A CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY OF HISTORY OF MANNEQUINS IN VISUAL MERCHANDISING PRACTICES

Dr. Aditya Upadhyay[1]

ABSTRACT:

This paper is a study of past and present of use of mannequins in practice of Visual Merchandising, to find a common link and trend flow, which can further help in deriving or forecasting techniques of VM which could be used in future. This study is done chronologically, right from the earliest available known sources of information about inception of this art. This article can lead the readers through the journey of transformation of art of 15th Century into science of displaying techniques for retailing of 21st Century. A reader will also learn how social, political and economic changes in society have impacted the retail culture and how everything around retail and visual merchandising adapted to these changes for survival. Like all other studies of history, all the information for this paper is collected through trustable secondary sources like published research papers, books, articles, brochures, pictures etc. Source of information is given due credit wherever required. Pictures are used extensively to help readers understand and relate with the journey of retail culture.

Keywords: Visual Merchandising, Mannequin, Retail Store, Window display, Retailing.

1: INTRODUCTION

Visual Merchandising evolved with the evolution of retail and its formats. Even in the days of barter system, retailers or shop-keepers used to display their products in the best way possible so as to attract another retailer and exchange of goods can happen. The activity of window-shopping appears to be one of the most popular pastimes of contemporary consumer culture. With a seemingly endless repetition, consumers converge to city centres or giant suburban shopping malls to enjoy the visual delights of commodities staged in aesthetically appealing arrangements (Parker, Ken W.,2003).During the 19th Century, displays were alike in both department stores and museums. Might be because retailers didn't have discovered the techniques of visual Merchandising and believed in displaying their products as much they could resulting in overcrowding of products on shelves. Today displays in museums are referred to as **Exhibitions**, while displays in stores are referred to as **Visual Merchandising (**Strege, 1999)

Sarah Marie (2008) in her article on "A History of Visual Merchandising in Retail Stores" said that though there are advanced techniques being used in visual displays, visual merchandising is not a new art form. Even in the days of 18th century, merchandise was presented in interesting and unique arrangements to attract customers.

JanaceBubonia (2013), in her article on "The Evolution of Visual Merchandising and the Impact of three key new trends" said that although there is no documented date for the inception of visual merchandising, it emerged as an important practice during the 19th century. Prior to this time, merchandise was not always displayed and stocked on the sales floor, and the overall layout and arrangement of fixtures and ambience was not a priority of shop owners. In fact, little attention was given to the arrangement and presentation of goods because merchandise was often in back rooms, rather than openly displayed to encourage self-selection. This made it essential for workers to assist shoppers in finding what they needed.

[1]Research Guide, Mansarovar Global University, Bhopal (M.P.), India (Contact: aditya.mfm@gmail.com)

2: OBJECTIVE

It is an attempt to understand the evolution of use of mannequins in practice of Visual Merchandising for retailing and to have an assessment over the work done so far. The aim of this descriptive research is to study the different methods adopted by retailers to show case their products using mannequins.

3: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Retailing is a process of selling consumer goods or services to end consumer. However there is possibility that a consumer is not purchasing personally and there is an end customer who is purchasing on his behalf. Retailing can involve various channels of distribution to supply products / services from manufacturers / producers to consumers. It is different from whole-selling, where large amount of products are sold to few customers, however in retailing small quantity of products are sold to large number of customers. (Upadhyay et. al. 2023)

Just putting a product for sale in an online or offline store is not sufficient for sales. Products do not sell on itself. Even good products need to be marketed, to be sold. (Upadhyay, 2023)

Visual Merchandising helps customers to have an amazing shopping experience. For a Visual Merchandiser, a store is like a theatre. The walls & floor are like stage of theatre. The lighting, fixtures & visual communications makes the set of the stage & the merchandise play the characters in the show. (Upadhyay et. al. 2017)

As per Kanika Aand (2012), in the article "Inspired by the world of art" states that "Indian retail is moving into 'second gear' with extensive attempts to constantly meet customer expectations. Given the shift of gear from merely creating awareness, it has its own advantage to harness and challenge to overcome."

