

Innovation in In-Store Promotions: Effects on Consumer Purchase Decision

Vasanth Kiran (Corresponding author)

Vanguard Business School

3/A, Hyland Industrial Area, Hosur Road, Bangalore, India

Tel: +91 80 4933 0111 E-mail: vasanth@vanguardbschool.com

Mousumi Majumdar

Vanguard Business School

3/A, Hyland Industrial Area, Hosur Road, Bangalore, India

Tel: +91 80 4933 0111 E-mail: mousumi@vanguardbschool.com

Krishna Kishore

Vanguard Business School

3/A Hyland Industrial Area, Hosur Road, Bangalore, India

Tel: +91 80 4933 0111 E-mail: krishnakishore@vanguardbschool.com

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Abstract

With retail competition at an all-time high, today's retailers must find new ways to attract consumers and inspire high levels of customer loyalty. Due to the scarcity of time and advancement in technological and strategical innovations, it becomes inevitable for the retailer to come up with various new ways of promoting the brands and their products in-store at the time of decision making. Innovative retail set up can create a truly differentiated in-store experience with fun, interactive tools that put a wealth of information at customers' fingertips during the right time of purchase decision. Retailers open in-store media (ISM) and allow manufacturers to advertise to shoppers. With an informative and easy-to-use retail experience, shoppers are empowered to access a wide variety of real-time product information— including pricing, location, availability, helpful advice, targeted promotions and more — right in the aisle, without waiting for a store associate. This enhanced self-service gives customers the best of both worlds — the instant information access in an internet-based online store and the irreplaceable tactile experience of shopping in the brick and mortar store. This research paper discusses on various in-store promotional strategies, new shopping solutions and how this in turn helps the customer to make purchase decision right in the retail store.

Keywords: Retail, In-store promotion, Purchase decision, Innovation

1. Introduction

Differentiation in the retail store has never been more important than it is today. It is of great interest to understand in detail, what makes a customer purchase a particular product (product purchase decision) in retail stores. There are multiple factors which influence a customer's decision besides the usual 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) e.g., brand appeal, store ambience, display etc particularly when the purchase is unplanned. For decades now, companies have been spending millions of dollars on advertisement and also trying to understand the factors which drive customer to purchase a product. Among the 4Ps, the latest trend has been in-store promotion.

Retail industry has been booming every year in the past decade and has penetrated the third world countries in a big way. India's retail market is to touch \$820 billion by 2020 according to A C Nielson survey (2008). However the potential is enormous and it is also a booster for national economy. The profile of the retail sector is changing from the corner mom and pop stores to organized sector. This change is sure to make an impact on the buying behavior of the consumers. The growth in retails sector is sure to bring forth some opportunities for the

manufacturers and retail chain owners. “Manufacturers need information on the effectiveness of in-store stimuli and the extent to which they influence consumer purchasing behavior for their brands. Retailers also need this information to determine the effectiveness of these resources designed to stimulate additional sales and perhaps differentiating themselves from the competitors” (Abratt and Goodey, 2010)

In-store promotions greatly influence a store’s operations and performance. The fewer in-store promotions are planned in any given year, the less accustomed the staff is to such events, which is a negative stressor that also has an impact on customer relations. Everyone is anxious about the success of the promotion. In addition, often these special promotions are unbudgeted which adds additional pressure for staff to deliver the desired sales results. In other words, the pressure for more sales is on, and as a result, less time can be spent with individual customers. On the other hand, in-store promotions are a great chance to turn a rather boring store into an entertaining event store, which will help to surprise customers and create curiosity in interesting and innovative new products. In-store promotions are professionally executed marketing and branding events, which is why they should be stress-free, great experiences for staffers and buyers alike. This research paper discusses on various in-store promotional strategies, new shopping solutions and how this in turn helps the customer to make purchase decision right in the retail store.

Consumers have more shopping options than ever before — from mass merchandisers offering one-stop discount shopping to large and respected department stores, and the convenience of the 24*7 global online market place. The increase in shopping choices results in an increase in customer demands and expectations, potentially eroding customer loyalty instead, consumers are defining their own shopping path on a daily basis, based on individual experience, product availability, customer service, convenience, value and price.

