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# UNIT 8 RETAIL COMMUNICATION SALES DISPLAYS

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## Objectives

After reading this unit, you should be able to :

- explain significance and purpose of sales displays;
- describe principles of display designs and types of displays; and
- outline the planning and execution phases of effective sales displays management

## Structure

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Objectives of Sales Displays
- 8.3 Principles (and Aesthetics) of Display
- 8.4 Types of Display
- 8.5 Managing Displays Effectively
- 8.6 Training Retailers
- 8.7 Motivating the Retailer
- 8.8 Summary
- 8.9 Key Words
- 8.10 Self-Assessment Questions
- 8.11 Further Readings

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## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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Retailing scene in India has undergone a significant change in the last two decades. Not only there has been a quantitative increase in the number of retail stores but also their size, location, nature of selling operations, exteriors as well as interiors, and merchandise displays etc. have seen a qualitative improvement. This improvement, however, has been more pronounced in the retail stores located in metropolitan cities and urban towns. Over there we notice an increasing use of various methods for attracting customer traffic at the stores. One of such methods is the sales displays.

### Meaning of Sales Displays

Believing in the concept of "come and get it, we have it", sales displays are in-store presentations and exhibitions of the products alongwith the relevant information. Effective displays increase the interest of the shoppers in the products on display and lead to increasing the level of the pass-by ratio and hence the sales. Sales displays have come to form an integral part of store atmospherics and play a useful role in retail store promotions.

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## 8.2 OBJECTIVES OF SALES DISPLAYS

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According to Lewison and Delozier, sales displays are used to:

- maximize product exposure
- enhance product appearance
- stimulate product interest
- exhibit product information
- facilitate sales transaction
- ensure product security
- provide product storage
- remind Customers of planned purchases, and
- generate additional sales of impulse items.

In pursuit of the above objectives, displays perform a three-fold job:

- attract people who otherwise might not go into the store, such as passers-by out



window shopping, to come inside,

- after they are inside the store, whether they came in to buy or just to look, expose them to buying suggestions by counter displays and literature, and
- those who come in to buy something, induce them to buy a larger supply by smart packaging or display, or to buy additional products.

The power of sales displays in accomplishing the above objectives can be felt by visiting retail stores say Bata, Raymond's, Intershoppe, Akbarally's, Flury's, Benetton, Singer's Kitchen Collection, Usha-Shriram, Titan Watches and Ceat Shoppe to name a few.

In short, sales displays project a retail outlet, as well as a product's personality, create store atmospherics, stimulate desire to buy, trigger moods and act as silent sales people.

### 8.3 PRINCIPLES (AND AESTHETICS) OF DISPLAY

Effective displays result from the use of both the design principles as well as the creative and artistic talents of the designers. Some of the important design principles (see Figure 1) are discussed below:

