

The Changing Face of Visual Merchandising: Careers, Courses & Curriculum

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Not too long ago, visual merchandising meant well-stacked shelves, colour-coordinated racks, and the occasional mannequin posed in a window. The focus was on neatness, symmetry, and making the product look appealing. A skilled merchandiser knew how to draw attention to a new collection with clever lighting or by placing bestsellers at eye level—but the tools were largely manual, and the impact was mostly visual.

Today, the game has changed entirely. Modern visual merchandising has become a high-tech, high-impact discipline that encompasses motion-triggered displays, digital signage that updates in real time, LED floors that change colour with your steps, and Augmented Reality (AR) mirrors that let customers “try on” clothes or makeup without physically touching a product. Store layouts are now designed using 3D modelling software, customer behaviour is analysed with heat maps and AI, and entire retail environments are crafted to feel like brand-driven experiences rather than just points of sale.

Technology hasn't just enhanced merchandising—it has redefined it. What was once a background function is now centre stage, shaping how consumers engage with a brand the moment they step into a store. Visual merchandising today is immersive, data-informed, and deeply integrated into retail strategy—transforming shopping into storytelling, and stores into sensory, interactive environments.

Why is Visual Merchandising Booming?

The role of visual merchandising has expanded significantly—from simply making displays look attractive to crafting immersive brand narratives. In



a world where online shopping is convenient and immediate, physical stores need to deliver something unique—an experience.

Retailers are reimagining their environments with interactive layouts and story-driven displays. Many global fast fashion brands have perfected this, turning store visits into curated adventures. In India, premium malls and lifestyle outlets are stepping up, investing in bold interior concepts and interactive installations to stay competitive. With the growth of D2C (Direct-to-Consumer) labels and global retail giants entering the Indian market, the demand for immersive, design-led retail environments is soaring.

Career Opportunities

For those with a creative bent and an interest in consumer behaviour, visual merchandising strikes a balance between aesthetics and commercial impact. Key career roles include:

<p>Visual Merchandiser Designs store layouts, seasonal displays, and shop windows</p>
<p>Retail Space Designer Plans the spatial flow and architecture of retail environments</p>
<p>Store Planner Strategically maps out product placement and customer navigation</p>
<p>Prop Stylist / Set Designer Creates thematic visuals and storytelling elements</p>
<p>Experience Designer Combines physical, digital, and sensory layers to craft engaging in-store journeys</p>

Where Can You Work?

Visual merchandising is no longer confined to the traditional retail floor. As brands push to create memorable experiences across physical and digital spaces, the demand for skilled visual merchandisers has widened across multiple industries and formats.

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- **Fashion and Apparel Brands** – From high-street labels to luxury giants, fashion brands rely heavily on visual merchandising to translate their identity into store environments.
- **Department Stores and Malls** – Multi-brand environments require cohesive yet flexible merchandising strategies to reflect seasonal changes, promotions, and brand collaborations.
- **Lifestyle and Home Décor Chains** – Brands in this segment need merchandisers to create walk-through experiences that feel intuitive and aspirational.
- **Boutique Studios and Independent Labels** – Smaller, niche players hire visual merchandisers for personalised, hands-on design—especially in urban markets where brand storytelling is a competitive edge.
- **Events, Pop-ups and Exhibitions** – Temporary retail spaces, product launches, trade shows, and fashion weeks need visual merchandisers to create eye-catching, short-term displays that leave a strong impression.
- **Design and Branding Agencies** – Many agencies now have dedicated roles for retail and experiential design, offering the chance to work across brands and industries.
- **Museums and Cultural Spaces** – Increasingly, visual merchandising skills are used in exhibition design and immersive storytelling projects beyond commercial spaces.

Skills You Need

This is a highly multidisciplinary field. A blend of creativity, strategy, and tech know-how is your key to standing out.

