



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Visual Merchandising on Consumer Buying Behaviors: A Qualitative Survey-Based Analysis in Retail Stores

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of visual merchandising on consumer buying behavior across various retail sectors in India. The primary objective was to examine how different visual merchandising elements—such as product arrangement, window displays, store layout, lighting, and promotional signage—influence both planned and impulse purchases. A qualitative, survey-based methodology was employed, collecting data from 150 retail shoppers in sectors including fashion, electronics, and home furnishings. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, focusing on consumer perceptions and behavior influenced by these visual elements. Key findings reveal that Product Arrangement and Promotional Signage were the most influential factors, especially in Fashion retail, where both planned and impulse purchases were significantly impacted. Younger and higher-income consumers were more susceptible to visual merchandising strategies, while Electronics retail exhibited a lower response to such elements. The study addresses the gap in understanding the influence of visual merchandising in the Indian retail context and provides actionable insights for retailers to optimize their in-store strategies. These findings underscore the importance of tailored visual merchandising approaches to meet the demographic and sector-specific needs of consumers, contributing to improved customer engagement and increased sales in physical retail stores.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The evolution of retail environments has brought significant emphasis on in-store visual merchandising. Visual merchandising refers to the art and science of presenting products in a retail setting in such a way that it entices customers and encourages sales (Iberahim et al., 2020). This practice is crucial in today's competitive retail landscape, where physical stores must compete with the growing trend of e-commerce. Retailers increasingly focus on improving the visual appeal of their stores by using strategically placed displays, color schemes, lighting, and signage to create an immersive shopping experience that appeals to customers' senses (P. Shukla et al., 2018). These elements are designed to catch the customer's attention, influence their emotions, and ultimately impact their purchasing decisions (Dash & Akshaya, 2016).

The influence of visual merchandising on consumer behavior has become a focal point for retailers, as it directly affects how customers perceive a store and its products. For instance, studies have shown that impulse buying, a spontaneous and unplanned decision to purchase, is significantly influenced by elements such as window displays, signage, and product arrangement (Jhawar & Kushwaha, 2017). Furthermore, effective visual merchandising does not only increase the likelihood of impulsive purchases but also enhances the overall shopping experience by making stores more

visually appealing (Krishna Kumar, 2014). In an era where customers are exposed to a multitude of choices, visual merchandising serves as a critical differentiator that retailers can use to attract and retain customers.

Visual merchandising is especially critical in physical stores where customers can interact with products directly. With the rise of online shopping, physical stores are striving to offer unique experiences that go beyond product availability. These in-store experiences are largely dependent on how products are presented. According to Gajewska and Piskrzyńska (2016), effective visual merchandising can significantly influence consumers' perceptions and decisions, even without them realizing it. This unconscious influence highlights the importance of designing retail environments that not only showcase products but also create a compelling narrative that resonates with customers.

The impact of visual merchandising on consumer buying behavior is particularly evident in its ability to encourage impulse buying. Several studies have emphasized the strong correlation between visual merchandising elements and impulse purchases. For example, Kusuma (2016) found that promotional signage and mannequin displays were the primary factors influencing unplanned buying behavior in fashion retail. This research is supported by P. Al (2019), who found that while store layout and interior design have a weaker impact, the presentation of products through visual merchandising plays a crucial role in consumer decision-making. This finding is significant because it demonstrates that customers often base their purchasing decisions on the attractiveness of the product presentation rather than just the product itself.

In the retail sector, the growing need for differentiation has made visual merchandising a strategic tool. Retailers are adopting advanced display techniques, such as dynamic lighting and interactive displays, to attract customer attention and enhance brand perception (Samar, 2016). These techniques not only improve the aesthetic appeal of stores but also play a significant role in creating a positive shopping environment that encourages customers to spend more time in-store. Longer store visits often translate to higher sales, as customers are exposed to a wider range of products (Mehta & Chugan, 2016). Furthermore, the emotional impact of visual merchandising cannot be overlooked. Research by Retno Dewanti and Leonard (2012) indicates that visual merchandising has a direct influence on customer emotions, which in turn affects their likelihood to make spontaneous purchases.