2. Review of Literature

Traditionally, customers were exposed to advertisement or promotions in a mass media and purchases were made based on it. Today most of the shopping decisions are made in-stores as the shop floor itself lure their customers on real time to take decisions on purchases. Popoi/Du Pont study came out with finding that 65% of all super market purchase decisions were made in-store with 50% of them being unplanned. From simple signage of retailers hoping to promote specials, in-store media has evolved into various incarnations including ads on shopping carts, cart straps, aisles and talking shelves, end-aisle displays, floor signage, kiosks, interactive flat panels, in-store audio and video transmissions (Kotler and Keller, 2009).

In the competitive world we live in, it is important to stand out from the crowd and turn your retail location into destination for consumers. Due to the upcoming trend in advertising and promotion industry there are various options for alternative media now to innovate your promotional strategies in-store. Marketers have discovered a dazzling array of “alternative media” as promotional tool (Kotler, Armstrong et al, 2011). Lempert (2005) asserted that in-store media can be easily tailored to current merchandising and promotional executions, which can be targeted to specific consumer groups through use of technologies, which identify them once in the store.

“The ultimate agenda of in-store marketing strategies is to regulate the consumer’s state of mind, the manner in which consumer learn to experience, move around, use their eyes and perceive the nature of choice” (Dulsrud and Jacobsen, 2010). The previous literature has examined the impact of the use of in-store displays on consumer reactions to price and promotion (Bemmar and Mouchoux 1991) as well as the effect of in-store displays and features on consumer purchase behavior and brand choice (Papatla and Krishnamurthi 1996). These empirical findings indicate that in-store displays and features tend to increase product sales and impact the purchasing decision of the customers.

It has been observed in some studies that consumers who intend to do shopping in short notice, generally lean towards impulsive or compulsive buying behavior driven by arousal effect in the retail stores. Gender, age, leaning towards unplanned purchases, and tendency to buy products not on shopping list serve to predict compulsive tendencies (Shoham and Brencic, 2003). However there are some common strategies adopted by retailers to overcome the problems of fickle consumers, price slashing competitors and mood swings in the economy. Such wishful thinking holds that sales promoters can thrive only if they communicate better with consumers during pre-purchase situations and assist in product demonstrations involving consumers to help in their purchase decisions (Berry, 2001). This is clear evidence of a need for good design and plan for in-store promotions.

The influence over purchasing decisions previously exerted by sales clerks is absent in today’s shop floors where displays, offers, promotions aid purchase decision on real time. The in-store environmental variables driving impulsive buying behavior include display of point of sale posters, exhibiting promoting discounts and cheaper prices while atmosphere engagement referring to enjoyment, elegance and attractiveness in conveyed by in-store

point of sales posters. Such behavioral drivers may also be referred as in-store promotional effect and atmospheric effect (Zhou and Wong, 2004). However, some researchers to an extent have identified that in-store advertisement can do the magic, “It is evident that in-store advertising plays a crucial role in reinforcing a brand message” (Szczech, 2011).

“Revolution is nothing without marketing strategy and marketing is nothing without advertising. For generations now companies have been spending anywhere big buck on super bowl ads and at least 11% budget towards advertising” (Pierre, 2011) , but is it worth? Are they able to get the ROI (return on investment)? On one side if we are talking about importance on advertising on other side, Ward Hanson has this to say “Really high spending on advertising sales is an admission of failure. I’d much prefer to see investments in loyalty leading to better repeat purchases than millions spent for a Super Bowl ad” (Hanson, 2000). As, the type of relationship that customers possess with the point of sales promotions offered by retail stores is largely based on loyalty levels (Rajagopal, 2008) . A recent global study, “Shopper Decisions Made In-Store”, by the Ogilvy Group was based on more than 14,000 shopper interviews conducted in 700 retail outlets across 24 markets worldwide spanning five retail channels across six product categories. The study found that nearly three of ten shoppers around the world wait until they are inside the store to decide which brand they will buy (Cooke, 2008).

“In the latest effort of retailers, many of the in-store target advertising efforts are still in the early stages of development” (Steel, 2008). This is supportive statement for the proposed research that there is lot of advancement in terms of in-store advertisement which has to be explored.

“In-store, retailers rely on personal selling techniques to make money. The salesperson has direct contact with a customer and can gauge a reaction, tailor a pitch or strike up a dialog to better understand the customer's needs” (Waters, 2011). Today marketers are in different era talking about the need of advance technologies like Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) which can still create a better customer interaction and make In-store a better place to advertise. Proponents say in-store marketing creates a lively atmosphere and enriches the shopping experience.

