



Marketing

Visual Merchandising Plan

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Background

The major retail store I've chosen is Kohl's. The first time I stepped inside of Kohl's I was amazed to see they sold more than clothes. There were so many departments within their store that I had to browse around. The eye catcher in Kohl's was their women purses. There wasn't any visual merchandising that caught my attention, only the women's purses and wallets.

Kohl's have many quality products ranging from home, bed & bath, furniture, women, men, juniors, kids, baby, and shoes. This store can be a one-stop shop for buyers. I believe if they would enhance they're visual merchandising it would gain more shoppers. For instance, the women's clothing section would be more appealing with staging, instead of using generic mannequins to showcase their clothing's. Overall, this store has a professional and clean view of its products.

Using a visual merchandising plan would benefit Kohl's greatly. They've been in business for a very long time. To keep their current target market while gaining new shoppers, precise streamlining of themes is highly recommended. As stated, "Kohl's Corporation is one of the largest discount department store chains in the United States, with more than 730 outlets located in 41 states. Targeting middle-income shoppers buying for their families and homes, the chain maintains low retail prices through a low-cost structure, limited staffing, and progressive management information systems, as well as the economical application of centralized buying, distribution, and advertising" (Reference for Business).

To enhance Kohl's visual merchandising strategies, it would be great if they'd planned at least 30-90 days in advance. Projecting themes would be ideal to jumpstart their advertising campaigns. Some little pieces can go a long way when showcasing merchandises in the window. People are normally drawn to bright colors that have a unique look. Keeping the look of their themes at eye level, helps customers to take in the view, verses having things placed in the ceilings. Finally, switching up on the themes would create an excitement for shoppers. For example, choosing the colors red, yellow, orange, black, and white are popular colors to use when marketing and advertising.

Visual Store Theme

When developing a visual merchandising process for my chosen store – Kohl's, it requires thoughtful planning. The display window theme can be done in-house by employees of Kohl's, or outsourced (freelancers) to generate the right window display. There are some steps to jumpstart the process: 1) Choosing the right color schemes. 2) Selecting a theme. 3) Choosing a star product, and 3) Maintain a fresh perspective.

As stated by Susan Davis, "Every visual detail can greatly influence a customer's decision to remain in the store and ultimately make a purchase. Even the simplest elements, such as the general color scheme, can affect a customer's disposition and determine a purchase decision, as well as repeat business." The goal in visual merchandising planning is to get customers to purchase items. For example, the theme for this merchandising process is "Spring is in the Air." I've used the colors red and black, with lady bugs and coordinating hanging thread from the ceiling. The star product is a red, black, and white dress to step out in Spring. When selecting, and placing my store fixtures, I must make sure I'm fully aware of the store traffic. This will help me in laying out my store blueprint to place the fixtures.

During this development process theme, Kohl's theme should create fun and state of urgency to buy their products. Throughout this visual merchandising plan it will discuss in further details how it's accomplished.

Core Design Elements

The core element designs of building a visual theme in Kohl's need to have an atmospheric of the right colors, music, lighting, and scents. These principle design concepts don't cost much just smart planning. As I was searching the internet, I came across a few Kohl's stores, which had substantial amounts of lighting.

Well-lit shopping areas help customers to view the products better. The spacing of lightings were designed effectively. The lighting overshadows Kohl's products and are very bright. Shocking surprise, I was curious to know what kind of music Kohl's play in their stores for customers. Here's a YouTube link for Kohl's music and some people have shared their comments: <https://youtu.be/QBrLYtV60GA?list=PL699FF09F044755AC>.

Choosing the right colors is critical. As mentioned, "Color is powerful, and it can make or break your visual displays. A retailer might create a horrible display, but if the colors coordinate well, the display can still be a tremendous success. Consider using contrasting colors, like black and white, and monochromatic colors--both create intriguing, eye-catching displays" (Matthew Hudson). In each display, there must be a harmony of colors to complement one another. The rhythm within the theme should reflect when viewed by buyers from top to bottom, and left to right. As it relates to the proportion, of the theme having large products centered in the middle should be complimented with equal sizes on the left and right side. With all these elements in mind during the planning session, it aids in bringing balance to the entire display.