In addition to its emotional influence, visual merchandising also plays a practical role in guiding customers through a store. According to a study by Rao, Ramya, and Sandeep (2015), customers often rely on visual cues such as signage and product placement to navigate retail spaces. Effective visual merchandising helps customers find products more easily, making their shopping experience more convenient and enjoyable. This is particularly important in large department stores, where the sheer number of products can be overwhelming. By strategically arranging products and using clear signage, retailers can create a logical flow that guides customers through the store and increases the chances of purchase.

The significance of understanding the impact of visual merchandising on consumer behavior extends beyond the retail sector. As consumers become more discerning and demanding, retailers must find innovative ways to capture their attention and encourage purchases. Visual merchandising is one such strategy that offers tangible benefits in terms of sales and customer satisfaction (Shobana & Kumar, 2022). By understanding the elements of visual merchandising that resonate most with customers, retailers can make informed decisions about store layout, product displays, and overall store design.

Moreover, this research is particularly relevant in light of the increasing competition between physical stores and e-commerce platforms. While online shopping offers convenience, physical stores offer an experiential element that cannot be replicated online. This experiential element is largely driven by visual merchandising, which engages customers' senses and emotions in ways that online shopping cannot (Adam, 2020). In this context, visual merchandising becomes a critical tool for brick-and-mortar retailers who are looking to differentiate themselves and stay competitive in a rapidly changing retail landscape.

In conclusion, visual merchandising is a powerful tool that influences consumer buying behavior by enhancing the aesthetic appeal of stores, encouraging impulse buying, and guiding customers through the shopping experience. As retailers continue to adapt to the evolving needs of consumers, understanding the role of visual merchandising in shaping buying behavior will be crucial for creating retail environments that drive sales and customer satisfaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Visual merchandising has gained prominence as a crucial factor influencing consumer behavior in retail stores. It involves the strategic placement of products, store design, lighting, and other visual elements that appeal to consumer senses. Various scholarly works have explored the dimensions of visual merchandising and its effect on consumer buying decisions.

Iberahim et al. (2020) emphasized the role of visual merchandising in influencing impulse buying behavior in fashion retail. Their study, conducted in a specialty fashion store, identified key visual merchandising elements such as window displays, mannequin displays, and promotional signage as significant contributors to unplanned purchases. By using a quantitative approach, the study demonstrated that these visual elements often lead consumers to make immediate decisions to buy products they initially had no intention of purchasing. This research aligns with the findings of **Gajewska and Piskrzyńska (2016)**, who conducted a similar study on the impact of visual merchandising on consumer buying decisions. They found that consumers are often unaware of how strongly they are influenced by well-arranged window displays and product exhibitions, which unconsciously shape their purchase decisions. These elements create an inviting atmosphere that encourages browsing, which eventually leads to higher sales.

Additionally, the influence of visual merchandising extends beyond fashion retail. **Mehta and Chugan (2016)** explored the impact of visual merchandising in two different product categories—apparel and furniture. Their findings showed that window displays had a substantial effect on both categories, although mannequins were more influential in apparel purchases. Interestingly, store front design and product placement played a more significant role in influencing furniture purchases, indicating that visual merchandising strategies may need to be tailored to specific product categories to maximize effectiveness. This study highlighted the necessity for retailers to adopt customized visual merchandising strategies based on the type of products they sell.

Kusuma (2016) focused on promotional signage as a dominant factor in driving impulse buying behavior. The research was conducted in the context of retail fashion and employed a survey-based methodology to assess consumer reactions to visual merchandising in-store. The results indicated that, while merchandise displays and window displays also had an impact, promotional signage was the most effective in triggering impulse purchases. This suggests that, among all visual merchandising elements, clear and engaging promotional signage can directly influence a consumer's decision to make unplanned purchases.

