

The Core Concepts of Store Atmosphere: Store Layout and Design

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Abstract

Store layout and design is typically based on the three C's of store atmosphere which are interrelated and inter dependent on each other. When we look deeply about the study on atmosphere of the store the major pillars are more concentrated which are known as store layout and store design. "Store layout and design are the two important distinctive competencies which are very helpful in creating a good atmosphere and brand building". In order to increase the footfall in the store, a well-planned and designed store should be established, not only by this retailer can differentiate but also it becomes a mark of recognition and standard which acts as a brand among the players in the market.

There are three C's of store atmosphere which is highly influential in nature, "Convenience, Comparison and Category".

Store design is the important topic in retail atmosphere, store design is a 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.

Store design is highly specialized form of managing the total stock on the ground with a creative and mindful presentation. The main purpose of store design 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.

The important aspect in store layout is the customers perspective where the retail design the layout and has an overall control on the customers view towards the store, from the exterior design and branding customers should have a clear picture about the interior of the store, the interior design and the predicted based on the exterior presentation of the store which is important to understand the effectiveness of the store design and store layout and spaces.

The main objective of this study is to understand the importance of a meaningful store design and layout which perfectly matches with the store, it can be based on themes and techniques which can be used to present the overall concept and message which influences the customers towards their buying decision. The major outcome of this study is that retailers are not updating their research and working according to it, the flow of the innovation is not matching the plan. There is a gap between planning and execution which is more important.

The focused aspect of research methodology in this study is to bring about the studies undertaken on the similar topics and its relevance to store design and layout, research methodology is a concept which speaks about the process of innovation to continuous improvements through ideas that are contributing to the make it better. We speak

about design and layout it is all about “the impression of the retailers brand on the customer it just because of the standard which the retailers have created though its outlook to make it more impact”.

KEYWORDS: store layout and design, comparison, category, convenience, presentation

INTRODUCTION

Evolution of retail store design was first started in mid of 19 century where stores such as Bon Marche, Printemps in Paris, Marshall Fields in Chicago, Selfridges in London and Macys in new York these were the retail store which started with an innovation called as chain store in the world. Retail store spaces are a part of retail chain to draw customers into space to shop. Retail store spaces are designed in order to make the customers comfortable in moving from one department to another.

The next development in retail store design was creation of boutiques in 1960s which focused on running a retail outlet by individual brands. This development lead to increase in expenditure of customers worldwide and in developed nations, this was a major shift in retail design stores which contributed to increase the customers and retaining customers which in turn forced the retailers to redesign their retail store according to the taste and preferences of the customers.

The evolution of store design and its impact on productivity, standardization, techniques, design attributes is brief. Standardization from alterations to the structure of space, entrance to exit, circulation systems, atmospherics attributes (lightning, color combination, music, visual merchandising), and materials through a theme which a consumer experience when they walk in, this experience influence them towards impulse buying or purchases.

When we talk about store layouts and circulation there are six basic store layouts depending on which retailers design the retail outlet. Straight plan, in this it divides the one part of store to another part of store with the use of walls to display merchandise. This type of straight plan is used in many retail outlets especially in pharmacies and apparels. Pathway plan is mainly used in departmental or apparels where the whole merchandise is available on a single ground in a single level; they use fixtures to make a way to customers and guides them to easily move from one corner to another corner in the store. Diagonal plan, it is based on the angles and the store layout is designed according to different angular state and in which the cash counters are in the middle of the store is especially in the self-service retail outlets.

Curved plan, this is best suited to salons and boutiques where the whole structure of the store is curved. Varied plan, this is to focus on special areas of the store as well as displaying the storage areas this is especially adopted in jewellery retailers and footwear. Geometric plan, it uses fixtures, racks and floor to present the merchandise in a geometric for to make the circulation of the space more convenient. These were the circulation plans based on the type of retailing.