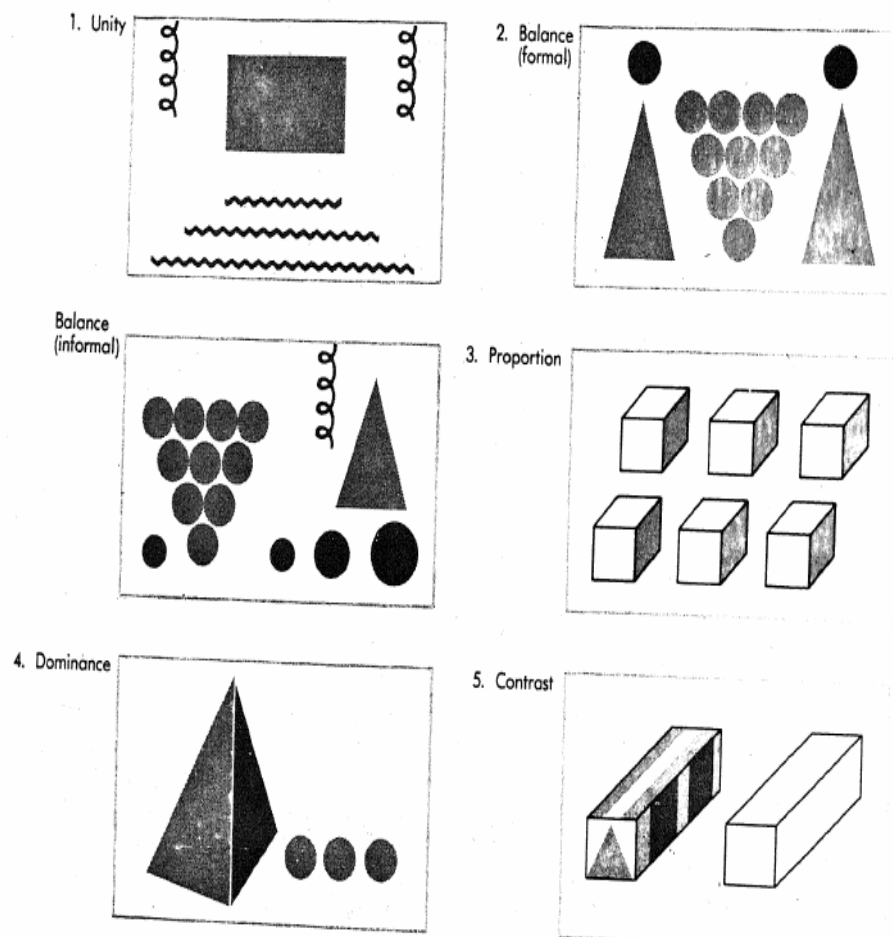


Figure 1 : Basic Principles of Design

**Principle of Unity** means that the various elements of display (such as merchandise, display materials, signs, accessories, etc.) appear unified and be seen as a whole and complete unit.

**Principles of Balance** means a harmony among the components of and items on display. Balance may be formal or informal. Formal balance believes in symmetry, that is, same weight, height or number of items on both the left and right sides of window display. Informal displays aim at being novel and 'extra-ordinarily attractive



and thus are asymmetrical in nature.

**Principle of Proportion** concerns with the relative sizes of the various objects of displays. It involves the positioning of objects in a certain pattern. Popular display patterns are: the step, fan pyramid and zigzag (see Figure 2)