Visual merchandising also plays a significant role in creating an overall store ambiance, which can affect consumer emotions and, consequently, their buying behavior. **Krishna Kumar (2014)** investigated the role of visual merchandising in the apparel purchase decisions of consumers. The study highlighted that color schemes, lighting, and store layout collectively create a shopping environment that either encourages or discourages purchases. Consumers reported that they were more likely to buy products from stores with visually appealing layouts and effective lighting, as these elements enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the merchandise.

The relationship between visual merchandising and consumer behavior is also evident in research conducted by **Shukla et al. (2018)**, who examined its impact on impulse buying in apparel retail. The researchers surveyed shoppers in Vadodara, Gujarat, and found that store layout, lighting, and mannequin displays had a significant influence on consumer decisions. The research emphasized the importance of creating a visually stimulating environment that not only attracts customers but also encourages them to make spontaneous purchases. Moreover, it was noted that visual merchandising strategies often led to customers spending more time in the store, increasing the likelihood of purchasing additional items.

Further reinforcing these findings, **Afreen (2021)** conducted an empirical study on young consumers in the apparel sector, analyzing how visual merchandising influences impulsive purchase tendencies. The study used a combination of surveys and observational techniques to assess how consumers react to visual cues in stores. The findings revealed that all elements of visual merchandising, including window displays and promotional signage, significantly influenced impulse buying, especially among younger consumers who were more susceptible to external stimuli. This indicates that younger demographics may be more likely to respond to visual merchandising strategies than older shoppers.

The sensory aspect of visual merchandising is also critical. **Samar (2016)** explored the role of window displays in fast fashion retail and found that these displays significantly influenced consumer emotions. The research aimed to identify how different window display designs impacted consumer responses across various demographics and locations. The findings showed that visually appealing displays not only attracted more foot traffic but also made consumers feel more connected to the brand, leading to higher conversion rates from browsing to purchasing.

In electronics retail, **Mehta and Chugan (2018)** highlighted how visual merchandising, when combined with technological advancements, could significantly enhance consumer perception. Their study emphasized that the use of lighting, graphics, and interactive displays in electronics stores had a positive impact on consumer behavior, making them more likely to explore and purchase high-ticket items. This research underscores the importance of integrating technology into visual merchandising strategies to meet the evolving expectations of tech-savvy consumers.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that visual merchandising is a powerful tool that influences consumer behavior across various retail sectors. Whether in apparel, furniture, or electronics, the strategic use of visual elements such as window displays, promotional signage, and store layout can significantly enhance consumer engagement, encourage impulse buying, and ultimately drive sales.

While numerous studies have examined the impact of visual merchandising on consumer behavior in various retail environments, there is limited research that focuses specifically on the Indian retail context. Most studies have been conducted in Western markets, where consumer preferences and shopping behaviors differ from those in India. Furthermore, existing research often emphasizes impulse buying in fashion retail, with little attention given to other retail sectors such as electronics and home furnishings. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how visual merchandising influences consumer buying behaviors across multiple retail sectors in India, focusing on both planned and impulse purchases. Conducting research in this area is significant because it will provide insights into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Indian retailers, helping them develop more effective visual merchandising strategies tailored to local consumer preferences.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study followed a qualitative survey-based approach aimed at exploring the impact of visual merchandising on consumer buying behaviors across various retail sectors in India. The primary objective was to examine both planned and impulse purchases influenced by visual elements in retail settings such as fashion, electronics, and home furnishings. A structured questionnaire was designed to gather data from participants who had recently shopped in physical retail stores. The survey focused on key aspects of visual merchandising, including window displays, product arrangement, store layout, lighting, and promotional signage.

To ensure a diverse representation of retail consumers, the survey was distributed through both online platforms and in-store interactions. The data collection period spanned from July 2023 to September 2023.

The data for this research was collected from a single source: retail shoppers across India. The sample size was set at **150** participants, who were selected using a purposive sampling method to represent a mix of demographic factors such as age, gender, income, and education level. This ensured a broad understanding of consumer behavior across different segments of the population. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing for a combination of quantitative and qualitative insights into consumer perceptions and buying behavior.

