



lighting up your sales

“The expression of the architecture will come from its lighting than its structure” said Denise Scott Brown.

The wisdom of these words hold good for the Fashion and Lifestyle industry too. Each shop has a different image to convey and a different product to sell. Every aspect of a shop should be carefully lighted with its clientele in mind.

Lighting allows a retailer to define his outlet's image, whether it is an inexpensive store that offers the best value for money or an exclusive shop with excellent quality products. The choice of lighting is determinant and it is up to a retailer to decide. The general atmosphere of a retail outlet and the way goods are presented are vital to positively influence the behaviour of a shopper. Lighting must not only facilitate interest and orientation but be designed in such a way as to constantly underline and reinforce the character of the outlet. IMAGES Retail bureau takes a look at the retail lighting scenario.

Christian Dior recently launched its exclusive counters in Shoppers' Stop, Mumbai. Special glossy paint, crystal glass shelves and gold lamination are used to décor the counter.



The lights for the counters came from Otelma in Paris that give a soft but firm lift to the overall décor and yet focus sharply on the wares on display. Most of all the lighting was to attract the customers to the Christian Dior counter.

So important is the function of lighting that in today's retail scenario that even though a large format retail store like

Shoppers' Stop is well and tastefully lighted, companies such as Christian Dior who set up exclusive counters still spend on extra lighting to further enhance their product presence and magnetize customers.

Lighting contributes to the creation of the mood. It is what gives a cosmetic shop/counter its unique recognisable character. The dreamlike aura projected by the major cosmetic brands advertising campaigns can easily be recreated through proper lighting on the product displays. Lighting that flatters the customers by making them look their best is readily available from lighting solutions.

Lighting has become an important part of a showroom décor.

One of the biggest challenges for retailers is to increase sales per square foot while decreasing costs at the same time. Traditionally retailers used to answer this challenge with improved store layouts, new store designs, traffic flow control, music, color, special seasons decorations and also lighting. But with retailing coming of age, companies discovered that lighting is an essential element and could not just be based on gut feeling. It became a specialised element.



Al Faner, 17,000 sq. metres shopping & commercial complex, Kuwait

Requirements of lighting can be summarised like: attracting attention, creating interest, creating an atmosphere, visual guidance, integration with sales strategy and flexibility

Initially many companies never realised the significance of lighting. This is not just in India but internationally too. However today both retailers and lighting companies have done extensive studies on how lighting up a retail outlet can catch a consumer's attention and increase sales.

Hera Lighting, a manufacturer of store fixture and display lighting systems faced a situation where they

could not convince a customer on the importance of lighting as there were no studies to back up that lighting attracted customers. However today there are extensive market research to support the importance of lighting.

Christian Bollrath, president of Hera says, "Our light fixtures were specified in a new store design for General Nutrition Center (GNC) stores. Two prototype stores were built and everybody was very happy about the results." For the new store concept GNC specified Hera's SlimLite fluorescent lighting system because it offered significant installation savings. This T5 lighting system features an integrated connecting system and built-in electronic ballast. The light fixtures did not need to be hardwired but could simply be plugged together. An electrician was not necessary for the installation.

When the new GNC concept was about to roll out, however, Hera's display lighting system was eliminated from the contract. GNC's management had concerns about the return of investment. Bollrath says "We were very frustrated because we were confident that our display lighting system would increase GNC's sales. Unfortunately we didn't have any data to proof our theory and there was no data to be found. That's when we decided to fund research of our own."

Hera teamed up with Merchant Mechanics LLC, a consumer research firm serving retailers, retail fixture manufacturers and consumer product manufacturers. The company specializes in investigations of the detailed interactions between shoppers, merchandise, and selling environments. Matthew Tullman, co-founder and president of Merchant Mechanics and Brad Stewart, Hera's director of sales, developed the methodology for the study. Art McSorely, vice president of construction and cost containment for GNC agreed to have the study conducted in two GNC mall stores.

Three Hera SlimLites were installed in a storefront end-cap display in each of the GNC stores. Merchant Mechanics installed video cameras in each store that were continuously monitoring shoppers for two days. On day one, the end-cap was illuminated in store one and not illuminated in store two. On day two this was turned around. During the two-day period over 13,500 mall visitors were observed.

"When the results came back we were all stunned" says Christian Bollrath. "We knew that display lighting would have a positive impact on sales but we didn't expect the results to be as significant."

During the time the end-caps were illuminated GNC sold more than twice as many products than without the illumination. "We were looking for strong, substantiated results from the study. Our expectations were exceeded" McSorely states. "We kept the ambient ceiling lighting on at



the same level for the test as we normally have. This study has provided valuable facts for implementing the future retrofitting of end-caps and other promotional areas in GNC stores in the USA and Canada," he says.

Glance Influence - It was found that 9.5 per cent more of passing shoppers turned their heads to glance into the GNC storefront when the end-cap display was illuminated than when it was not. Specifically, when the end-cap displays were illuminated, 21.6 per cent of customers glanced into the storefront compared to 12.1 per cent when the lights were off. In relative terms, this is a 78.5 per cent increase in glancing behaviour.



Mall Shopper Conversion - The illuminated end-cap display was nearly twice as effective in converting passing shoppers into store customers. When the display illumination was on, an average of 3.7 per cent of passing mall traffic were attracted into the stores. When the illumination was off, an average of only 2.1 per cent were attracted to enter the stores.

POP Eye-Contact - Of all mall shoppers that entered the storefront area, 34.4 per cent made direct eye contact with the illuminated display as they passed through the storefront compared to 19.5 per cent when the display was not illuminated. This is a relative increase of 76.4 per cent.