The environmental component of a display - Kohl's has a reputation of presenting clean and simple window displays. Their themes are normally powerful visual images. As mentioned from an article on 2degreesnetwork.com, "And just last week Kohls in the US released its first corporate sustainability report. Listed amongst its five primary environmental strategies is green building design and operation - half of its stores already have the US Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star label, while it ranks first in retail and second overall on the Environmental Protection Agency's quarterly rankings of top green power purchasers" (Stephen Kenneth).

Per Kohl's Green, "Kohl's is dedicated to the community – part of taking care of our global community is taking care of our environment. Through Kohl's Cares initiatives, Kohl's has taken steps to decrease its footprint and environmental impact. With green policies in place, Kohl's has built many ENERGY STAR labeled stores, converted a large percentage of its inbound transportation to rail lines (cleaner than trucks on the road) and been recognized with a 2015 ENERGY STAR Sustained Excellence Award." Many people around the world are taking advantage of being a part of environmental impact.

Tools and Strategies

The advertisement strategy of Kohl's is to develop an Easter Clearance Sale. The intended targeted audience are single/married parents with girls between the age range of 7-16. Easter is a big shopping day for clothing and accessories. The focused special event is for "Girls Easter Dresses."

The characteristics of shoppers is directed to Christians, since Easter is a recognized celebration of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Many Christians believe in celebrating Easter with something new to wear. As stated, "The Rev. Safiyah Fosua, who directs transformational preaching ministries at the Board of Discipleship, said the idea of wearing new clothes on Easter is an old practice that has lost its meaning.

New converts, she noted, wore their white baptismal robes around town for a week to symbolize their new life in Christ. "In subsequent years, those converts would not put the white robe back on but would wear new clothes to symbolize their participation in new life in Christ" (United Methodist Church).

Kohl's current advertisements are done online and in-store with the following. Kohl's will announce their Easter event through traditional and new age marketing, such as print advertisement, email campaigns, TV, radio, store display signage's, and social media.

- App Store (Apple & Android)
- Coupons.com
- Dealcatcher.com
- Direct Mail
- Email Campaigns
- Facebook
- Google+
- Groupon.com
- Instagram
- Kohl's.com (online/in-store)
- Outdoor Advertisement
- Pinterest
- TheBlackFriday.com
- Twitter
- YouTube

To assess and recommend tools in an effort create a call-to-action when advertising Kohl's products. It can be done through SEO, Public Relations, personal selling, co-branding, opt-in email campaigns, and social media marketing. Some of the print advertisement involves direct marketing of flyers, postcards, and sales copy to name a few. The point of purchase materials for Kohl's can be done in their brick and mortar locations within the USA with over 1,073 stores, and online. Here's a few of their print materials I've created for Kohl's.



Figure 1 - This sign can hang from the ceiling. Customers from a distance will be able to view in each department.



Figure 2 - Add signs in aisles leading to each department.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Kohl's can strengthen their visual merchandising strategies to excite shoppers by knowing buyers purchasing behaviors. This would involve targeting the right market, color schemes, pitching exciting themes, using a specific star product, eliminate clutter, and having a fresh perspective when planning. Advertising to the right marketing channels, such as social media, email campaigns, print, TV, and co-branding can create a buzz about Kohl's products.

A wonderful way to entice shoppers as they're entering the front door is to have two-three employees handing out coupons. Buyers love discounts! In addition, stimulating customer's sensory perception enhances curiosity. It's also a clever idea to implement kinetic, assortment, over communicate to attract more sales. The pros of using multimedia visual marketing is great to use depending upon the targeted audience. An age range of 17-35 might find more enjoyment when viewing animated videos as a sales tactic.

The cons of using multimedia visual marketing may not work well for shoppers who use cell phones. For instance, Apple cell phones doesn't offer a Flash video app, and buyers may see a blank image, which was intended to entertain, and promote a sale.