
UNIT 15 RETAIL IMAGE: ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Structure

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15.0 OBJECTIVES

Retail is the best channel for any business to increase its sales and overall business. Retail comes with a lot of responsibilities which means maintaining the image of the retail store and its regular maintenance.

In this unit you will learn about the following:-

- Physical image and maintenance of the store
- Perceived image of the retailer
- We will distinguish between the physical look & feel of the store and its maintenance and then the invisible image which is because of the right service, assortment mix, quality products and right pricing. This is how consumers perceive any retail store.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Retailers are perceived good or bad in many ways. Retail establishment has two elements which I am describing below with the pointers.

Physical part of the image

- Location of the store
- Retailer Positioning
- Target Market
- Building of the store
- Layout of the store
- Lighting of the store

- Racking placement user-friendliness
- Chillers & Freezers
- POS – ease of doing billing
- Façade of the store / entrance + exit
- Parking facility
- Visual Merchandising
- Additional add on services such as – valet parking, alterations, babysitting room etc
- Air-condition
- Overall ambiance of the store

Now, comes the nonphysical part which is not directly related to the physical store ambiance.

- Customer service level of the staff
- Speed in POS billing
- Assortment mix
- Quality of products and brands
- New trendy product line
- Value of money / Pricing
- Quality promotions
- Overall ease of happy shopping
- Exchange policies
- Security team friendliness

As a retailer, he must focus on both the aspects as mentioned above as pointers to be called a successful retailer in the city. This allows them to beat competition also gradually.

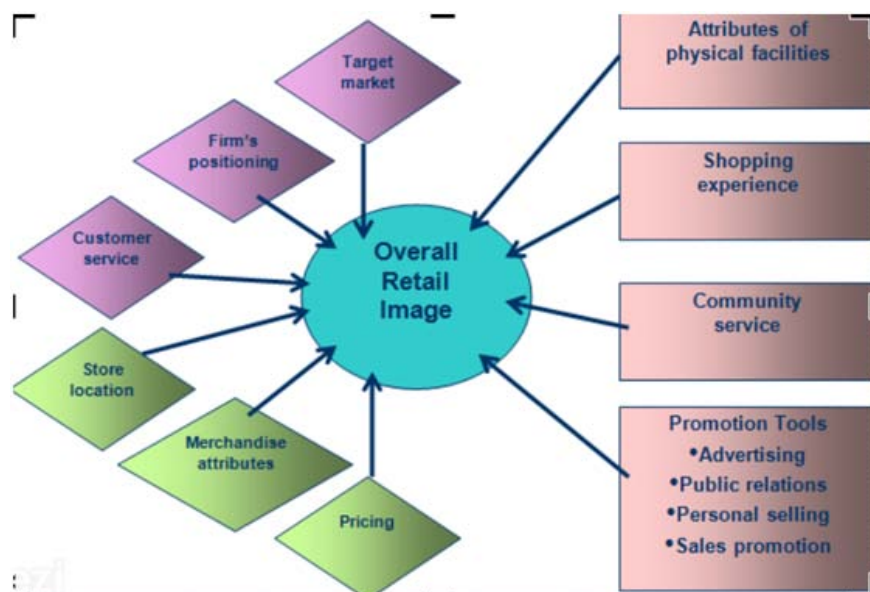


Fig. 15.1: Shows the retail image courtesy – Prezi.com

15.2 PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF THE STORE

- **Location of the Store:** - Location plays a very important role in becoming the customers' first choice of visit. Hence, the location should be such which should be easily approachable to the customer. It should be near the main market. It should have other retailers also so that customers find their destination to visit the store.
- **Target Market:** – Retail image is also based on target market. Before planning to build a retail image, retailers must understand customer buying habits likes and dislikes and their consumption pattern. Also, what is important here is what customers look at when it comes to retail image in that country, demography or market.
- **Retailer Positioning:** - Is the retailer position himself as a niche retailer, value format or mass retailer. Based on retailer positioning the retail image part is worked upon.
- **Layout of the Store:** - If the layout is customer friendly with larger width of aisle space. Placement of categories from the beginning of the store till the end of the store in logical manner. Category adjacencies are kept in mind then it becomes very useful for a customer to shop. He may complete his purchase in less time.
- **Lighting of the Store:**-Lux level of the store means lighting intensity will always make the customer excited to buy the products. It should not hit the eyes negatively. It should have sufficient light for a customer to shop with ease even in the dead spots of the retail store.
- **Rack Placements:-** There are 2 elements – quality, size of the rack and then placement of the racks etc. Quality racking systems allow right product mix display which allows customers to shop with the speed sufficiently.
- **Chillers& Freezers:** - There are products which are perishable in nature and also require chilling before selling. Good quality fixtures will always create a wow image of a retail store in front of customer eyes.
- **POS:**– Customers may spend 2 hrs in shopping but they want the billing to be done quickly. So, it is important for a retailer to have speed POS machines and quality cashiers to bill the merchandise with speed. Also, customers want enough gap between 2 customers standing in a queue with good air-conditioning around it.
- **Façade of the Store / Entry and Exit Points:** - The best way to build an image is to have a good façade of the store with good quality branding. It builds the image of a retailer. Also entry and exit points must have width for customers to walk through from it. Multiple entry and exit points generally customers like as they may access the store with ease.