Visual Merchandising is the art of presentation, which puts the merchandise in focus. It educates the customers, creates desire and finally augments the selling process (Mohan & Ojha, 2014)

4: RESEARCH GAP

Having reviewed the literature available, it was found that none of the researchers have contributed by providing a comprehensive study of use of mannequins in practice of visual merchandising for retailing. There was no research found which could explain how retailing and visual merchandising evolved since inception and how it is perceived in the current era. The gap realized in this area, triggered this research.

5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To study the past of Mannequins, literature was reviewed; using secondary data which has been collected from authentic sources, published articles, papers and databases. The type of research used is **Integrative Review** of Literature and is **Descriptive** in nature.

To study the present of Mannequins, Literature was reviewed along with **Observational Research**. Prominent retail stores worldwide were observed with special emphasis on stores in India.

6: ANALYSIS

HISTORY OF MANNEQUINES

Mannequins are surrogate for the human body or a real model to showcase garments in stores. Mannequins also replaced human body where life could have been in danger like for automobile accident testing and fire testing, bullet's impact testing etc. They also found their place in medical science for helping the students learn about human body. A medical simulation mannequin could be used a virtual patient and to demonstrate first aid practices or emergency services. Military use of mannequins was also recorded when it was used for war or fight practice. History of mannequins is as much as history of Fashion. Figures, body types and material used kept changing as per change in fashion and consumer behavior. (Source: By Leighann Morris - The complete history of mannequins: Garbos, Twiggies, Barbies and beyond, http://www.hopesandfears.com/hopes/city/fashion/213389-history-of-mannequins retrieved on 30.08.17 at 19:37)

Table 1: Chronological History of Mannequins

(Source: Developed by Author)

CENTURY	ERA / PERIOD	DESCRIPTION
15th		Type: Miniature sized 'Milliners' mannequin'
18th	Around 1750	French Fashion Dolls which were later modified and transformed into mannequins.
19th	Around 1850	Mannequin Type: Mannequins were in the form of dress makers' dummies and tailors' draping forms, which were used to sell draped yard fabrics. Later these were used for ready-made pre-stitched garments too. Wirework mannequins were manufactured in Paris in 1835(Steele, V. 2005) Speciality: No arms and heads.
	1880	Type: Life like mannequin Material used: paper mache and wax. Speciality: Use of Heads which were made at mask houses. Introduction of joints in arms and legs for more flexibility. A metal screen was attached with torso for draping a skirt over it. A hidden wooden tripod was attached under skirt screen to support the mannequin. Manufactured / Designed by: Fred Stockman.
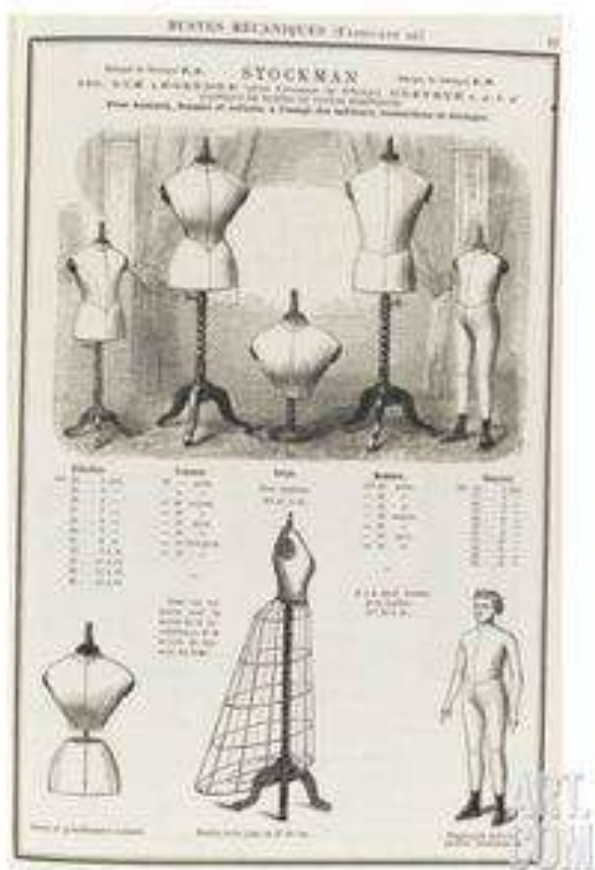
Picture 1 & 2: Life like mannequin
(Source: https://in.pinterest.com/pin/480055641500113737/?lp=true)

