The Unified Global Feel Of Indian Retail –Visual Merchandising The Indian Way.

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Abstract:- Visual Merchandising is the art of presentation whereby Visual merchandisers conceptualize designs and implements windows and in-store displays for retail stores. The global trends of Visual Merchandising and Retail Design do impact the Indian market in a positive way which we can see through the shift in them understanding the importance of Visual Merchandising and Retail Design in building brands and Store image.

Retail format in India are reflecting visual merchandising strategies. Categories like Apparels, groceries, food e.g. Big Bazaar, Hyper city, Spencer's etc. are on their way. Mobile and technology products are still learning to do it. More and more open browsing formats are coming up but on the contrary apparels, fashion and technology products needs help or assistance for making purchasing decision. It is observed that an Indian consumer within 3-4 minutes look around for help unlike the west. Open browsing formats are increasing the consumers' confidence, but still what is a right format depends largely on shopping behavior and consumer psyche. A retailer needs to understand the changing lifestyle of shoppers and should be in a position to deliver their expectations through retail. **Rishi Vasudeva (Brand Director, Arvind Brand)** says that "India is a dynamic market with top shopping trends. 60% of Indian population will be less than 35 years. Development of malls further will be 1.5 times of current mall space in the next 3-4 years. There will be tremendous revamping of Old Street and emergence of new high streets. So more retail facades will be seen on the high streets".

According to **Mr. Shaileshchaturvedi- CEO and Director-Tommy Hilfiger Apparels India "Retailing is always about detailing"** and while talking about visual merchandising the Indian way, he states that there is pressure of localization and local adaptation to meet the needs of local customers. But he still feels that no compromise should be done on localization beyond a point.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Alexendra Roach (2010) in his book **'The Golden rules of Visual Merchandising'** defines "Visual Merchandising as promotion of goods through attractive and engaging product display design to encourage the sale of a product or service. VM doesn't just refer to a special promotion display; it refers to the presentation of an entire store."

Display or visual merchandising is 'showing' merchandise and concepts at their very best, with the purpose of making sale. It may not always result in selling the displayed merchandise, but it **conveys to the customer**

- **The value of the merchandise**
- **The message of store image/ Brand image**
- **Sales promotion or idea through window display or in-store display**
- **The concept behind the display**

Today's creative and talented retailers are using this upcoming art to breathe in new life into their store products. Passion for design and creativity are essential to be a good visual merchandiser. A perfect design process and the ability to create ideas that are different are required. Awareness of happenings in fashion world is needed so as to keep up-to-date with the dynamics of the market constantly.

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Retail format in India are reflecting visual merchandising strategies. Categories like Apparels, groceries, food e.g. Big Bazaar, Hyper city, Spencer's etc. are on their way. Mobile and technology products are still learning to do it. More and more open browsing formats are coming up but on the contrary apparels, fashion and technology products needs help or assistance for making purchasing decision. It is observed that an Indian

consumer within 3-4 minutes look around for help unlike the west. Open browsing formats are increasing the consumers' confidence, but still what is a right format depends largely on shopping behavior and consumer psyche. A retailer needs to understand the changing lifestyle of shoppers and should be in a position to deliver their expectations through retail. **Rishi Vasudeva (Brand Director, Arvind Brand)** says that "India is a dynamic market with top shopping trends. 60% of Indian population will be less than 35 years. Development of malls further will be 1.5 times of current mall space in the next 3-4 years. There will be tremendous revamping of Old Street and emergence of new high streets. So more retail facades will be seen on the high streets".
The top trends in retail are as follows;

- There is a huge rush for brands
- Convenience is what customers are looking for today.
- Mass customization is on.
- 'Pull him in' is the call of the retailer.
- The emergence of women as a major influence in all buying decision. Large working women population means more self-sufficiency.
- Shopping a new family entertainment.
- Development of malls and new markets has brought lifestyle retail.
- Changing face of high street with retail facades.