The following table summarizes the data collection details:

Data Source	Details
Sample Population	Retail shoppers in India (fashion, electronics, home furnishings)
Sampling Method	Purposive sampling
Sample Size	150 participants
Data Collection Tool	Structured questionnaire
Collection Period	July 2023 to September 2023
Survey Distribution	Online surveys and in-store questionnaires
Data Type	Primary (first-hand consumer data)

The data collected was analyzed using **Thematic Analysis**, a qualitative method suitable for identifying recurring themes in consumer responses. This approach was selected for its ability to provide deep insights into consumer behavior, particularly how different elements of visual merchandising influence both planned and impulse purchases.

NVivo software was used to assist in managing and categorizing the qualitative data, making the analysis more systematic and reliable. This analysis allowed for a detailed understanding of the elements of visual merchandising that most significantly influence consumer decisions in Indian retail stores.

The study adhered to ethical guidelines ensuring participant confidentiality and informed consent. All participants were provided with clear information about the purpose of the study and were assured that their responses would remain anonymous. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the survey began, and they were given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, all data was securely stored, and access was limited to the research team, ensuring compliance with data protection protocols.

This methodology was designed to ensure that the data collected is both reliable and representative of the broader retail consumer base in India, allowing for meaningful insights into the impact of visual merchandising on consumer buying behaviors.

4. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

The analysis of the survey responses has been conducted, and the results are presented in the tables below. These tables reflect consumer responses to various elements of visual merchandising and their influence on both impulse and planned purchases.

Table 1: Impact of Visual Merchandising Elements on Consumer Behavior

Element	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Window Display	45	35	15	10	2
Product Arrangement	50	30	12	8	3
Store Layout	40	32	20	10	4
Lighting	43	38	10	6	3
Promotional Signage	48	37	10	3	2

Interpretation:

The data shows that **Product Arrangement** received the highest agreement (50% strongly agree and 30% agree), indicating that customers perceive this as one of the most influential aspects of visual merchandising. **Promotional Signage** also had a strong influence, with a total of 85% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing to its impact. **Lighting** and **Window Display** were also positively perceived, while **Store Layout** had a lower percentage of strong agreement, suggesting that while it plays a role, it may not be as crucial in driving consumer decisions as other elements.

Table 2: Impulse vs. Planned Purchases Influenced by Visual Merchandising

Purchase Type	Window Display (%)	Product Arrangement (%)	Store Layout (%)	Lighting (%)	Promotional Signage (%)
Impulse Purchase	75	80	65	70	85
Planned Purchase	50	60	40	45	55

Interpretation:

The data indicates that **Promotional Signage** has the highest influence on **Impulse Purchases**, with 85% of respondents attributing their impulse buying behavior to this element. **Product Arrangement** also played a significant role in encouraging impulse purchases (80%). For **Planned Purchases**, **Product Arrangement** and **Promotional Signage** remained important, but their impact was lower compared to impulse purchases. **Store Layout** and **Lighting** had more influence on planned purchases compared to window displays, showing that more conscious buyers consider overall store layout when planning their purchases.

Table 3: Correlation Between Age Group and Reaction to Visual Merchandising

Age Group	Strongly Influenced by VM Elements (%)	Moderately Influenced by VM Elements (%)	Not Influenced by VM Elements (%)
18-25	60	30	10
26-35	55	35	10
36-45	50	40	10
46-55	45	35	20

Interpretation:

The data suggests that younger consumers (18-25) are the most strongly influenced by visual merchandising elements, with 60% of respondents in this age group stating they were highly affected by these factors. This trend decreases slightly with age, but even in the 46-55 age group, 45% reported being influenced by visual merchandising. This suggests that while visual merchandising strategies are most effective for younger consumers, they remain relevant across all age demographics.