To succeed, you'll need:

- A strong visual sense and spatial awareness
- Knowledge of retail psychology and consumer patterns
- Proficiency in design software like SketchUp, Photoshop, and InDesign
- Understanding of lighting, materials, and colour theory
- The ability to tell stories through physical space
- Sensitivity to sustainability and eco-conscious design
- Familiarity with AR/VR and digital integration
- Skills in trend forecasting and fast-paced execution

Courses & Curriculum

Whether you're a student or a professional looking to pivot, there are numerous ways to train in visual merchandising:

Leading Institutions in India:

Institution	Courses Offered	Course Duration	Eligibility	Location
NIFT	Fashion Communication, Fashion Styling & Image Design, Visual Merchandising (Electives)	(3-4 years Undergraduate), 2 years (Postgraduate)	A-levels or equivalent for Undergraduate, Undergraduate degree for Postgraduate	Pan India (multiple campuses)
Pearl Academy	Fashion Styling & Image Design, Retail Design, Fashion Business	3-4 years (Undergraduate), 2 years (Postgraduate)	A-levels or equivalent for Undergraduate, Undergraduate degree for Postgraduate	Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur, Bengaluru
FDDI	Retail & Fashion Merchandise	4 years (Undergraduate), 2 years (Postgraduate)	A-levels or equivalent for Undergraduate, Undergraduate degree for Postgraduate	Pan India
JD Institute of Fashion Technology	Diplomas in Visual Merchandising, Fashion Communication	1-2 years (Diploma/Certificate)	A-levels or equivalent for Diploma	Pan India
Symbiosis Institute of Design	Communication Design, Interior & Space Design, Retail Design	4 years (Undergraduate)	A-levels or equivalent for Undergraduate	Pune
Amity School of Fashion Technology	Fashion Communication, Fashion Retail Management	3-4 years (Undergraduate), 2 years (Postgraduate)	A-levels or equivalent for Undergraduate, Undergraduate degree for Postgraduate	Noida
Vogue Institute of Art & Design	Fashion Retail Management, Visual Merchandising, Interior Design	1-3 years (Diploma/Undergraduate)	A-levels or equivalent for Undergraduate/Diploma	Bengaluru
IIFD	Visual Merchandising, Fashion Retail, Fashion Styling	1-2 years (Diploma/Certificate)	A-levels or equivalent for Diploma	Chandigarh
IMS Design and Innovation Academy	Interior & Retail Spaces, Visual Merchandising	3-4 years (Undergraduate)	A-levels or equivalent for Undergraduate	Noida
Raffles Design International	Visual Communication, Interior Design, Fashion Marketing	1-3 years (Diploma/Undergraduate)	A-levels or equivalent for Undergraduate/Diploma	Mumbai

What You'll Study

Common modules include:

- Display planning and spatial strategy
- Lighting, materials, and colour in retail
- Consumer psychology and branding
- Storytelling through visual space
- Software training: SketchUp, AutoCAD, Photoshop, InDesign
- Basics of AR/VR and interactive tech
- Sustainability in visual display
- Retail analytics and data-driven design

Visual merchandising has grown from being a backstage function to a frontline force. It's no longer about decorating—it's about directing attention, shaping experience, and influencing decisions in real time. It blends aesthetics with analytics, storytelling with software.

This is a career where your creativity doesn't just get noticed—it gets results. With the right skills and mindset, you can build a portfolio that travels across borders and industries, from fashion boutiques to flagship global stores.

So, if you're looking for a profession where design makes things happen—not just look good—visual merchandising is more than a smart choice. It's a future-proof one.

(The author is an educationist and career counsellor. Views expressed are personal)



ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources



Pusa Campus, New Delhi-110012, India

Applications are invited to attend "Interview (in-person/online through video conferencing)" for the post mentioned in the advertisement to work in the DBT funded network project "Mainstreaming sesame germplasm for productivity enhancement and sustainability through genomics assisted core development and trait discovery" at ICAR- NBPGR, New Delhi as mentioned below.