“In-store or point of purchase (POP), advertising helps trigger memory recall, effectively introduces new products, promotes sale items and educates consumers” (Szczech, 2011). What is more important is to check, is the effectiveness of advertising, otherwise which, there will be no control on their expenditures and return of investment. Currently, talking about the same, retail industry in developing world has caught the world’s imagination in the last few years. With Asia topping the list of most attractive retail destination for three years in a row, it had retail giants like Wal-Mart, Carrefour and Tesco sizing up potential partners and waiting to enter the fray (A T Kearney's Global Retail Development Index (GRDI), 2008). This clearly says that there is need for a proper advertising channel and thorough study in this regard is necessary. Several customers usually enter store with a plan to purchase a particular brand, but in-store advertisement might also help such people to become ‘inclined user’ from a ‘committed user’. The study is significant because being aware of the effectiveness of in-store media could lead to more acceptance and applications by retailers. Moreover, being aware of in-store media limitations could bring about more realistic expectations about its capabilities. Consequently, manufacturing and retail managers should realize the need to achieve synergy and integration of traditional media and in-store media in their organizations.

3. Modern In-Store Advertising Methods

There are different types of advertising techniques that are available for promoting products and services in-store. However, here are some of the latest trends in advertising that are gaining popularity. Zhou and Wong (2004) categorised the in-store shopping environment into two separate effects of in-store point-of-purchase (POP) posters on shoppers’ impulse behaviour in a supermarket setting. The first is the *promotional effect*, which includes such stimuli as promotional discounts (coupons, multiple-item discounts and gifts) and cheaper prices. The second was termed the *atmospheric engagement effect* (enjoyment and attractiveness) conveyed by the POP posters.

3.1 Using In-Store Advertising and Brand Reinforcement through promotional effect

People are now looking for new types of advertising appeals that they can target. Many of the new-age advertising methods are a result of the advent of the internet, while some of the trends are just novel ideas that have transformed mundane advertising media into brilliant and witty advertising methods! Internet advertising is a vast concept and it entails several sub-types, many of which have been only recently introduced.

Let's take a look at some of the modern advertising methods.

In-store video advertising offers new opportunities for retailers to promote products and generate new revenue streams from consumer-goods supplier partners. Independent studies show that 75% of all brand decisions are

made at the point of purchase, and 49% of advertising at the point of purchase has a direct impact on sales. It can be done through multichannel broadcasts to strategic locations throughout each store on plasma screens or any type of fixed or mobile device. As a result, messaging is more efficiently, centrally managed in real time to promote sales offerings and lead customers to higher-margin products. Retailers are also able to achieve significant new revenue streams by running manufacturers' product ads at the point of purchase.

3.1.1 Centrally Managing Digital Signage for Significant Savings

Retailers spend millions of dollars annually on designing, printing, distributing, and monitoring in-store signage. Unfortunately, this major expenditure does not guarantee that signage will be consistent, up-to date, and properly displayed across all store sites. With digital signage solutions, the expense of sign production, store audits, maintenance, and lost sales revenues is eliminated. Signage can be centrally managed, with sign texts sent directly from headquarters to a variety of electronic devices at each site. Controlled signage provides customers with completely consistent product data, pricing, discounts, and other promotions in real time to maximize sales at a lower cost across the enterprise. Digital Signage influences cognition, which then influences emotions. It has a significant, positive, total effect on approach behaviours, mediated by positive effect on the perception of mall environment (Dennis et al, 2010).

3.1.2 Increasing Sales with Consumer-Relevant Information

Retailers can reach out to customers and build awareness by providing more personalized, media-rich information throughout the buying process. Characterising information sharing requires consideration of the locations of information and decision rights (Jensen and Meckling, 1992). Information sharing brings the relevant information system from the location of information to the decision makers. A decision right shows the authority for making particular decisions. Today's stores are showing broadcasts that help consumers learn about how a product is made, or how to install a stereo system, operate a digital camera, or build a deck. This also increases conversion rates on cross and up-sell opportunities. Broadcasts can be centrally changed according to the time of day, the season, sales periods, and other factors. Drawn into these dynamic displays, customers learn more about products quickly, allowing stores to use their network to increase sales and support brand messaging.