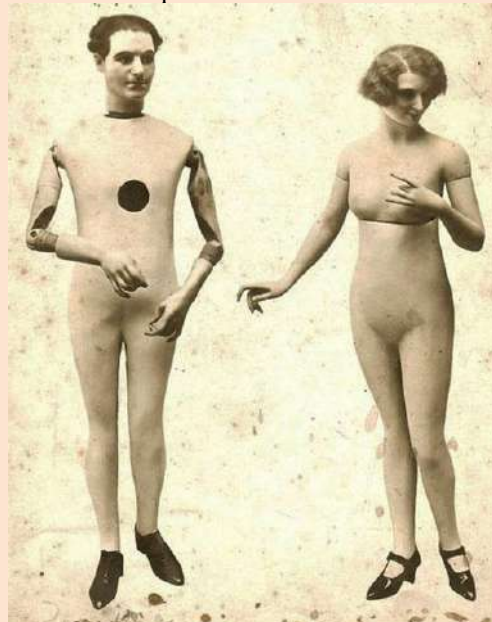| 19th	1900-20 Era of First World War-1914	Emergence of mannequin workshops in Brussels, Rome, London, Berlin and Paris. Prominent Manufactured : Pierre Imans Body type: Ideal body shape, big busted and thinner waist. Measurement: size 18. Speciality: Life like models. Introduction of mechanism to wink and smile. Introduction of real hair and teeth. Material used: Visible Body parts like face, hands and neck, needed more detailing and were made of wax. Other body parts which were generally covered with garments were made of paper-mache. While ordering, customer had a choice to select eye color, hair color and teeth. Each strand of hair was implanted to the head, eyebrows, moustaches and eyelashes, with a needle. Demerits: Mannequins were easily breakable, difficult to clean and wax could melt under direct sunlight. It weighed around 300 pounds. Average Price: $ 15 (Source: Omaha World Harold, May 6, 2014)

Picture 3: A Mannequin created by the artist Pierre Imans, France in 1911.
(Source: http://www.ebay.fr/itm/a193-211-Mannequins-Pierre-Imans-1911-Extraits-du-Livre-Mannequins-/332347653366?hash=item4d6176bcf6 retrieved on 30.08.17 at 19:54)

1920-30	Dresses were more revealing then. Hence complete mannequin body was required to be realistic. Artists: Siegel La Rosa and Stockman. Body type: Slender, boyish, straight figure. Material Used: wax was supplanted by Plaster and lacquered papier mache, which was more durable and heat resistant. Speciality: Introduction of self-sculpted facial features like nose, eyes and hair gave rise to Semi-realistic mannequins. **Picture 4& 5: Siegel La Rosa Mannequines, displayed in 1925 at International Exposition of Decorative Arts in Paris.** **(Source: https://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/articulated-larosa-and-siegel.jpg retrieved on 30.08.17 at 20:01)**