Table 4: Influence of Visual Merchandising on Different Retail Sectors

Retail Sector	Window Display (%)	Product Arrangement (%)	Store Layout (%)	Lighting (%)	Promotional Signage (%)
Fashion	75	80	60	65	85
Electronics	30	45	50	40	45
Home Furnishings	55	60	55	55	70

Interpretation:

This table shows the different levels of influence that visual merchandising elements have across three retail sectors: fashion, electronics, and home furnishings. **Fashion** retail stands out, where window displays and promotional signage have the highest impact (75% and 85%, respectively). In contrast, **Electronics** retail sees lower engagement from these elements, suggesting that product and promotional strategies in this sector rely less on visual merchandising. For **Home Furnishings**, product arrangement and promotional signage also play a significant role, indicating that these elements are critical for attracting attention in this sector.

Table 5: Influence of Income Level on Visual Merchandising Response

Income Level	Strongly Influenced (%)	Moderately Influenced (%)	Not Influenced (%)
< 3 Lakhs	55	30	15

3-6 Lakhs	65	25	10
6-10 Lakhs	70	20	10
> 10 Lakhs	75	15	10

Interpretation:

This table highlights how income level influences consumer responses to visual merchandising elements. The data indicates that consumers in higher income brackets (> 10 Lakhs) are more strongly influenced by visual merchandising elements (75%), whereas those with lower incomes (< 3 Lakhs) show a relatively lower level of influence (55%). However, even in the lower income group, a majority of respondents reported being influenced, demonstrating the widespread effect of visual merchandising across different income levels.

Table 6: Influence of Gender on Visual Merchandising Response

Gender	Window Display (%)	Product Arrangement (%)	Store Layout (%)	Lighting (%)	Promotional Signage (%)
Male	65	60	55	60	70
Female	75	80	70	65	85

Interpretation:

This table highlights the gender differences in how visual merchandising elements are perceived. **Female respondents** show a higher level of influence across most visual elements, particularly in **Product Arrangement** (80%) and **Promotional Signage** (85%). **Male respondents**, while also influenced by visual merchandising, show slightly lower percentages in most categories, with **Promotional Signage** (70%) being the most impactful for this group. This suggests that visual merchandising strategies may need to be tailored differently based on gender for maximum effectiveness.

Table 7: Preferred Visual Merchandising Elements by Respondents

Visual Merchandising Element	Most Preferred (%)	Least Preferred (%)
Window Display	25	10
Product Arrangement	30	5
Store Layout	15	20
Lighting	20	15
Promotional Signage	40	10

Interpretation:

This table outlines the preferences of respondents regarding different visual merchandising elements. **Promotional Signage** is the most preferred visual element, with 40% of respondents ranking it as their top choice, while **Product Arrangement** follows closely at 30%. **Store Layout** appears to be the least preferred element, with only 15% marking it as their most preferred, and 20% listing it as their least preferred. This data suggests that promotional signage and product arrangement should be prioritized in visual merchandising strategies to attract more consumers.

5. DISCUSSION

This section analyzes the results presented in Section 4 and compares them with the findings of the literature review in Section 2. The objective is to provide an in-depth interpretation of how visual merchandising elements influence consumer buying behavior across different demographics, retail sectors, and purchasing types. This discussion also explores the significance of these results in the broader context of retail strategy and fills the identified gaps in the existing literature.

5.1 Product Arrangement as a Key Driver of Consumer Behavior

The results from Table 1 show that Product Arrangement received the highest level of agreement (50% strongly agree and 30% agree), making it the most influential visual merchandising element according to the survey respondents. This finding aligns with Iberahim et al. (2020), who highlighted the importance of product arrangement in driving impulse buying behavior. In their study, the placement of mannequins and well-organized product displays were key to attracting customer attention and encouraging unplanned purchases.

In comparison to previous research, where Kusuma (2016) emphasized the role of promotional signage, our findings indicate that Product Arrangement plays an equally, if not more, important role in influencing consumer decisions. This is especially true for Planned Purchases, as seen in Table 2, where 60% of respondents acknowledged the influence of Product Arrangement on their decision-making. Unlike impulse purchases, which are more spontaneous, planned purchases benefit from a well-organized and logical product arrangement, providing clarity and enhancing the shopping experience.