3.1.3 Interactive Customer Communication Channels

This new technology has now for some time found a warm welcome in modern approaches to customer relationship management. Free trial periods and small gifts from the merchant to a consumer might encourage customer interaction and these interactions might increase consumer trust. These various methods are referred to together as customer facing technologies (Jarvenpa, et al, 2006). Media technology is able not only to support marketing efforts at the POS (point of sale), but also to open up new business areas for retailers and thereby lead them to new customer groups. Customers want a store to retain and use relevant information so that they do not need to start again with each transaction/ purchase.

3.1.4 Maximizing Information Kiosks for Internal and External Use

Gagnon (2006) says that customers are often frustrated with disconnected or interrupted shopping experiences where information is not readily available to enable them to easily complete their transactions, where Kiosk can help. An increasing number of retailers are differentiating themselves by offering internet-based interactive kiosks in stores to help customers make better buying decisions and to provide access to e-commerce sites. Self-service implementations in a retail environment have primarily consisted of informational wall-mounted kiosks or kiosk stations, as well as self-service checkout stands. With informational kiosks distributed throughout the sales floor, shoppers can get on-the-spot answers to questions as well as other helpful information. For example, a scan of an item can return the price, while guided menus can help locate a particular product — all without the assistance of a store associate.

3.1.5 Product and Price comparing tools

Every customer is eager to know if the product they are intending to buy is the best in terms of quality, which is in fact better than competitors and also in terms of price. Armstrong and Chen (2009) analyse price and quality competition in oligopoly. In their model, like in the current one, a high-quality is associated with high prices and a low-quality with lower prices. Due to severe competition and EOS (economies of scale), retailers are able to provide high quality products at a reasonable and affordable price. This on the spot price and product comparing tool will help retailers prove themselves as the best choice for the customer, proving them real-time.

3.1.6 POP Display

Retail Marketing is a rich industry now, and its importance is steadily growing since new demands on store layout and design in rising (The Retail Marketing Industry, 2006), and for retailers, brand marketers, their ad

agencies and producers; suppliers of POP (point of purchase) advertising displays retail marketing has come to play a crucial role in the overall Marketing mix (Retail marketing-Who makes it happen?, 2006). This strategic medium builds brands and stimulates impulse purchases, as well as the point of purchase signage and in-store media educate and draw attention to consumers about a product's features (The Retail Marketing Industry, 2006). In-store impact can according to Kessler (2004) be used to maximise the effectiveness of the communicated message through the implementation of display and merchandising in the marketing mix. The figure 1 displays four types of POPs based on the inclusion of mystery in the message.

3.1.7 Store planning and Layout

Store layout and visual merchandising are factors that contribute to the uniqueness of a store. The exterior and interior of a store convey several messages about the store to the consumers. Managing space is the first and foremost concern of almost every retailer, when it comes to designing the store's interior. Space is always an expensive and scarce resource. Retailers always try to maximize the return on sales per square foot. Planning a layout for the store's interior is the first step in designing the store's interior.

The store should be designed in such a way that the customer can take view of all section once he starts the journey into the store. These are the various basic store layouts and circulation plans that all provide a different experience as proposed by Barr and Broudy (1990).

- a. Straight plan: this plan divides transitional areas from one part of the store to the other by using walls to display merchandise. It also leads the consumer to the back of the store. This design can be used for a variety of stores ranging from pharmacies to apparel.
- b. Pathway Plan: is most suitable for large stores that are single level. In this plan there is a path that is unobstructed by shop fixtures, this smoothly guides the consumer through to the back of the store. This is well suited for apparel department stores, as the clothes will be easily accessible.
- c. Diagonal Plan: uses perimeter design which cause angular traffic flow. The cashier is in a central location and easily accessible. This plan is most suited for self-service retail.
- d. Curved Plan: aims to create an intimate environment that is inviting. In this plan there is an emphasis on the structure of the space including the walls, corners and ceiling this is achieved by making the structure curved and is enhanced by circular floor fixtures. Although this is a more expensive layout it is more suited to smaller spaces like salons and boutiques.
- e. Varied Plan: in this plan attention is drawn to special focus areas, as well as having storage areas that line the wall. This is best suited footwear and jewellery retail stores.
- f. Geometric Plan: uses the racks and the retail floor fixtures to create a geometric floor plan and circulation movement. By lowering parts of the ceiling certain areas can create defined retail spaces. This is well suited for apparel stores.