**Picture6: Window Display for Atwater Kent radios , Washington DC, 1928, shows the heightened realism post World War I.**
(Source:https://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/1928-washington-DC-THomas-R-Shipp-Co.-Atwater-Kent-Window.jpg retrieved on 30.08.17 at 20:34)
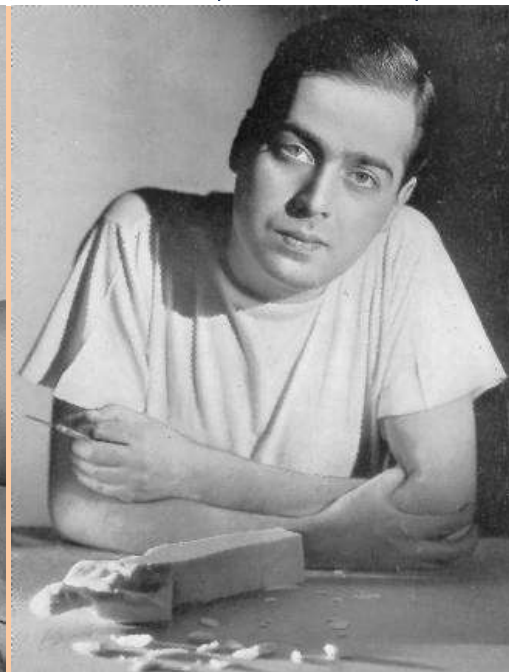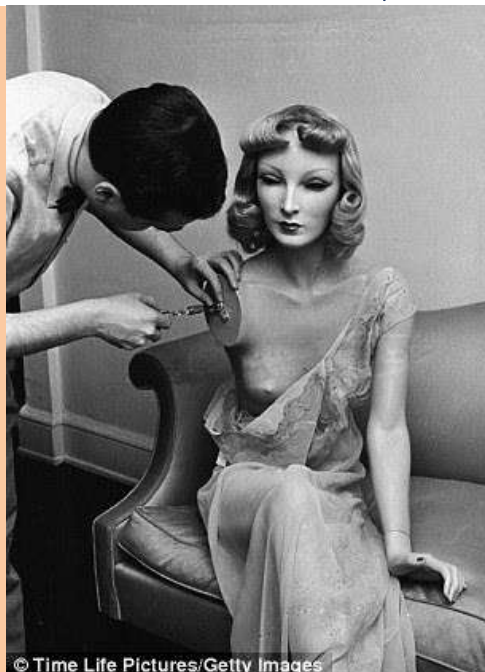
1930-40 Era of Great Depression	Body type: Introduction of realistic body types which included both plus size and skinny bodies. Material used: Plaster, metal skelton covered with skin like material with a flexibility of changing positions. Artists: Lester Gaba and his models are called 'Gaba Girls', Australian doll maker – Kathe Kruse Weight: 100 pounds
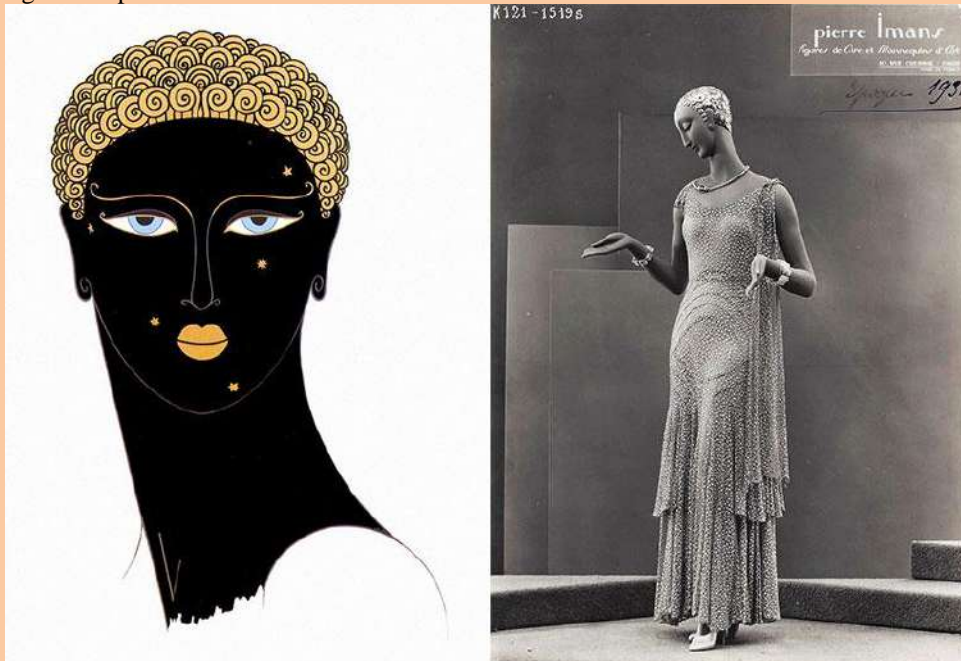
Picture 7: Pierre Imans mannequin modelled after Josephine Baker.
(Source: https://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/imans2.jpg retrieved on 30.08.17 at 20:04)