Shopper Stopping Power - Overall, 4.6 per cent of store customers browsed the illuminated end-cap compared to only 2.6 per cent of customers who browsed the display when the illumination was off. This is a relative increase of 76.9 per cent.

Impact On Browsing Duration - The average amount of time spent browsing by a shopper who stopped at the end-cap display increased from 8.4 seconds, when the light was off, to 17.8 seconds when the end-cap was illuminated. This is a relative increase of 112 per cent..

Product Handling Influences - Illuminating the end-cap display led to a 38.5 per cent relative increase of all entering customers who handled merchandise from the display. When the end-cap was illuminated 1.8 per cent of all entering customers handled merchandise compared to 1.3 per cent when the illumination was off.



Impact On Purchasing Behavior - Last but not least the most important number for retailers. Of the 4.6 per cent of store customers who stopped at the end-cap to browse merchandise, 33.3 per cent made a purchase when the lighting was on, compared to 14.3 per cent when the lighting was off. This represents a relative increase of 132.9 per cent in purchases for the illuminated end-cap when compared to the non-illuminated end-cap.

This lighting research proves that display lighting increases sales significantly. Many times you can accomplish more by lighting the right shelf, in the right location, than any other design tool available. While in many cases ceiling ambient lighting plays an important role in store design, the proper illumination of merchandise is an area which is overlooked.

In India, recent years have seen artificial lighting flourish as an element of shop and store architecture and design. The signal effect of shop windows is confirmed by marketing studies. An illumination of 180 LUX stops to 5 per cent of passers by, 1200 LUX produce 20 per cent response, and 2000 LUX attracts the eye 25 per cent of the passing public to the brief glimpse of the shop window.



“Display lighting is a moneymaker and not an additional cost factor in your stores. It's probably the design element with the shortest return of investment,” Christian Bollrath, President of Hera Lighting L.P.

So the classical marketing arguments that “light pulls people” need very careful attention. There are no patent recipes for shop and lighting design. It all about lighting according to the needs and space and location of a retail outlet

The importance of retail lighting is emphasised by everyone ranging from the mall to retail storeowners and last but not the least the companies engaged in manufacture of the lighting bulbs.

Gagan Mehra, MD, Osram India says, "retail scenario has changed dramatically over the years with the using of advanced lighting technology and products and emergence innovative lighting design. There is a growing realisation that the light pulls people. It has brought about a definitive change in retail lighting. Earlier it was mostly flat lighting than just illuminated products for the customers. Now retail lighting is designed to 'attract attention', create interest and ambience and serve as a 'visual guidance' to support visual merchandising."



Elaborating on the important role that lighting plays in the retail environment Girish Rao, spokesperson of BPL Lighting says, "retail stores need to have lighting which is bright at the entrance with a mixture of candescent and incandescent lights focusing of light plays an important role in stores too. This is specific to the products on the display and the way they are placed. Installation of lights in show rooms is in series and provides uniform light."

Parag Kulkarni, marketing manger of Wipro Lighting says "lighting for retail has certainly evolved in the last few years. With the retail boom and buyer becoming more educated on aesthetics flexibility and need for highlighting merchandise aided by lighting companies like ours which educated buyers, lighting for retail has undergone a tremendous change."

He adds, "Window lighting through track lights is a phenomenon of last two years. Window displays help attract buyers within the store. Lighting plays a big role in pulling passers by in the store. There is a great focus on exterior area lighting and landscape lighting. The overall emphasis is on creating an inviting space and making the buyer feel comfortable."



Talking about the importance of lighting in today's changing scenario BS Nagesh, MD and CEO, Shoppers' Stop says,

"Light is one of the most important factors that help the company to market a brand to the consumer and also make the customer see the store offering in it's best rendered form. The intensity and color of the light needs to be right in terms of lux and color." He adds "We at Shoppers Stop use 800 lux for the ambient lighting and about 1500 lux for the walls with color 84 (that helps the color of the garment to be seen very close to daylight). The companies which we trust in the lighting sector are Trix, Artlite, Troll (Spain), Ansorg, LSI (for color Kinetics), Asian electrical (for indirect lighting) and last but not the least Philips (for lamps and control gear)."

BS Narula, MD Ebony says "there are various kinds of lighting arrangements followed in the store. Ambient Lighting: this is general lighting of the whole store, primarily white lighting with compact fluorescent lamp to light up the space.

Task Lighting: Specific area lighting to highlight particular area like cutlery, perfumes etc. Use of halogen/halide lamps is common. Diffused Lighting: For aesthetic purpose and to bring about a certain drama/interest onto a particular zone like the atrium or circulation areas."

Himanshu Chakrawarti, general manager marketing, Trent Limited (Westside) says, "We operate completely from the customers' perspective. This would mean that there should be sufficient lighting for customers to browse around. Also, certain sections require extra lighting for highlighting like jewellery section, hotspots and of course, the window displays."

Lighting undoubtedly is the main tool for defining an outlet's identity. Lighting choice entirely depends on the target customers. The adjustability of lighting makes a retailer the master of his shop's image, allowing him to highlight its top-of-the-line items and direct a customer's attention to merchandise, which in turn

would offer him a higher profit margin. The choice of lighting in a retail outlet will set the stage to match customer's taste and expectation.

Each shop has its own style, its own character. The customer should be able to freely shop in a relaxed atmosphere, looking through the clothes on display and seeking advice when necessary. Quality goods, a high level of customer service, and attractive product displays should put the customer in the mood to buy. And lighting aids this.

To be continued in next issue where we will discuss cost, techniques and innovations of lighting a retail outlet.



with inputs from Vasujit Kalia, Jyoti Verma and Nijita Nandan