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Sustainability

Gathering Momentum



Accessories

Opposites Attract

Trends Report

Bricks & Clicks in Sync

Runway Review

Finding Fresh Formulas

Educate Your Customers

with Visual Merchandising

by Ani Nersessian

Imagine a store with no sales people. Imagine it has all the charm of a stockroom with no product presentation in place to visually communicate with shoppers. What would the customer experience be?

Research tells us that customers rely almost exclusively on visual clues to form an opinion about a store. In as little as three seconds, whether or not they are aware of it, shoppers decide if they are open to making a purchase or not. That is why visual merchandising is so important, because it sends a welcoming message rich in colour and opportunity. If a picture is worth a 1000 words, then a well executed, store-wide visual merchandising program educates customers by presenting a multitude of reasons to buy.



Research shows that:

- over half of all purchase decisions, including impulse and planned buys, are made in store
- most shoppers purchased an item because it was displayed.
- displays or advertising alone are not as effective as advertising and displays together
- nothing influences a decision to buy more than advertising at the point of sale.

~ Point of Purchase Advertising Institute

Visual merchandising drives sales by inviting attention, by explaining products, instilling desire and encouraging buying decisions in a way that impacts memory and recall. Educated customers are those who respond, consciously and unconsciously, to visual merchandising that imparts knowledge by revealing the special features of a product whether it is a technology within the fabric, a design detail, or a demonstration of how it is used. By revealing the key features and selling points of a product, strategic displays teach by example and free customers to make buying decisions based on their own perceptions without feeling pressured.

As customers learn to self-select, they gain confidence. Shopping becomes easier and more pleasant especially when coordinated pieces and recommended groupings are styled and curated to present a complete purchasing package. Store layouts designed to have a positive influence on traffic patterns guide customers along an optimum shopping path that prepares them to be upsold by exhibits of complementary coordinates and accessories.

Visual merchandising can actually compensate for staffing limitations by teaching shoppers to be more independent. Relying solely on sales staff to provide information limits the number of customers that can be serviced at once. Visual merchandising performs as both a stylist offering advice on perfect pieces, and as a product knowledge expert highlighting special features and explaining how to benefit from them.

Visual merchandising is a retail sales engine.

What is more, research shows that an integrated promotional campaign that combines merchandising with advertising is the most effective way to increase sales. Special offers at strategic locations can be used to arouse interest, to introduce and explain new products, highlight trends, and direct customer traffic. Beyond creating an organized and pleasing shopping experience, visual merchandising provides important visual information that allows customers to learn and to shop independently.

Visual merchandising is your silent salesperson: absolutely necessary and incredibly impactful!



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