Picture 8 & 9: Lester Gaba assembling mannequin Cynthia which was made of plaster. (Source: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2203951/Lester-Gaba-Meet-Cynthia-1930s-mannequin-New-York-sensation.html retrieved on 30.08.17 at 20:39)

Lester's 'Cynthia' was made after a wealthy socialite Cynthia Wells. Lester used to take her along to public places, which captured media attention. Cynthia found place in Life magazine too. Tiffany's sent her jewellery as a PR stunt. Later the story of Cynthia ended when it slipped from a chair and smashed.

1940-50 Era of World War-II	Designed by: Marry Brossnan Measurement: 35-24-36 ½ Material used: Introduction of first plastic mannequin by Wolf&wine company, but it turned green after a while, so manufacturers had to take it back. Body Type: Slimmer and shorter to save resources during and post War. Mannequine manufacturers sanded the nipples off, which were considered to be over sexual.
1950-60 Era of Boobs and Barbies	Body Type: Ultra feminine, curvy with thin long legs. V-shaped torso for male mannequin, hour glass figure. It is the era of comeback of boobs and emergence of Barbie dolls. Speciality: Bright makeup. Natural hair were re-introduced and then later substituted by synthetic wig. Artist: First Barbie doll with hour glass figure was manufactured in 1959 by American Toy Company-Mattel, Inc.

Picture 10: Barbie Doll
(source www.dailymail.co.uk)

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1960-70 Era of Supermodel and super light mannequins	Material used: papier mache was substituted by fiberglass and polyester. This made mannequin lighter but stronger. Body Type: Shift from curvaceous to smaller body type, stick-thin. Nipples which were sanded off in 1940s, returned. **Picture 11: A female skinny mannequin with clearly visible nipples.** **(Source: https://hiveminer.com/User/escotto2000 retrieved on 30.08.17 at 22:13)** Speciality: Wigs could be brushed and set as real hair. Introduction of sex appeal and high fashion in mannequins. Artist: Adel Rootstein's most famous mannequin was Twiggy, which mimicked her body measurements and facial features. It was a teen sensation and junior mannequin. Rootstien is