- **Additional Services:-** Services like Valet parking, Parking, Washrooms, Baby sitting room, CSD desk, alterations these are given and expected as mostly retailers are offering hence these are always important to be part of it.
- **Visual Merchandising:-** VM improves the aesthetic looks of the store through the VM windows building themes or quality merchandise. The high points and branding above the brand product placement add more feathers to the display of the merchandise. Mannequins' placement allows customers to see the merchandise in a real life scenario as if the customer himself is wearing it.
- **Air-Condition:** – Good Air-condition units save cost and give effective cooling. Retailers score well when customers find the right temperature inside the retail stores.
- **Overall Ambiance of the Retail Store:-** If the above-mentioned pointers managed well then there are chances that the retailer may score well or at par with other. retailers. Anything short may bring the retailer to a lower efficiency level which is not expected.
- **Security Team Friendliness:** Customers are very particular about the security team behavior hence these aspects also build a positive image in the minds of the customers.
- **Retail Technology:** - it makes the customers life easy as they find the product on time with speed. Retailers obviously are able to deliver goods to customers in store with ease.
- **Building of the Retail Store:** Customers look at the building whether it is a new building or old building or store in mall. How a retailer has converted the building like any good retail format store. Customers are always eager to see and feel this aspect while shopping.

15.3 NON-PHYSICAL PART OF THE RETAIL IMAGE

- **Customer Service Level:-** Customers want services when they need the most on product pricing and quality of the merchandise. So, if they need any products which are not visible, they may seek help. Retailers with a good quality well trained team may bring the service to an optimum level. This is the main differentiator which decides the image of the retailer or retail store.
- **Speed in POS Billing:-** Good quality cashiers who are capable of doing faster checkouts are always appreciated by the customers.
- **Assortment Mix:** - This is a key differentiator where the consumer finds clearly a difference between two retailers. Good Assortment mix is a long-term driver for a retailer to build an image in front of the customer.

This also requires good pricing, competitive pricing, good quality promotions providing value to the customers.

- **Newly Launched Products:-** Retailers showcasing newly launched products of brands which they are keeping is always an attraction to the customers.
- **Exchange Policies:** - Good hassle-free exchange policies and customer friendly customer service desk always build a good image in front of the customers.
- **Fill Rates:** - Customer while shopping must have all the products mentioned in his shopping list. It is important for a retailer to have a good assortment mix and optimum levels of fill rates to the tune of 80%+ all the time in all SKU's.
- **Floor Space:** - More floor space is dedicated to the products for display of merchandise. Customers should be able to buy with ease and merchandise intensity should be at the optimum levels.
- **Cross Merchandising:** - Cross merchandising helps the customer to connect one product with the other product as both the products are dependent on each other. These displays always promote higher sales. Customers also get the direct benefit of choosing the best possible options under cross merchandising displays.

