

## **Paco Underhill evening...24th April '07 Bangalore**

### **On invitation of MINDSCAPE / Technopak India**

Paco's talk on the science of shopping with my comments in [blue](#) below:

**Visual Communication** is getting to be the most powerful of all other forms in recent times.

- But there is a huge overload, - clutter, therefore intense competition
- Age takes its toll on the eyes. The 40+ do not see fonts or colours as any youngster does.

Unfortunately these are not given adequate weightage in design of visual communication.

[At WITCO we have always had this battle of fonts and effective colours too with our eminent consultants. Though we all talk of the younger generation the 40+ remains the most significant part of the current clientele for us. Only six words for an outdoor message is again a battle!](#)

**Signs** can be grossly misleading or confusing. An arrow pointing upwards means – go ahead or above ??? Paco is certain that a good navigational aid signage package should enable one to walk through without stoppage and yet reach the precise destination. Be it a store, mall or hospital! Therefore positioning, font size, colours symbols etc. all are critical.

[An hour before this talk I went to one of my favorite book stores on Residency Road Bangalore. The poster message on the side entrance door shocked me! "This store will close today" in two lines. I could not read the third line as I was walking in opening the door by then. The alarming news made me let go of the door step back and read the third line..... "at 7.30 PM".](#)

**Men designing stores for women** is sore point with Paco.

[I have heard him say that before. In Kolkatta when he visited India the first time and also before that at NRF convention in New York, a little after his best seller became the bible for Retail Communication. One sure needs to be sensitive to different consumers but not being sensitive to needs of your primary clientele is unthinkable. All of us have read enough of Venus & Mars and how people from different planets process information and convey their thoughts. Since most of us live with spouses from another planet this should not be so difficult to understand!](#)

**The big threat** may be outside your industry. Share of wallet monitor is key.

People more **"Time Poor"** than **"Money Poor"**. Therefore the products which most clientele need to pick up in a rush must be conveniently located.

Retail needs to pay attention to where you loose money – **poor productivity areas** and put in corrective measures.

**Energy Saving** - Companies like Wal Mart have proven that there are huge benefits at hand by using energy saving devices. Big investments which pay back in a year!

At WITCO we have been working on this for more than a decade. Initial efforts actually lost money! The high initial costs without the promised quality was the problem. Energy saving and environmentally friendly “VAC” air conditioners also proved a disaster due to politically controlled fuel costs. Currently 90% of our fittings & equipment are energy- saving/efficient ones.

**Mirrors** – For the younger generation the “mobile” is a fashion accessory and not just a communication device. They need mirrors to check out “the look”

At WITCO, we have found even 40 + Maritian’s (Men) like to check out “their look” with the new port folio in hand. So, mirrors are definitely not for clothing, footwear, cosmetics, jewellery alone.

**Self-Service** need not be for self-service stores alone. Almost any store can be designed for partial self-service.

At WITCO we have added shelf talkers, specs sheets, feature highlights, navigational aids – all in relatively small stores to address this. After all you cannot staff the store based on the needs of some 30 minutes a day when you may have customer’s out numbering the store team. So, this is an absolute neccessesity for us!

How come Supermarket **aisles** are all of the **same width**? The very high traffic ones need to be wider.

A drug store increased sales by 18% by just handing over **baskets** to people who have more than two three items in hand.

Landmark book stores always do that for me! Many supermarkets, departmental stores do that here in India.

Under **store design** he emphasized on the importance of **lighting**. Appropriate lighting can actually make “good products look great”. He also said we need to “prioritise the consumer needs” when designing the store fixtures and merchandising.

This is an area we fail in, more often. The bane is that more often our “designers” function as “decorators” unfortunately and we have stores which look good only for 3 hours not 3 years!

**Amenability equals profits** – The need is to be flexible and innovate based on feedback, learnings, intuition. Also that in future, outstanding companies will be so not because of “visionary leadership” at the top but “champion contributors” who face the consumer regularly.

My friend and CFO –T.K. Ranganath smiled at this one and told me that I may be guilty of too much amenability / experimentation resulting in looking more like a continuous R & D Lab! – That’s a caution!

Conversation standing adjacent to the customer (not facing him/her) is a great and effective “ice – breaker”. Products like televisions automatically allow for this.

My son Althaf, a retail management under graduate student of University of Surrey is now working for 1 year at the John Lewis Dept store on Oxford Street, London. He watched a customer walk in and watch the “Penguin Display” at the Christmas decorations department and remarked “Having fun with the penguins?” The customer responded with a laugh, “Ice was sure broken” Paco will approve? His manager sure did! Full marks also for the store system which captured this interaction, enquired with the “trainee” and complimented him.

In Paco’s opinion Indian Retail is trying to move from the 19th to the 22nd century. Rather than studying U.S. and Europe it might make sense to study Brazil, South Africa, Dubai, South Korea, Mexico even Moscow.

Key concepts to look out for are - **healthy**, **ecological** and **relevance** as you plan for the future.

Indian Retail is rightly nervous in this age as their consumers travel the globe and are aware of the best available the world over. Establish a close **linkage** with the clientele is his advice.

At WITCO being a speciality store with relatively low walk-in but high conversions – the store team is **accountable** for **every** walk-in. Customer feedback obviously is optional but Team member’s comprehensive, structured feedback is mandatory. Great way to maintain the link and an invaluable resource for review and planning.

I will be delighted to hear from you on your experiences... at [harris@witcoindia.com](mailto:harris@witcoindia.com). You may also circulate this to whoever you wish to.

Happy Retailing - Harris

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