known for making Industry's most expensive mannequin, worth $12,000.(Source: Mannequins are big business, Omaha world herald, May 6th, 2014)
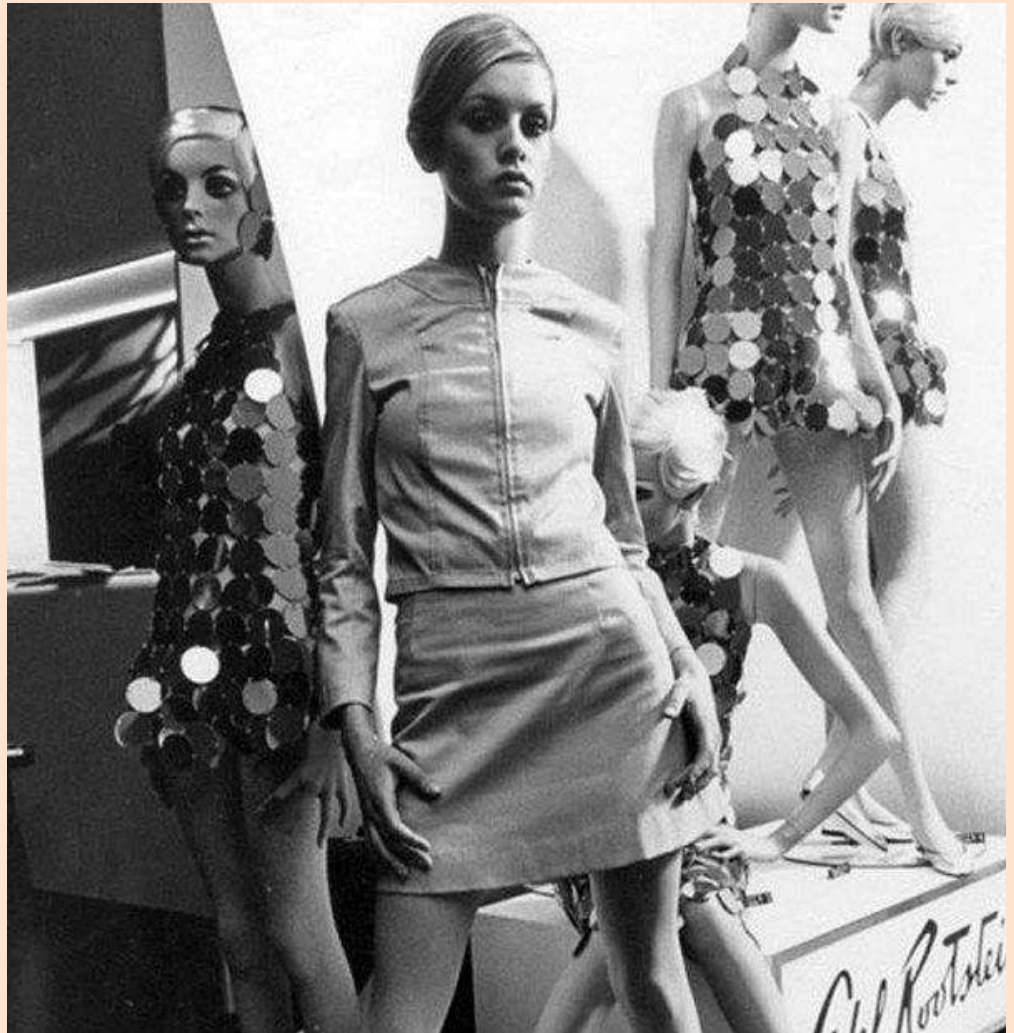

Picture 12: Twiggy poses in front of a Rootstein display.
(Source: https://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/what-mannequins-say-about-us/
retrieved on 30.08.17 at 21:38)