After determination of store layouts and circulation, retailers started focusing on themes and creating an atmosphere in the store, after deciding the store layout it becomes easy as it provides an idea to craft the atmosphere and themes of the retail space through lightning, sound, color and visual merchandising, these are the attributes which influences the customer experience and purchase decision.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Delia Vazquez and Margaret Bruce., (1998)¹ “Design Management-The Unexplored Retail Marketing Competence”. in their research has explained about the seven P’s of

retail design management wherein they have focused on seven aspects mainly patience, persistence, persuasion, policy, promotion, planning, policing, and has compared its influence through store design and its impact on consumer behaviour, and has focused on reviewing the design on monthly basis and its importance for the footfall. This study also helps in understanding the importance of store design and layout in creating a distinctive brand image.

The major influential factor of Store atmosphere is store layout and design and it has an important effect on the shopping experience of customers which can change and increase the amount of merchandise sales and can influence the sales. Customers purchases per visit to the retail store acts as a dependent variable. Interior and exterior design and outlook of the store, different thematic layouts, Fixtures, fittings, display , product arrangements, store layout, trial rooms, lighting, music, scent and the whole atmosphere as independent variable, as discussed by Aghnia Banat and Harimuki Wandebori (2012)² in their article on “store design and store atmosphere effect on customer sales per visit”. They conclude their article stating there is a positive relation between the store atmosphere and customer’s purchases and decisions. From this study we can analyze that it is an interdependent concept.

Simamora (2003)³ in the research paper titled “Membongkar Kotak Hitam Konsumen”. according to which store image has important supporting factor which is classified into two, External and Internal Impression wherein external factors include location, architect, design, look, logos, entry and exit points and its design, display windows. Internal factors include colour, layout, display, category management, image, themes, to prioritize the potentiality of the store it is very important to the retailers to understand the consumers and link those important aspects in creating the store atmosphere. It should match the psychological and physical needs so that the customers can easily access to the store of its targeted customers.

There is connect between store atmosphere and store image as it represents the store and brand to build identification in the minds of customers, the difference between the store image and the perception of customers towards the speed in the process of activities and range of products available in the store. As discussed by Mete Sezgin and Senem (2014)⁴ in their article on “Store atmospheres importance in creating stores image in sustainable management of store”, they concluded their article stating that range of products available should be arranged in accordingly to the store design. The customers get influenced by the store personnel behavior and the store environment.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Store design based on themes is also most creative and innovative where design is based on the theme which the store is currently running, in which the proper use of space is done and the space in the store helps the customers to interact and get entertained while purchasing the products, it is very important for retailers to build and create awareness about the cues which in the present trend to avoid issues and challenges in retaining the customers.

It is very important to understand the perfect layout for the store and match it based on themes and nature of the store, for a retailer the basics of managing a retail store is to gather information and knowledge about the store layout around the world to make a feel of differences among others and it is equal to consider the factors which determines the design and layout. To understand the need of store layout and select the suitable store layout it is easier to go with the process which analysis, selects and determines the best store layout, the main objective while planning store layout is to understand that it is very important due to the fact that it always acts as a major tool

for customers and for retailers as it consist factors like convenience, helpful in comparison, transportation and movements in the store.

It should be planned in such a way where the customers are highly concentrated towards a retail outlet and which can give better market opportunity for the retailer.

Store entrance and its design should be clear and focused on the nature of the store as well as brand, it should more meaningful and fun-fill for the customers to walk-in, and design should be based on strategy that influences in a very positive manner to the customers, to be compatible with the cost and the value of the store.

Store design should have a feature of in store advertisement which is an ongoing trend which helps the retailers to create awareness and giving a mindful exposure of shopping.

From the study it is clear that store design and store layout is a major challenge that the retailers are facing in today's competition as it is very difficult to compete with the competitors as they are bring the new ideas and innovations to establish their brand in the market. The main streams of concentration when it comes to store atmosphere is design and layout and its objective is towards cost effectiveness through planning the space in a productive manner, access the merchandise effectively, prevent shrinkage, avoid traffic near counters.

The store should be geographically designed for maintenance, free flow concept is mainly used in the store which showcases new trends and avoid traffic as well as effective use of the floor. Race track design, curving design, loop layout grid design and layout these are some of the basics and ongoing design and layouts.

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