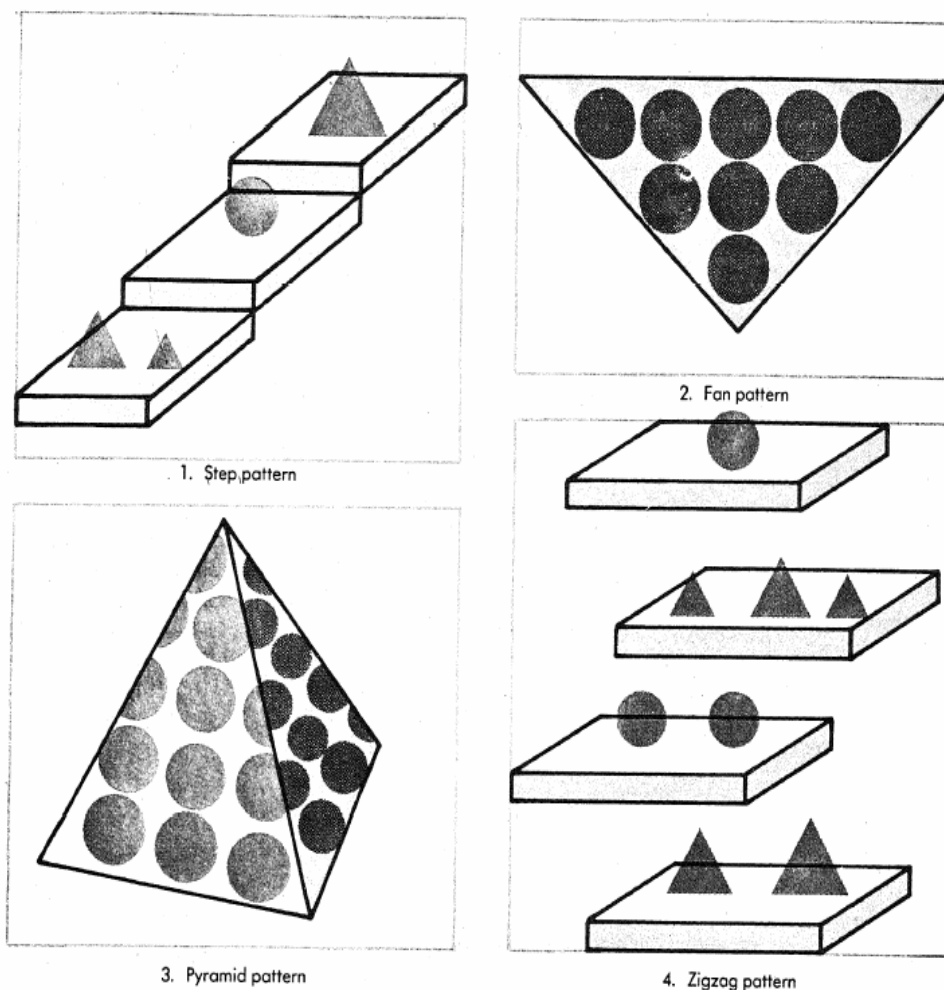


Figure 2 : Display Patterns

**Principle of Dominance** means dominating the display scene/space by using specially made products/packs of size much larger than the original size, or dominating with the use of unusual special effects as attention arresters/crowd pullers.

Use of giant Easter eggs in the show window of Flury's at Calcutta, of snakes and ladder game at Raymond's and placing of chotiwalla person at a restaurant in Rishikesh near Haridwar are some examples of displays based mainly on this principle.

**Principle of Contrast** concerns with focusing on a product by stressing on the contrast, such as, displaying a light shaded product in dark shade background, a small cute offering against the giant size product in the background, using contrasting colours of lights, etc.

#### Activity A

Visit the major shopping centre of your town and study the retail stores located there in terms of:

- size of stores using show windows
- type and brands of products on display;



- c) type of material used for making the displays attractive; and
- d) the major principle of display used in the show window.
- a) .....
- .....
- b) .....
- .....
- c) .....
- .....
- d) .....
- .....
- .....

### 8.4 TYPES F DISPLAY

As has already been stated, good displays act as powerful traffic builders and result in raising the store sales. Going by the increase in competition at the market place and the felt need of each retailer to attract more shoppers to its store, the question facing them today is not whether to use displays or not but how to use displays effectively. Blending creativity with principles of display designs, nature of product and specific market needs, has resulted in the creation of impact making sales displays which can be broadly classified into the following types. Before gaining familiarity with the different types of displays it will be desirable to remember. that a creative retailer for gaining the unique display edge may make use of a combination of some or many of the display types discussed below.

**1. Assortment Display:** In this type of display a retailer puts on display a wide variety of merchandise for the customer. This display is organized in two ways - open and closed. The open display provides an opportunity to the customer to feel or try the product. Self service stores, Super Bazars, Kendriya phandars and ready-to-wear garment stores commonly use open displays.

The closed displays, on the other hand, keep the products within the glass windows or pre-packaged form. Counter service retail stores and those stores that sell expensive items (say jewellery) or fragile products generally use closed displays.

**2. Theme Displays:** These displays work on the principle of unifying the merchandise on display around a common theme or event, and accordingly call for the creation of appropriate mood or atmosphere in the store. These displays aim at enhancing customer enjoyment while involving him more deeply in the merchandise and the event. The theme may relate to national, international or local event, a season, festival or even could be internal to the store. Some popular themes include Republic, Independence and 2nd October Days at Khadi Gramudyog, New Year, Christmas, Easter, Diwali, Pooja and even off-season sale themes at other stores. Bridal themes at saree shops, holidays themes at travel agency firms, school opening themes at shoe stores, etc. are some more examples of theme displays.