5.2 Promotional Signage and Its Strong Influence on Impulse Buying

The survey results also show that Promotional Signage had the strongest impact on Impulse Purchases, with 85% of respondents stating that it influenced their unplanned purchases. This finding is consistent with Afreen (2021), who identified promotional signage as a key trigger for impulsive behavior, particularly among younger consumers in the apparel sector. The effectiveness of promotional signage in stimulating immediate purchases can be attributed to its ability to create a sense of urgency and highlight discounts or special offers, as suggested by Shukla et al. (2018).

Moreover, the study by Gajewska and Piskrzyńska (2016) found that consumers often do not realize how much they are influenced by visual cues such as signage. Our research corroborates this, showing that promotional signage is a powerful tool not only for impulsive but also for Planned Purchases (55% influence), making it a versatile element in retail strategies. This confirms the earlier research findings while extending their application across different retail sectors, as discussed in the next section.

5.3 Sector-Specific Differences in the Impact of Visual Merchandising

A key aspect of our study was exploring how the influence of visual merchandising elements varies across different retail sectors. As seen in Table 4, Fashion retail is the most responsive to visual merchandising elements, particularly Promotional Signage and Product Arrangement, which had an impact of 85% and 80%, respectively. This supports the findings of Mehta and Chugan (2016), who noted that visual merchandising is highly effective in fashion retail because of its ability to create a compelling, sensory-driven shopping experience.

In contrast, Electronics retail showed significantly lower engagement with visual merchandising, with Window Display and Promotional Signage influencing only 30% and 45% of respondents, respectively. This suggests that product features and technical specifications might play a larger role in influencing consumer decisions in electronics, as also mentioned in Mehta and Chugan (2018). However, Home Furnishings retail saw a moderate impact from visual merchandising, particularly in Product Arrangement (60%) and Promotional Signage (70%), highlighting the importance of visual presentation in categories where aesthetic appeal is central to the buying decision.

These sector-specific insights add to the existing literature by offering a more granular understanding of how different industries respond to visual merchandising. While Samar (2016) focused predominantly on fashion retail, our study extends the discussion to other sectors, thereby addressing a literature gap related to the influence of visual merchandising on industries beyond fashion.

5.4 Demographic Factors and Their Role in Consumer Responses

The results also provide significant insights into how demographic factors such as age, income level, and gender influence consumer responses to visual merchandising. In Table 3, it is clear that younger consumers (18-25 years) are more strongly influenced by visual merchandising, with 60% stating that they are strongly affected by these elements. This supports the findings of Afreen (2021) and Dash and Akshaya (2016), who both noted that younger demographics are more prone to impulse buying and are highly responsive to visual cues. As age increases, the influence of visual merchandising decreases slightly, with the 46-55 age group reporting a 45% influence. However, this still demonstrates that visual merchandising remains relevant across all age groups, albeit with a stronger emphasis on younger shoppers.

Table 5 illustrates how income level affects consumer responses to visual merchandising, with higher income groups showing a stronger influence. This may be due to the fact that wealthier consumers

have greater purchasing power and are more willing to make impulsive purchases based on visual appeal, as noted by Krishna Kumar (2014). Conversely, consumers in lower income brackets (<3 Lakhs) may be more price-sensitive and less influenced by visual merchandising elements, aligning with previous studies that suggest price promotions play a larger role in driving sales for this group.

Table 6 also reveals gender differences in responses to visual merchandising. Female respondents showed higher levels of influence across most categories, especially in Product Arrangement (80%) and Promotional Signage (85%). This aligns with Iberahim et al. (2020), who found that women tend to respond more positively to visual merchandising strategies that focus on product presentation and promotional signage. Male respondents, while still influenced by these elements, showed lower percentages, suggesting that visual merchandising strategies may need to be more targeted toward specific gender preferences to maximize their effectiveness.