1970-90	Body type: natural body type for both male and female mannequins. Speciality: "Bra-less look", mannequins of different races were introduced. Material used: Introduction of metallic colors like gold and silver. Typical colors were Black, Grey and White. Artist: Adel Rootstien designed Sayoko mannequin after a Japanese model Sayoko Yamaguchi. Introduction of Costumers substituted mannequins in many stores.
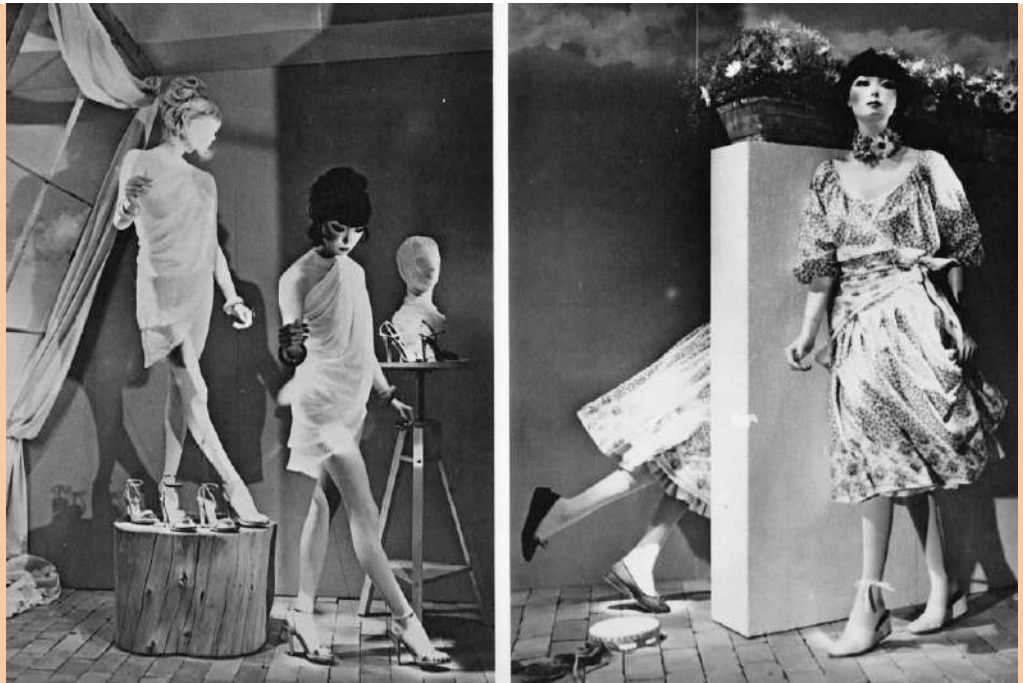
Picture 13: Two catalog images from the 1970s showing Rootstein's Sayoko mannequin, a collector favourite.
(Source: Retail Therapy: What mannequins say about us by Hunter Oatman-Stanford dated December 6th, 2013, retrieved from https://www.collectorsweekly.com on 30.08.17 at 21:36)

Picture 14: Poster of the movie- Mannequin

Mannequins were so realistic that they had bellybuttons, backbones and abs. In 1987 a romantic comedy movie with the name 'Mannequin' was released, which was based on a story of a VM artist working in a store with a mannequin, which comes to life for him. Actress Kim Cattrall, in one of the interviews about the movie, mentioned that she had to work hard on her body to match the streamlined body type of mannequin.

A sequel of this movie was released in the year 1991 with the name 'Mannequin two: On the move'. Lead actress of this movie Kristy Swanson played the role of a mannequin 'Jessie' which was frozen by a thousand years ago by an evil sorcerer and came to life by a kiss from lead actor William Ragsdale who was playing the role of Jason Williamson / Prince William.

Picture 15: Poster of Movie 'Mannequin two: On the move'
(sourced from http://www.slashfilm.com/stewart-raffill-mannequin-2-interview/2/ on 26.09.17)

Picture 16: Poster of the movie 'One touch of Venus'
(Source: http://www.dvdtalk.com/reviews/60970/one-touch-of-venus/ retrieved on 27.09.17)

However these movies on Mannequin and life of a window dresser got their inspiration from a much older movie 'One touch of Venus' which was released in the year 1948. It is a black and white, romantic musical comedy movie which based on a story of window dresser, Eddie Hatch (played by actor Robert Walker) who kissed a statue of Venus (played by actress Ava Gardner) and the statue comes to life. That Statue was bought for $ 2,00,000, for the Departmental Store, where Eddie was working.

| 1990-till date | Introduction of moulded mannequins, cartoon character body types and customization of mannequins.
With the evolution and intervention of Technology in retail, retailers are now moving towards virtual stores and digital displays.
Body type: Realistic, stick-thin. Emergence of plus sized mannequins