Bata, probably, was among the first to introduce the theme displays, initially for their range of footwear, and now for their whole host of accessories. Imagination can perhaps be the limiting factor to such creative theme displays one comes across now. For instance, once around Christmas Raymond's had a window display depicting the story of three kings and the shepherds with the underlying aim to display Raymond's blankets which were used as coats by the shepherds. Similarly, Intershoppe played on the "denim magic" theme - even dressing windows in denim blue to sell its range of jeans and jean accessories. Renowned beautician Shahnaz Hussain projects the ethnic image to promote her herbal



range of cosmetics at her Saloons in India and abroad.

3. **Life-Style Displays:** Using the market segmentation approach life-style displays are used by retail stores focusing on the activities, interests and attitudes of a segment of customers. The purpose is to make the retail store appear homely for the target customer and give him the feeling that he has come to the right place for shopping. Benzer, Sheetal, Roopam and FUs garment stores, Usha-Shriram household furniture and items represent some examples of these displays.
4. **Coordinated or Ensemble Displays:** Using the approach of suggestive selling, in this type of display generally a mannequin is dressed in matching say combination of shoes, socks, pants or short, shirt or T-shirt, sports jacket and even tennis racket and bags as at Bata's, "Power" range stores or Raymond's shops. The customers are thus provided with the ease to buy related Raymond's items in one department or place instead of going over to different departments or stores. Ensemble displays focus on selling a concept rather than just a product.
5. **Unit Displays:** Unlike the related displays, the unit displays use merchandise that is identical in size, colour, shape, use etc. for display together as one unit and at one place. Generally the display of knives or spoons in cutlery, shoes, bags, shirts etc. as seen in a good number of stores follows this pattern.
6. **Classification Dominance Displays :** This type of display focuses on exhibiting a large variety of width and depth of the product lines carried by the store. This is organized on product basis which are put in vertical order for displays on the walls, on the selling floor or sometimes all over.
7. **Rack Displays:** These are mainly used by clothing and household goods retailers for neatly hanging or presenting the 'products. A variety of vertical chrome or steel tubing racks in circular and side wards shapes as well as mobiles are used for display.  
**Cut Cases and Dump Bins** also find use as inexpensive and effective displays. Used at wholesale and large discount sale stores, merchandise is left open in these cases and bins for providing ease of handling to shoppers.  
Some other complementary materials that aid in making sales displays attractive include window streamers, stickers, posters, hangers, counter cards, dummy cartons and balloons.
8. **Videotape Displays:** An interesting development in retailing in the developed countries is the growing use of audio-visual merchandising. These displays use technology to "speak" to and show shoppers the available merchandise. These pre-recorded audio/video devices include "shelf talkers" and "rear screen projections" thus adding anew dimension to products needing demonstration.

### Activity B

During your visit to the major shopping centre of your town in addition to gathering data already listed in Activity A, analyse the retail displays in terms of:

- a) type(s) of display used
- b) nature of product and type of display used
- c) power of displays used to attract the window-shoppers and passers-by
- d) unique features of the displays liked most by you.

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## 8.5 MANAGING DISPLAYS EFFECTIVELY

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In order to get maximum advantage from sales displays it is necessary that these be organized and managed effectively. The process of display management can be divided into two phases:



- 1) planning of sales displays, and
- 2) execution of sales displays.

### **Planning of Sales Displays**

The planning phase of sales-displays covers dimensions such as :

- optimal use of display space
- use of cost-effective fixtures for display which provide maximum exposure to the merchandise
- type and pattern of displays to be used and their suitability with both the available store space as well as store layout ; and
- cost and frequency of change of displays in the retail store.

### **Execution of Sales Displays**

This phase of display management includes:

- ensuring adequate stock of merchandise to be displayed as well as in inventory
- earmarking area and allocation of space of different displays and fixtures
- checking the quality and features of the display fixtures procured for use in displays
- attending to display related aspects such as store name board, store front, display window size, style and colour of display signs to be used, and display window lighting and atmospherics including floors, walls, ceilings, ventilation, cooling, heating etc.
- organizing men and materials for the display including selection of outside experts, if any, and coordination with other employees of the store
- instructing store staff on handling of displays and merchandise, and - arranging for timely advertising and publicity of the store.
- Ovid Riso in his edited book "Sales Promotion Handbook" cites the following requirements for a good product display:'
  - 1). It must be easy to set up, and sturdy to stand up well. Should have its own easel or base and not require fastening, tacking or attaching to any other fixture.
  - 2). It should illustrate the product in use if there is the slightest chance if consumer cannot see at a glance exactly how to use it.
  - 3). It should be colourful, well designed and simple.
  - 4). It should be informative, including the price.