3.1.8 Audio, Video broadcasts

Retail marketers' understanding of radio and television advertising campaigns' impact on retail store visits would be a major breakthrough in evaluating return on media investment (Fitzgerald, 2004). The need to reduce display clutter has opened possibilities to other in-store media options such as audio and video transmissions. The audio video effect was studied and proved by Arbitron retail media study on the consumer's purchase decisions as cited by Williams (2005). It also compared audio and video effect which revealed that video displays video displays generated higher awareness rate than audio (33% vs. 18%) and slightly higher effectiveness in making an unplanned purchase (9.6% vs. 6.5%). This shows that shoppers tend to be more engaged to the visual rather than the audio medium. Further technological inventions like usage of Plasma TV, LCD are less space consuming and more informative in nature.

3.1.9 In-store coupons and sampling

The in-store factors of an economic nature such as price and coupons were more likely to influence impulsive buying than those with an atmospheric engagement effect like background music and scent (Tendai and Crispin, 2009).

In-store coupons can be referred to as 'surprise' coupons and described them as unanticipated coupons encountered while in the shop and that are intended to be used for that particular shopping trip. Windfall or unanticipated gains are spent more readily than gains that were anticipated according to Heilman et al. (2002). This tends to violate the fundamental economic assumption which posits that funds are fungible - that the source of money should make no difference in its consumption. Who would not love a free sample of any product in a

retail store? Catching the attention of the customer in-store through sampling is a real time proved technique. Lawson et.al (1990) says the benefit of in-store sampling increases product awareness. This is achieved by making the product more visible and appealing to shoppers, whether they actually try the product or not.

3.1.10 Packaging in itself

As important is decorating the store to attract the customer, more important is to decorate the product, which is possible through soulful colours and eye-catchy packaging. The in-store designing and packaging goes hand-in-hand. In retail store design, as in package design, colour is used to attract or draw the customer and customer's attention. Advertisers have long been concerned with designing eye-catchy packages (Margulies, 1970). Shoppers aged 35-44 are influenced by many in-store media options including product packaging, check-out line advertising, and outside store ads. Finally, shoppers 25-44 are most driven to spontaneous, unplanned sales by shelf signs (Lempert, 2005). Hence to arrive at an idea about having beautified packaging in-store attracts attention and helps in purchase decision.

3.2 *Factors with an atmospheric, entertaining and experiential effect*

3.2.1 Background music

Music is capable of evoking complex affective and behavioral responses in consumers, according to North and Hargreaves (1998), as cited by Mattila and Wirtz (2001). Music may impact on both how long consumers spend in a shop and also on how much they buy. In a study shoppers in the first study spent more time and money in a slow music tempo retail environment and in the second study, customers in a slow music condition took more time to eat their meals compared to those in the fast-music condition (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001).

3.2.2 In-store displays

The most important aspect of successful in-store displays is for retailers to understand their customers and their habits according to Terrazas (2006). Strategic displays can then be devised that help to increase sales especially through unplanned purchases by consumers. One strategy may be to identify the commonality of goods bought by list-buyers and then attractively display complementary products next to these common products. Displaying the most popular products purchased by your clients in the back of the store could be another strategy - this forces the client to walk past and be confronted by as many other items first. It is also common practice to separate popular items (strategic display). Bread and milk, for instance, will most likely be displayed at the 2 most opposite ends of the store which will force the consumer past a host of products encouraging impulsive buying en route to the other essential product (Terrazas, 2006). Shopping trolleys designed to accommodate kids require strategic trolley height displays that will catch the children's attention because children play a big role in shopping trends (Terrazas, 2006).

3.2.3 Sales people

Consumers tend to enjoy a shopping experience with supportive and friendly shop assistants. Salespeople can really make the shopping experience fun and enjoyable by providing extraordinary service. Consumers enjoy shopping more without the presence of an overbearing salesperson although they do, however, appreciate when a salesperson is nearby and helpful (Jones, 1999).

3.2.4 Shop congestion/crowding/shop density

Crowding is generally perceived as an unpleasant experience in shopping situations (Bateson and Hui, 1987) as cited by Michon et al. (2005). Consumers adjust to higher retail densities by reducing shopping time, deviating from their shopping plans, buying less to enter express checkout lanes, postponing purchases, relying more on shopping lists, reducing interpersonal communications and refraining from exploratory behaviours (Michon et al., 2005). All these behaviours make the consumer towards impulsive buying and create a soothing purchasing environment.