Picture 17: Plus sized mannequins for a lingerie store
(Source: http://blogmulherao.com.br/16187/vitrine-plus-size/ retrieved on 30.08.17 at 22:01)

De Maria Meghan (2014), in her article titled "How realistic mannequins are changing the fashion Industry" discussed about how trend is shifting from use of unrealistic mannequins to realistic mannequins in Apparell retail stores of America. Meghan also mentioned that almost one third of American adults are obese, however American retailers were using idealistic body type mannequins, which is un-relatable for the consumers. Meghan also referred to a Wall Street Journal report which concluded that plus-size women hold 28 percent of apparel purchasing power in the U.S., and this segment of clientele must not be overlooked.

Adams, Rebecca & Mayer, Megan (2014), in their article "American Apparel Pubic Hair Mannequins Stop Pedestrians In Their Tracks" discussed about a bold move by a controversial American Apparel retailer with the brand name **American Apparel**, where the store have used store window mannequins adorned with pubic hair. According to one of the representatives of the store, this publicity stunt was intended to convey the 'rawness and realness of sexuality' and was aimed to boost sales during Valentine's Day. |

Picture 18: Realistic Mannequin with pubic hair and nipples at an American Apparel store
(Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/american-apparel-pubic-hair-mannequins_n_4610688 retrieved on 27.09.17)

**Picture 19: Window of American Apparel store catching pedestrians attention
(Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/american-apparel-pubic-hair-
mannequins_n_4610688 retrieved on 27.09.17)**

**Picture 20: Mannequins are fitted with cameras and sensors to track age, sex and race of
customers so that retail company can rebrand and market their stores accordingly.
(source: Mannequins are spying on shoppers for market analysis by Liat Clark on
http://www.wired.co.uk/article/mannequin-spies-on-customers retrieved on 30.08.17 at
22:18)**

Glennie, Alasdair (2012), in an article in The Daily Mail, mentioned that these spy mannequins,
called "Eye See", are manufactured by Italian firm Almax and sell for £3,200 each. A secret
camera inside the figure's head connects to software that builds up statistical information on
passers-by.

7: EPILOGUE:

From this research, it is pretty evident that Visual Merchandising started from a need of retailers to invite their customers inside their stores and it evolved and grew into various dimensions with different other motives too like educating the customers, building the brand value and comforting the shopping experience. As well said by KanikaAnand (2012) that Retail in India is in 'Second Gear', which means there is much more, yet to be done in the field of Marketing and Visual Merchandising too. In the last one decade, researchers have excavated a lot in this subject to explore its dimensions but still there is a lot to be discovered than what we know today, which leaves an open ocean for researchers to dive in.

8: CONCLUSION & RESULT:

From the above table no. 1, it is evident how use of mannequins and VM evolved hand in hand. Development of VM techniques was always dependent on need and competition. From the era of barter system to the current era of Multi Brand Outlets and E-commerce websites, VM has registered its presence in its own way as per needs of both retailers and customers. Transitions in retail industry depends on various factors like population, economic conditions, political conditions of the country etc. however for ease of study these transitions are categorised century wise. Also it is pertinent to mention that transition in the whole retail industry and thus in VM techniques were not homogenous throughout the world. For example, emergence of Arcades, Expositions and Malls are contribution of developed western countries which were followed by developing countries, much later. In 19th Century when western countries were enjoying world's first few department stores with lucrative display techniques and use of mannequins, India on the other hand, until 20th Century, had only government owned ration stores or brick and mortar (kirana) stores. Indian customers started enjoying visit to department stores / super markets, very recently in 21st Century, which shows that Indian retailers are lagging with respect to retail establishments and Visual Merchandising techniques. And even though Indian customers have tried and accepted new retail formats like malls, supermarkets, department stores etc. they couldn't leave their roots unattended and are still fond of visiting fairs, haat bazaars and local brick and mortar (kirana) store or unorganised retail stores.

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