On the other hand **Mr. SurenderGnanaolivu[i] VP- Store Development, Mahindra retail India Pvt. Ltd.** Had put focus on Indian retail trends and explained how India is different from the rest of Asia in terms of customer, advertising market and how that impacted the trends in this country. He presented the unique features of this market and the challenges the industry was taking on as opportunities in the In-store Asia. The overview he presented was as follows:

- India is the 5th Largest retail destination and is ranked as the most attractive retail destination by AT Kearney
- Retail Sales estimated at US$ 180 billion growing at 5% against a GDP growth of 9.7%
- Retail Industry accounts for 10-11% of GDP generating 6% of total employment and is divided into traditional and organized retail
- Of a total of retail sales of US$ 456 billion organized retail is about 5% pegged at US$ 21 billion and is growing at a CAGR of >25%
- It has largest number of retail outlets in the world- 12 million stores with an average size of 150 sq.f.t and only 4% above 500sq.ft.

## II.   VISUAL MERCHANDISING AND RETAIL DESIGN – THE INDIAN WAY

Today, we notice many Indian retail projects are being designed by international design firms, who apply their superior technology, techniques and methodology. However, Indian design firms speak about various factors which give them an upper hand in the industry. Visual merchandising by international designers may be efficient but Indian designed features today have the advantage of reaching the soul of the consumers. Today it is trying to trigger the emotions of consumers. Warm services are of importance in the Indian retail space as compared to an unassisted environment. Today visual merchandisers are trying to understand the local consumers and their needs by providing local solutions, rather than simply following western guidelines in implementing their projects. Because it is noticed by the designers that **India is a place of snake and ladder game- there are challenges that can set a retailer back by 40 squares, equally there are opportunities that can take a retailer right to the top of the heap**. Dealing with India's mix of challenges and opportunities needs a mix of flexibility and creativity, a good term to explain this is "Global Localization", a sophisticated version of 'Jugaad' if there is a readiness to experiment and innovate to meet dramatically different local needs. While talking to some experts during the in-store Asia, a seminar on insight on Visual Merchandising, some important views collected by me from some experts on global localization were very surprising, that in-spite of the advanced and outstanding internationals features of Visual Merchandising still many head designers, Big retailers and Visual Merchandisers prefer completing Visual Merchandising and designing projects keeping in mind the Indian culture and the Indian mindset. Visual Merchandising the Indian way and understanding the local needs are the need of the hour.

Mr. Shaileshchaturvedi- CEO and Director-Tommy Hilfiger Apparels India. Views regarding **"Global Localization"** are worth mentioning. While talking about visual merchandising and retail design in context with international brands he said that, "a designer needs to focus on **'unified global feel'** i.e. there is no need of local version of the brand for the local customers. As the customers who walk in would like to have the same global feel". According to him small town consumers are well to do consumers. To judge the presence of light consumer space they grab those locations of the town where either a Domino's Pizza outlet or a luxury car outlet is doing successful business.

According to him **"Retailing is always about detailing"** and while talking about visual merchandising the Indian way, he states that there is pressure of localization and local adaptation to meet the needs of local customers. But he still feels that no compromise should be done on localization beyond a point.

Today there are many designs of Retail brands in India which are the one which has truly brought in the Indian style of design keeping the culture of India and understanding the Indian consumer psyche which is deep rooted towards its cultural heritage and is been appreciated by customers.

The best example is the **"Kingdom of Dreams"** Designed by **Sanderson Group** is an outstanding example of global localization where the inspiration is drawn from Rajasthan fort. It also has a cultural gully which has a Goan facade designed to represent the amalgamation of the Portuguese architecture with the Indian ethos. It is built like an Indian palace where all styles of Indian architecture are created in a unique design style. This place generally host music releases, Bollywood press conferences etc.