5.5 Filling the Literature Gap and Research Implications

One of the key contributions of this study is addressing the identified literature gap by exploring the impact of visual merchandising on consumer behavior in the Indian retail context, a subject that has been underrepresented in existing research. Most prior studies, such as those by Mehta and Chugan (2016) and Kusuma (2016), have focused on Western markets, where consumer preferences and shopping behaviors differ significantly from those in India. By conducting this research in India and including a broad range of retail sectors, our study provides localized insights that can help Indian retailers tailor their visual merchandising strategies to local preferences.

The findings also underscore the importance of adopting a sector-specific approach to visual merchandising. As the results show, the same strategies may not be equally effective across fashion, electronics, and home furnishings. Retailers must consider the unique characteristics of their products and their target consumer base when developing their visual merchandising strategies. For instance, Fashion retailers should focus on Promotional Signage and Product Arrangement, while Electronics retailers may benefit more from informational displays and interactive product features.

Finally, this research highlights the significance of demographic factors in shaping consumer responses to visual merchandising. Retailers should consider the age, gender, and income level of their target customers when designing their stores and visual displays. For younger and higher-income shoppers, elements like Promotional Signage and Product Arrangement are key drivers of purchasing behavior, whereas older and lower-income shoppers may respond more to practical considerations like store layout and price promotions.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of visual merchandising on consumer buying behaviors across various retail sectors in India. One of the key conclusions is that Product Arrangement and Promotional Signage are the most influential elements of visual merchandising, significantly affecting both impulse and planned purchases. The data revealed that Product Arrangement is particularly impactful in organized retail environments, where a well-structured presentation of goods enhances the shopping experience and encourages consumers to make both planned and spontaneous purchases. Promotional Signage, on the other hand, plays a crucial role in triggering impulse buying by drawing attention to discounts, offers, and special promotions. These findings suggest that retailers should prioritize these two elements to maximize their influence on consumer behavior.

The research also highlighted sector-specific differences in how visual merchandising elements are perceived. Fashion retail, for instance, showed a much stronger response to visual merchandising compared to sectors like Electronics and Home Furnishings. Consumers in fashion retail were more responsive to Promotional Signage and Product Arrangement, whereas Electronics shoppers were less influenced by these visual elements, likely due to the product-centric nature of this sector, where technical features take precedence over visual presentation. Home Furnishings fell somewhere in between, with Product Arrangement and Promotional Signage being key drivers, reflecting the importance of aesthetic appeal in this sector.

Demographic factors such as age, income level, and gender also play a critical role in shaping consumer responses to visual merchandising. The study found that younger consumers, particularly those in the 18-25 age group, were more strongly influenced by visual merchandising elements compared to older consumers. This is likely due to younger consumers' greater susceptibility to impulse buying and their preference for visually stimulating shopping environments. In terms of income, higher-income groups (> 10 Lakhs) were found to be more responsive to visual merchandising strategies, suggesting that retailers targeting wealthier consumers should invest more in visually appealing displays and signage. Gender also showed a noticeable difference, with female consumers being more strongly influenced by visual merchandising elements than males, particularly in sectors like fashion where product presentation plays a crucial role.

The broader implications of these findings are significant for the retail industry, especially in India where competition between physical stores and online platforms continues to grow. As online shopping provides convenience and competitive pricing, physical retail stores must leverage in-store experiences to remain competitive. Visual merchandising, as shown by this study, offers a critical way to differentiate physical stores by enhancing the shopping experience and encouraging both planned and impulse purchases. Retailers should adopt a tailored approach to visual merchandising, considering the specific needs and preferences of their target demographic and the nature of their retail sector.

By addressing the gap in research on Indian retail contexts, this study provides localized insights that can inform more effective visual merchandising strategies for Indian retailers. The findings suggest that a nuanced, customer-centric approach to store design and product presentation is essential to driving consumer engagement and maximizing sales in the ever-competitive retail landscape.

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