Given the importance of proper planning and execution, incorporating creativity and innovativeness in sales displays emerge as the primary need in its effective management. It, therefore, requires the use of outside experts as well as search for newer materials to achieve distinctive edge in the product display. The other requirement relates to the frequency at which display designs are changed which in turn is linked to the budget available for this promotional activity. Big budget companies are known to change their displays quite frequently and for this purpose even employ interior decorators and designers and some have an in-home merchandising and display department.

### **Obtaining Retailer's Cooperation**

Sales displays at the retail store can be organized either singly by the store owners or jointly with the manufacturers of the products. The manufacturers sponsored product displays at retail stores carry one more important dimension. This relates to selling of the display scheme to the retailers and obtaining their cooperation for proper usage of display material and scheme.

### **Motivating and Training Retailers**

This relates to the zeal with which the retailers support the manufacturer's efforts. In other words, for maximising results from sales displays, participating retailers need to be convinced of the objectives, and trained as well as motivated to get their utmost cooperation in the conduct of sales displays. The remaining part of this unit covers this aspect.



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## 8.6 TRAINING RETAILERS

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With growing competition for the limited display space at the retail store on the one hand, and rising costs of organizing displays on the other, it is becoming necessary retailers participation with equal enthusiasm. An investigation to the reasons for

It is not unusual to find that not all the display schemes offered by manufacturers get retailers participation with equal enthusiasm. An investigation into the reasons for retailer's poor interest in some of the display schemes pointed out to the following inadequacies:

- unreasonable terms of participation and unattractive rewards ;
- mismatch between display space available at the store and display requirements
- complicated display fixtures and material ;
- monotonous repetition of old display ideas ;
- non-availability of professional help required for setting up of creative displays;
- unclear instructions regarding use of display material; and
- receipt of incomplete display kits.

In view of the above reasons, it, therefore, becomes necessary to satisfactorily involve retailers in the organization and conduct of sales displays. A beginning, in this regard; should be made by explaining to the retailer and his staff the purpose of the display and how to make it a success. The latter could be done through personal discussion, supply of printed self-instructional material, provision of do's and don'ts and availability of assistance from interior decorators where needed. In any case, a salesperson's visit to the retail store after the display material has arrived at the store to ensure its completeness as well as for guiding its handling has been found very useful in both reducing material wastage as well as disinterested participation.

### A Company Practice

In order to ensure proper usage of the display material as well as to make retailers promotion conscious, a U.S. Corporation made the following suggestions to its display scheme participating retailers:

- 1). When the display features a general idea, place it in a prominent location where it will be seen by all customers. The space opposite the front door is, incidentally, the preferred position in the whole store.
- 2). A specific item or specific line display should be placed as near as possible to the merchandise described.
- 3). A display offering the merchandise for the consumer to examine should be placed where the customer can touch it.
- 4). All displays should be placed where they can be seen and read by the customer.
- 5). Displays designed to be hung from the ceiling should be hung low enough for the customer to read and look over easily.
- 6). All displays should be placed where they will not conceal merchandise.
- 7). Never place displays where they will have \_ roved back and forth by salesmen when taking care of customers.
- 8). Always place displays in a well-lighted position.

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## 8.7 MOTIVATING THE RETAILER

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With a view to motivating retailers to put in their best efforts in the conduct of sales displays, sponsoring organizations encourage them by :

- provision of display goods and fixtures at special subsidised prices
- cooperative advertising and sales promotion i.e., promoting the retail store as well as the manufacturer's product on cost-sharing basis
- publicity through newsletter as well as keeping the retailer informed of the market movements of the product on display in different markets
- organization of display contests carrying catchy rewards and effort related



- consolation prizes
- photoflashing of retailer's displays at work to other retailers
- visit of mystery shoppers who assess and award prizes to outstanding retailers.