Below is the picture of Kingdom of dreams-Delhi (India's first ever entertainment and leisure destination initiated by Great Indian Nautanki Company
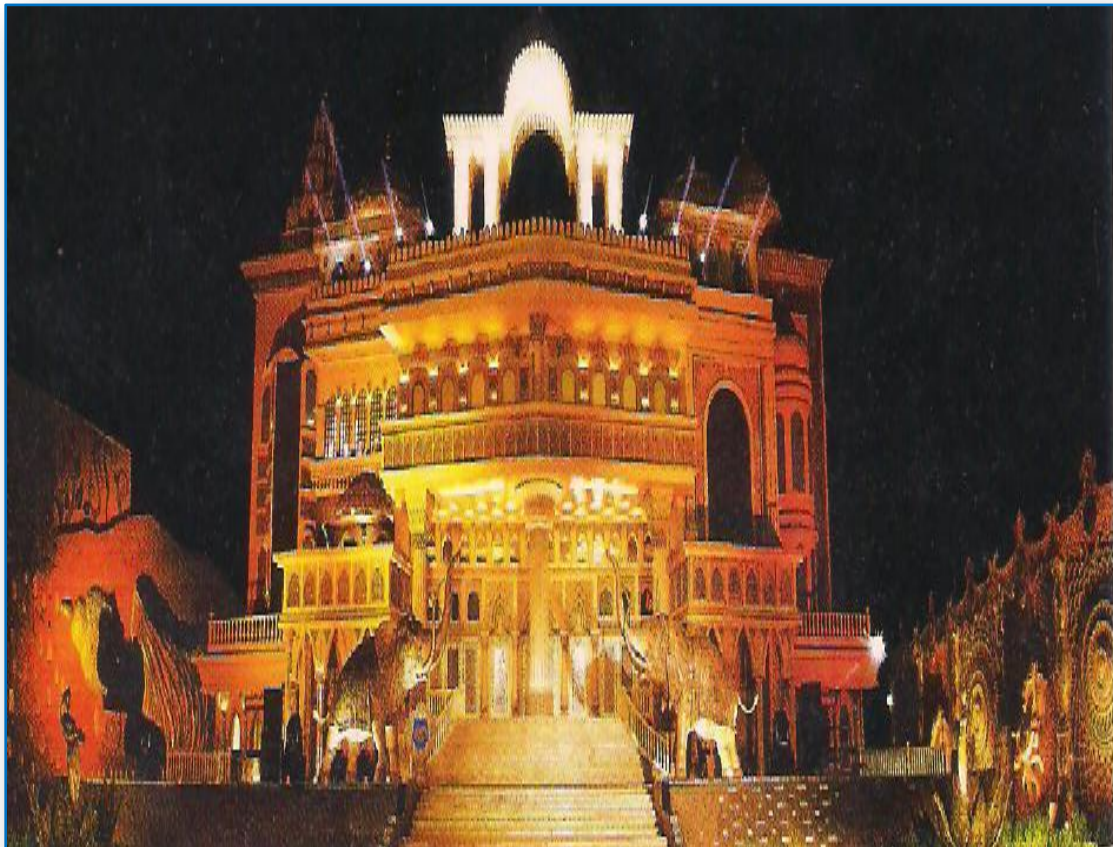

The **RohitBals** store designed by **Lotus design,** visual Merchandiser RohitBal at DLF Emporio offers a grand luxury in sync with the RohitBal's international repute; the store truly offers a grand luxury retail ambience keeping the richness of the Indian culture and tradition intact.

Below is the picture of RohitBals store

The design of **Idiom Design and Consulting**[ii] Traditional retail in Banaras and markets in Ahmedabad were an inspiration for the design of Ethnicity. The store takes on the design of the steps leading to Ganges at Banaras to add the Indian touch and create a unique retail experience. The store layout is inspired by a traditional Indian market place with chowks and gallies. The display adds Indian touch to the space. The merchandising is a mix of traditional with contemporary fixtures. Bringing tradition and modernity together is the essence of the display.