4. Effective Advertising Techniques used in In store Advertisements

Advertising techniques can be of many kinds. All creative advertisers use some of the following effective advertising technique and tricks to grab the potential consumer's attention and turn it to sales. It is very challenging when it comes to in-store advertisements.

4.1 *Arouse Curiosity*

Nothing works better than this technique. Human, by nature are always drawn towards the unknown or in this case something new and advanced. Research in advertising and atmospheric has suggested that advertising variables arouse emotional responses that may be leading to a purchase (Sheth, 1991). Arousing curiosity with words, prints, images or visuals will definitely make an impact. On an average, an individual spends less than 5

seconds to go through an entire ad. If your subject does not arouse curiosity immediately, it is a lost opportunity. A well-crafted in store advertisement should be eye-catching, and difficult to ignore.

4.2 *Promise a benefit*

Most brands are associated with some pre-defined character, and they need to be reemphasized with every new service advertised in store. The headline must promise a benefit for the consumer, because in most instances it is the headline that sells the product more than the copy, images or the celebrity. In store advertisements should also carry general information about the service center address, phone numbers, credit cards that the business accepts, and the name of a person to ask for when calling for more information.

4.3 *Emotional Appeal*

Many advertisers attract attention by pulling at the heart strings and triggering emotions. An emotional response is by far the most powerful reason for making decisions. Emotional and rational thoughts are interdependent, as the ability to decide rationally is determined by issues that drive the emotions. We get more attracted to products and services that make us feel good and safe. The concepts of emotional appeal are the best seen in-store made world over, and also companies that associate their sales with social up-liftment causes.

4.4 *Children*

In most houses, children have a say in every big or small purchase made. Most parents just give in to the tantrums, a fact well-known to the advertisers. Most of the advertisements in-store has children featured in them who are generally a little more perfect than the target audience. These perfect children then go on to become role-models that have to emulated by other children, which helps the retailers indirectly to increase the visibility through word of mouth and help in sales.

4.5 *Celebrity Endorsement*

A celebrity's larger-than-life image, whether downright weird or righteous, strikes a chord with people of all ages. In store advertisers understand this appeal and use celebrity status and image to convince consumers that their products are worth purchasing. Besides celebrities that have international and national fame and recognition, many local advertisements use local, but popular celebrities in their ads. While choosing a celebrity to endorse your in-store products and services, it is imperative to ensure that their image and character matches the brand advertised. In India advertisers pour millions of rupees every year into celebrity advertising, Khatri, (2006). Celebrity endorsers can create more positive responses towards advertising and great purchase intentions than non-celebrity endorser (Byrne et al, 2003).

4.6 *Consumer Intelligence*

As a rule, never underestimate or insult the consumer's intelligence. Most ads exaggerate, however, the benefits and basic information of the product and service should be well presented. A consumer who is interested will always check the market before making a decision. Irrelevant and over-the-top exaggerated information will definitely turn off the potential consumer. No one really believes in words like the greatest, unbelievable or once-in-a-lifetime-fantastic offer specially offered in in-store ads. Another thing to bear in mind is that, while certain products cater to general masses, some are only meant for limited market. Therefore, it's important to appeal to basic sense and culture of different markets while creating ads.

5. Conclusion

Advertising is all about the way information about products and services is presented. An in-store sales promotion is another vital way to advertise. Sales promotions are double purposed because they are used to gather information about what type of customers you draw in and where they are, and to jumpstart sales. In-store sales promotions include things like contests and games, sweepstakes, product giveaways, samples coupons, loyalty programs, and discounts have proved to enhance the purchase decisions. The ultimate goal of sales promotions is to stimulate potential customers to actual sales. As we can see, the field of advertising has evolved and reached the masses in ways that were perceived to be unimaginable a decade ago. Thanks to developments and innovations in the field of technology, advertising is now present almost in every form we can imagine and in-store advertisements have made an unmatched difference to the Retail industry and has helped boost sales to hit huge profits with less expenditure.

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Figure 1: Four types of POPs (Janson, C., Bointon, B. and Marlow, N. (2002))

Clarity without mystery Peripheral processing Elementary	Clarity with mystery Central Processing Enchanting
Neither clarity nor mystery Peripheral processing Sombrous	Mystery without clarity Central Processing Deceptive

Figure 1 displays four types of POPs

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