environment to be presented whether it is thematic or systematic. From this research it is clear that customers like thematic type of atmosphere where themes are used on the ground to bring a pleasant atmosphere.

When it comes to space planning allocation of shelves and locating the merchandise in a proper way and having a systematic row and column shelving impacts the customers more. The store location can be classified as free standing or isolated store, part of business district and part of shopping center. When store atmosphere was introduced the meaning of store atmosphere was just a purchase environment, purchase environment where the surroundings is designed likely to create a particular emotion towards the customers and increasing the buying probability. Then later increasing sales margin and profits became more prior to the retailers and they started connecting the sales and the customer experiences and behavior as to bring about their main objective of profit. Retailers started taking it more seriously the store atmosphere and how it influences customers; as the perception mainly depends on the experience and how the customers look in to it, each customer has different perception towards innovation and towards the atmosphere as each individual has different psychology and different ways to judge it is common that the retailers focused on building an appealing store environment that creates a good experience and perception about the retail store. When we talk about the innovations it is all about difference creating that amount of difference among the competitor and impact it on the customer as a biggest change.

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