

## Visual Merchandising

### Circulation

An effective method of circulation as per the product type and store format helps in ensuring that the customers are moved /led from one section to another in the most efficient way. Customers should be exposed while exposing the customers to maximum number of product categories and department. There are four basic types of layout – the free flow, grid, loop, and spine. Let us learn them in detail.

- 1. Free flow:** This is a very common type of layout used by small stores which sell a Store Layout and Design single product category like ladies wear or men's wear or kids wear or furniture or purses etc. In this kind of layout the fixtures and merchandise are grouped into free-flowing patterns. Figure 4.14 shows the free flow circulation. Since, it being a single product category store, the customers are encouraged to move freely from one part of the store to another browsing through different merchandise and trying to spend time in understanding the product details. This type of layout works well for a store up to 5000 square feet. If there are more than one product category of merchandise is on display then this type of layout is not the right one. It will confuse the customer not knowing where the one category begins and stops and the next one begins.
- 2. Grid:** This type of layout is common in supermarkets, drug stores and convenience stores. In this layout the fixtures and counters are laid in long rows. Look at Figure 4.15 which shows the grid layout. Customers move through one row of fixtures and counters and enter into another row of counters/fixtures from the adjacent point. The customer is expected to move in one direction, when moving between the rows of counters/fixtures and understandably not to turn back. There are other customers either moving downward from the opposite point or queuing behind for moving upward in the front direction. Thus, customers enter from one point and move out from the opposite point and enter into the next row of merchandise from the adjacent entry point. The customers also find this way of movement useful as he/she is able to go through all the items in a certain sequence. They should not miss any items that may be required in the immediate future, with least possible movement through the aisles. If the customer wants to buy only some specific items then moving up and down the fixtures or rows may become irritating. The customer is forced to go through the whole run looking for specific items. Super market generally keep regular items like dairy and bakery products at the back of the store forcing the customer to move through the entire layout to reach to these sections. Retailers need to be careful that this layout is not overdone, so as to force the customers to move to a different store.
- 3. Loop:** This type of layout is very popular among the departmental stores. It is also called race track as it circles or cover the whole store's perimeter. The loop layout is considered a very effective layout for increasing the productivity of the space. It starts from the front door or entrance of the store – which is the main aisle then loops through the entire internal perimeter of the store – which is either in the form of a circle or rectangle or square – and then ends at the front of the store (that is the exit door next to the entrance door). In case of large format stores there can be parallel loop tracks – one moving from the outward side while the other moving through the internal track with intermittent connectivity tracks for movement from one track to another. The important benefit of this layout system is that it exposes the customers to the largest possible amount of merchandise. The fatigue level for customers while moving through the main aisle is low as the customers are exposed to

different types of products and categories with innovative visual displays. The main aisle should allow free flow of customers – and allowing customers to browse, understand the merchandise both on the left and right side of the aisle thereby encouraging cross shopping. Ideally the main aisle should not be more than 60 feet away from any merchandise location on the left or right side of the main aisle.

4. **Spine:** The spine layout tries to combine the advantages of the free flow layout, the grid layout and the loop layout in a certain way. In this layout there is a single aisle which takes the customers from the main entrance to the back of the store and the same aisle is used to bring back customers to the front. Look at figure 4.16 which shows spine layout. On the left and right side of the main aisle there are other departments and sections that branch off toward the back side or side walls. And, within each of these departments the merchandise is laid out in the free flow or grid or loop layout depending upon the type of merchandise and the fixtures used. The spine type of layout is more commonly used by medium sized stores – both soft-line and hard-line merchandise stores – of size ranging from 2000 to 10000 square feet.