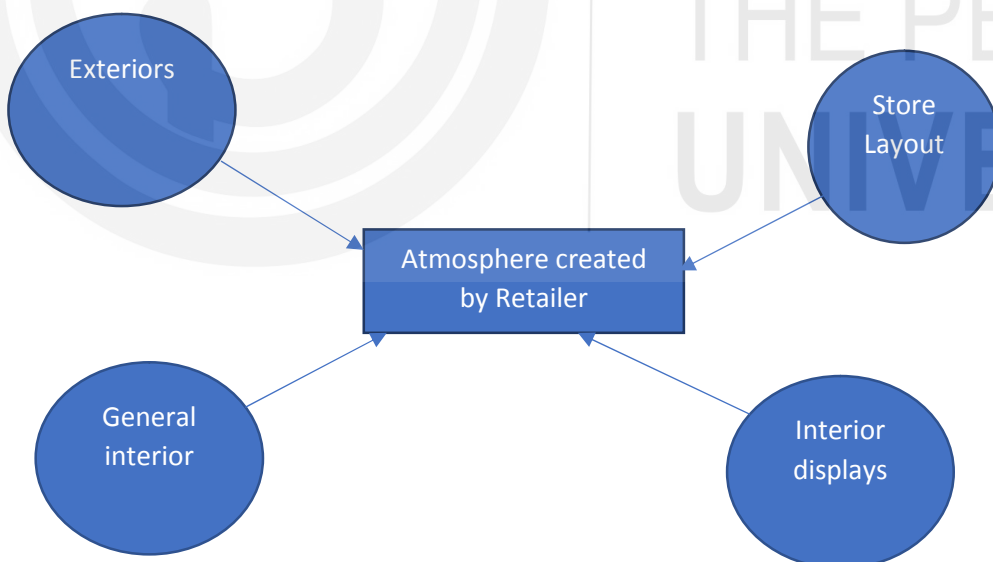


Fig. 15.2: Shows the non-physical part of retail

15.3.1 Curving Traffic Pattern

Advantages

- A friendly atmosphere

- Shoppers do not feel rushed
- People are encouraged to walk through any direction
- Impulse of unplanned purchases are enhanced

Disadvantages

- Possible customer confusion
- Wasted floor space
- Difficulties in inventory control
- Higher labor intensity
- Potential loitering
- Displays may cost more

15.3.2 Community Oriented Actions

- Make store barrier free for disabled shoppers
- Show a concern for recycle trash for the environment
- Support Charities
- Employ area residents
- Run sales for senior citizens
- Sponsor little league and youth activities
- Initiate donations
- Cooperate with neighborhood planning groups

15.3.3 General Interior In-Store Transportation (Elevator, Escalator, Stairs)

- Personnel
- Merchandise
- Price levels
- Displays
- Technology
- Store cleanliness
- Flooring
- Colors
- Lighting
- Scents
- Sounds Store fixtures
- Wall textures
- Temperature

- Aisle space
- Dressing facilities
- Dead Areas

Check Your Progress-A

1) Can you define apparel store especially department stores of 20,000 sq ft + stores. Which store do you like the most on the physical aspect of retailer image?

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2) Can you define in apparel store specially department stores of 20,000 sq ft + stores. Which store you the like the most on Nonphysical aspect of retailer image?

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15.4 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MAINTENANCE OF RETAIL IMAGE?

Creating and maintaining a retail image is a difficult and an ongoing process for any retailer. Same way retailers have to maintain the physical image of the store and nonphysical image of the store. Why maintenance is required because the customer wants a fresh look and higher customer services both visually and through service levels. Due to high competition in the market every retailer has to give their best foot forward to get maximum market share of the business. This is possible when physical and nonphysical retail image is maintained equally at the optimum levels.

15.5 LET US SUM UP

Every retailer is ensuring that they do best for their customers but in the end they mess up something or the other. Retailers need a qualified team who understands retail science and customer psychology. Their experience from reputed retailers’ experiences may build any good quality retail store. So now the question is how we bring a niche in our approach of building a retail image in front of the eyes. Retailers need strong eyes for detailing. It can

pinpoint small problems and solutions can be derived for the problems. All the initiatives to build retail image requires investment of time and cash both above all requires a lot of patience and hard work in maintaining it. So I would say maintenance is a key in maintaining retail image in front of the customers.

15.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- 1) Which lux level is needed is apparel vs food retail stores?
- 2) Why cashiering speed is important to please the customers?
- 3) Why assortment is a backbone of building retail image?
- 4) Why Fill rate is a backbone for customers to keep coming to the store?
- 5) Why store location is important for a retail image standpoint?
- 6) Can you list stores which do not have a good retail image in customers mind? Why?

Further Readings

Books

- Swapana Pradhan-Retailing Management
- Dravid Gilbert-Retail Marketing
- George H, Lucas Jr., Robert P. Bush, Larry G Greshan-Retailing
- J. Lamba- The Art of Retailing
- Barry Berman, Joel R Evans- Retail Management; A Strategic Approach

Website and Online Resource

www.apple.com

www.cluteinstitute-onlinejournals.com

www.prezi.com

Note: These questions/exercises will help you to understand the unit better. Try to write answers for them. But do not submit your answers to the University for Assessment these are for your practice only.