For example, Food Specialities Limited in India attaches considerable importance to the retail trade. Even much before the trend of hiring display windows had caught on, it embarked on a drive to enrol all high-visibility shelves and counters for displays. The company, generally speaking, offers nearly 25 per cent more money for shelf space than almost any other company. It has also devised a host of retail dispensers - hanging net baskets, counter top and floor racks to carry a range of its brands. Likewise, one of the principal factors for the success of brands such as Vicks Vaporub and Gold Cafe in 1988 is attributed to the ability of their sponsors in motivating retailers and hiring out premium display windows.

With the passage of time we find that the art of organizing effective sales displays has been perfected. Quite a few consumer goods companies in India which have been using sales displays almost regularly have developed very comprehensive checklists covering pre-planning steps ; event planning ; design preparation and procurement of aids for displays ; selection and signing of select retailers ; monitoring of display scheme in action ; judging criteria, rewards, follow up and lessons for the future. These checklists also find an outline of the role of the sales force at the various stages of the sales displays.

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## 8.8 SUMMARY

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Sales displays have acquired a place of significant importance in modern retailing. These help in both enhancing the store image as well as attracting shoppers to the store. Effective sales displays make use of aesthetic principles and are generally built around a popular theme suiting the market needs of the product. Sound management of sales displays requires an eye for detail on the part of sponsors so far as minute details relating to planning and execution of sales displays are concerned. Retailers play a critical role in the success of sales displays and hence require careful handling and proper motivation.

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## 8.9 KEY WORDS

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**Cut-Case Display :** Inexpensive display, where merchandise is left in its original cartons/cases.

**Dump-Bin Displays :** Case/Bins display which carry a large number of sale items.

**Ensemble Displays:** Display where related or coordinated merchandising is put together.

**Fan Display Arrangement:** Set up vertically, the display arrangement rises from the heavy base and widens drastically as the height increases. Often seen at chocolates, confectionary, and grocery shops. (See Fig. 2.2)

**Merchandising Space :** Space used for keeping items in stocks or inventory, while not on display.

**Merchandising:** Planning and presentation of merchandise and services at places and in quantities that best serve the interest of the customer and the retailer.

**Open Assortment :** Display of merchandise inviting access to the customer to feel or try them.

**Pyramid Display Arrangement :** Display arrangement in the shape of a three dimensional pyramid, with each side presenting an attractive triangle (see Fig. 2.3).

**Rack Display :** Displays of merchandise on racks generally used by textile retail stores.

**Scrambled Merchandising :** A wide variety unrelated to additions to the retail store's original business merchandise.

**Selling Space:** Space in the store earmarked for displaying merchandise, interactions between sales personnel and customers, space of demonstrations, etc.





**Step Display Arrangement:** A multi-tiered placing of trays, resembling a series of steps, for display of merchandise on it. (See Fig. 2.1).

**Store Front :** The total physical exterior of the store itself including entrances, windows, lighting and construction materials, etc.

**Width of Assortment:** variety of different or unrelated product lines handled by a store.

**Zig-Zag Display Arrangement:** A display arrangement which uses the basic approaches of step and pyramid display arrangements. The merchandise put on it appears to be zig-zag along the way.(see Fig 2)

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## 8.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

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a) Why is it becoming increasingly important for the manufacturers to properly manage the sales displays of their brands? Develop a checklist *for* evaluating the sales display at a retail store.

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b) Using the above checklist *compare* the effectiveness of sales displays in any of the following two -cases

- 1). A footwear store
- 2). A Jewellery shop
- 3). A saree -store
- 4). Consumer durable store
- 5). Cosmetic shop
- 6). Beauty Parlour
- 7). Furniture shop
- 8). Bookstore

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## 8.11 FURTHER READINGS

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