Below is the picture of the traditional Rani Market designed by Idiom Design and Consulting
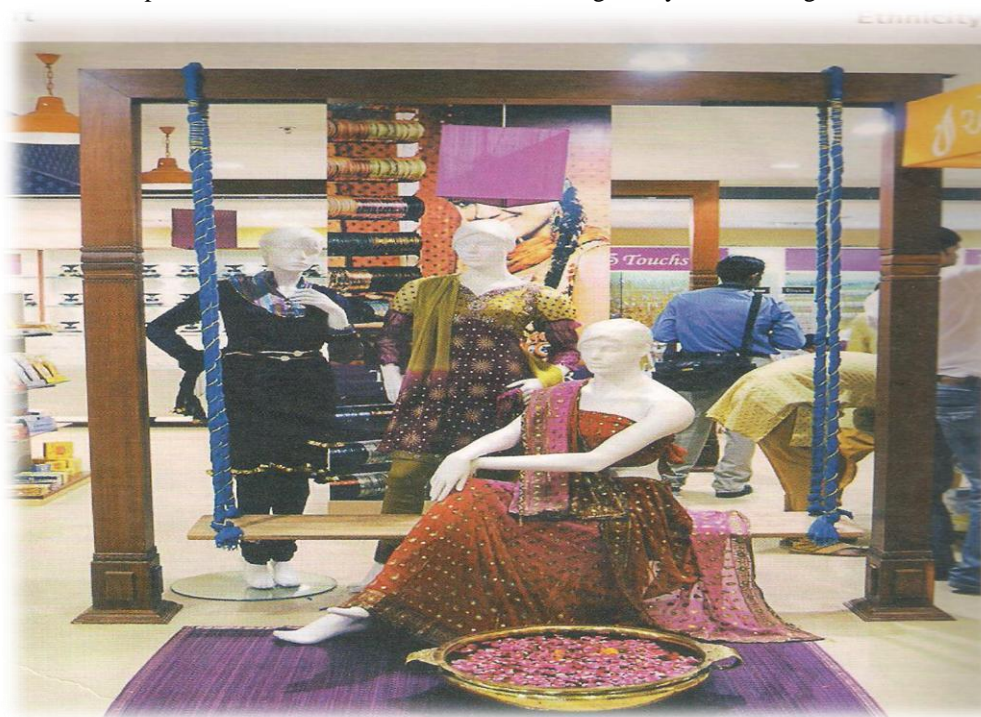
Role of retailers and Visual Merchandisers for catching up the trend of giving a local flavor along with global perspective – A challenge as well as an opportunity

Retailers and Visual merchandisers need to play a major role as visual merchandising has become an important aspect of retail. Talking on the **'Role of Visual Merchandising in glocalisation of Visual Merchandising and Retail Design' Mr. Anuraag(Head-VM, Future Axiom Telecom Ltd.)** said that **"**Visual merchandising would have to find its own path of growth in these evolving markets. I see the future of Visual Merchandising evolving into more as a tool for management of customer experience making sure that the brand ethos touches not just a customer's mind but also their heart."

DirenChedda[iii] (DCA , DirenChedda Associate who claims to design under Indian circumstances and says that " **never close your eyes and follow the European Market**" He also further states that every retailer at the end wants to do good business, wants the customer who enters the store needs to buy. And therefore while creating a design it is important to look into minute details as to how the customer will enter the store, what will he look at , what mindset will make him buy and accordingly an atmosphere is created through design. Every consumer is different and so one should not follow the west as Customers here is totally different from there. Designing Indian features has one very important challenge, the challenge of real estate. Here in India retailers want to use every sq.ft. of space and this is to be kept in mind while designing the Indian features.

I would like to conclude with the words of **Simon Ong**[iv]**(Group Managing Director and Co-Founder Kingsmen** who states that "Retailers and Designers are always faced with challenges of keeping up with the changing times and trends. But the bottom line to this is to engage the shoppers to the maximum. One must remember that staging experiences is not about entertaining customers, but engaging them."

"It's not what you sell that matters, but what matters is how you sell"

The other aspect today is effect of recession which has increased the importance of retail design as people are looking for new values. Everybody is searching for new ways to be successful during the crisis and to emerge even stronger now. Competition in the Indian market is increasing as international brands are entering the Indian markets. Retail landscape is changing as the concentration is on branded retail and shopping mall portfolio. Existing brands and retailers are under heavy pressure as customers awareness is less due to weak brand appearance. There are premium malls appearing. Retailers are willing to improve their Visual merchandising standards. This can be judged on the basis of the increasing Indian cliental of the top most retail design firms like LIGANOVA, Four Dimensions Retail Design India. Pvt. Ltd., DFC, FITCH, Design Forum, Shark Design studio etc.

III.   CONCLUSION

What is needed today is **Brand DNA** which should be visible throughout the store. There needs to be consistent brand message through VM standards. The standardization of strong international brands need not be changed for local needs as even local customers and consumers needs to be treated as international customers and get the global feel. The idea of design is seen as Indian or Western, The designers working for it may be local or global. We need to break down the barriers and bring in a fusion of design while respecting and celebrating the things that make each of the retail outlets unique.

Here lies the question how much localization is needed. What is needed is the concept of 'Global localization'. The VM needs to give a local flavor which needs to be further integrated to global concept i.e. 'Global Localization- Visual Merchandising and Retail Design the Indian way.

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