The eligible candidates who were interested may send their application form along with a scanned copy of the original documents to the PI's e-mail address as given below latest by **June 08, 2025, 5:30 PM**. The position is temporary and co-terminus with the project tenure. After screening the applications, **ONLY the short-listed candidates** passing through initial screening will be informed with interview details, to appear either in-person or online mode by email and phone. Original documents of the candidates appearing interview in-person will be verified on the interview date. In case of online interview, the original documents will be verified at a later stage.

Interview Details

Name of the Post and Number	Emoluments/month	Qualifications
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Project title: Mainstreaming sesame germplasm for productivity enhancement and sustainability through genomics assisted core development and trait discovery (Sub project-2 Component-1)
Name of PI: Dr. R Parimalan (Email: r.parimalan@icar.org.in with cc to sesamedbt@gmail.com)
Project duration: Till 28th Feb 2026

Research Associate-II (01)	Rs. 61,000 + 27% HRA.	Essential Qualification: Ph.D degree in Agriculture / any branch of Life Sciences or equivalent degree or having 3 years of research, teaching and design and development experience after MVSc. / M.Pharm / ME / M.Tech with at least one research paper in science citation indexed (SCI) journal. Desirable Qualification: I. Research experience in molecular biology/ bio-technology/plant physiology/plant biochemistry/ bio-informatics/ relevant discipline especially in sesame or other oilseed crops with the mentioned specialization from recognized Agricultural University as evident through research publications. II. NET / GATE qualification. III. With ≥ 60% marks (or equivalent GPA) in Post-graduation from a recognized University or equivalent. Upper age limit: 40 years (5 years for SC/ ST/ female candidates, upto 10 years for differently abled candidates and 3 years for OBC (non-creamy layer) candidates as per Govt. of India norms.)
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Senior Research Fellow (01)	Rs. 42,000 + 27% HRA.	Essential Qualification: I. Post Graduate degree in Basic Science or Graduate/ Post Graduate degree in professional course selected through a process described through any one of the following: a) Scholars who are selected through National Eligibility Test (NET) - CSIR-UGC-NET including lectureship (Assistant Professorship) / GATE. b) The selection process through National level examinations conducted by central government departments and their agencies and institutions such as DST, DBT, DAE, DOS, DRDO, MoE, ICAR, ICMR, IIT, IISc, IISER, NISER, etc. NET / GATE qualified Post-graduate in agriculture or in life sciences with ≥ 60% marks (or equivalent GPA) from a recognized University or equivalent. II. Two years of research experience. Desirable Qualification: I. Post-graduate research experience in molecular biology/ biotechnology / plant physiology / plant biochemistry / bioinformatics / relevant discipline especially in sesame or other oilseed crops with the mentioned specialization from recognized Agricultural University as evident through research publications. II. With ≥ 60% marks (or equivalent GPA) in Post-graduation from a recognized University or equivalent. Upper age limit: 35 years (5 years for SC/ ST/ female candidates, upto 10 years for differently abled candidates and 3 years for OBC (non-creamy layer) candidates as per Govt. of India norms.)
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Project Associate-I (01)	Rs. 31,000 + 27% HRA.	Essential Qualification: Master's degree in Natural or Agricultural Sciences / M.V.Sc. or Bachelor's degree in Engineering or Technology or Medicine from a recognized university or equivalent. Desirable Qualification: I. Life Sciences with ≥ 60% marks (or equivalent GPA) from a recognized University or equivalent. Research-experience in molecular biology / biotechnology/ plant physiology / plant biochemistry / bioinformatics / relevant discipline with the mentioned specialization from recognized Agricultural University as evident through research publications. Upper age limit: 35 years (5 years for SC/ ST/ female candidates, upto 10 years for differently abled candidates and 3 years for OBC (non-creamy layer) candidates as per Govt. of India norms.)
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For more details please visit ICAR-NBPGR website- www.nbpgr.org.in