

Impact of Visual Merchandising on Consumer Behaviour towards Women Apparels in Kerala State

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ABSTRACT

Visual merchandising is vital to improving the sales of women's apparel, especially in the current scenario. The main purpose of this study is to identify the correlation, relationship, and influence of visual merchandising on sales and customer purchasing behaviour. This research study has been carried out in Kerala State, India. A total of 150 respondents were selected through the random sampling method. Simple percentage analysis has been used to identify the respondent's profile, and a simple linear regression method has been used to predict the sales impact of visual merchandising. This study will provide more insights to garment factory owners, shop owners, and the retail industry, which will be helpful in defining strategies for their businesses. The regression line equation: $\hat{Y} = 12.1105 + 0.6771X$ is derived from the statistical result, and it shows that the regression line slope: $b_1=0.6771$ CI [-3.0052, 4.3594] means that when you increase the purchasing behaviour of women by 1, the value of the visual merchandise impact on sales increases by 0.6771. The y-intercept: $b_0=12.1105$ CI [-130.2426, 154.4636] means that when Purchasing Behaviour of Women equals 0, the prediction of Visual-Merchandising Impact on Sales's value is 12.1105. The x-intercept equals -17.887. This study's results are limited to Kerala State only. It might differ from region to region and country to country. There is further research scope in this subject to explore how the sales percentage varies with respect to year on year with changes in apparel models, sizes, nuance, trends, fashions for different age groups, etc.

Keywords: Visual Merchandising; Customer behaviour; Women Apparels.

Introduction

Visual merchandising is vital to improving the sales of women's apparel, especially in the current scenario. The findings of a preliminary inquiry into "visual merchandising" and its impacts on consumer behaviour and brand awareness are presented in earlier studies. Concessionary-branded female fashion lines are being offered within a department shop. According to the findings, aesthetics themes were most significantly associated with products which attracts customer to carried out purchases. According to preliminary research, enjoying the display increases the likelihood of purchase by four times but does not completely decide it (Kerfoot, S., Davies, B., & Ward, P., 2003). In addition to examining impulsive buying, parasocial contact, television exposure, and exposure to television shopping programmes among television clothing consumers, the study intends to examine impulsivity as a reason for television apparel shopping. Four broad categories of motivations for watching television advertisements for clothing were

identified through content analysis. These categories show a positive correlation between exposure to television advertising and impulse buying, a positive correlation between impulse buying and parasocial interaction, and positive correlations between parasocial interaction and both television exposure and television shopping exposure (Park, J. H., & Lennon, S. J., 2004).

Research is being conducted to examine how 32 garment e-tailers are currently using visual merchandising. Content analysis was used to examine these online retailers of clothing and found that using online visual merchandising approaches will be useful (Khakimdjanova, L., & Park, J., 2005). Other research studies focus on different strategies by comparing and analysing one's job scope and performance level in the fashion merchandising process according to the brand types in which one is involved. This research seeks to define the role of a domestic fashion designer (Lee, E. A., & Kwon, H. S., 2006). Another research finding showed that many offline visual merchandising (VMD) aspects have been adapted for online use. Additionally, several VMD features of online clothing retailers have no corresponding offline equivalent. Researchers can utilise the taxonomy of VMD cues to carefully explore the impact of the signals that follow the SOR Model (Ha, Y., Kwon, W. S., & Lennon, S. J., 2007).

Further research Results revealed that when female consumers evaluate the quality of garment goods at the decision-making stage, the sensory, emotional, and cognitive elements of the aesthetic experience play a significant role. These aesthetic qualities are a result of the product's design and materials. The essential aesthetic sensations are brought about primarily by colour and texture (De Klerk, H. M., & Lubbe, S., 2008). Another study compared the practices of online clothing retailers in China and Korea, and the findings revealed that there are 8 online visual merchandising factors that should be considered: convenience, product presence, product information, service, interest, participation, aesthetics, and fitness. The online visual merchandising practices of clothing retail stores between Korea and China varied significantly across all 8 parameters (Park, H. H., Li, Q., & Jeon, J. O., 2009). Another study looked at how distinct online visual merchandising (VMD) cues, including high-and low-task relevant signals, affected customer gratification and arousal in light of differing situational involvements (browsing vs. purchasing). The study's findings showed that strong task-relevant signals had a substantial impact on pleasure and arousal in situations with high situational engagement (such as when making a purchase). Additionally, it was discovered that low situational participation (browsing scenario) signals had a substantial impact on enjoyment and arousal. Consumer happiness, purchase intention, and approach behaviour were all positively correlated with pleasure and arousal brought on by various online VMD signals (Ha, Y., & Lennon, S. J., 2010).

According to another study, 3D virtual models dramatically lessen perceived danger for the four aspects of clothing compared to 2D photos. Particularly when their bodies accurately reflect a customer's real body form, they are beneficial at lowering perceived risk regarding clothing fit (Shim, S., & Lee, Y., 2011). The outcome demonstrates that women's purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by clothing shown on mannequins inside stores and in show windows (Jain, V., Sharma, A., & Narwal, P., 2012).

Literature Review

The area of virtual merchandise is expanding quickly as Indian retail becomes more prominent on a national and international scale. Each sector of the fashion business is forced to use visual marketing to increase the attractiveness of items due to today's intense rivalry and similarity of goods. Retailers of clothing, in particular, retailers may assist customers in finding the proper items to improve the sale against the competitors (Madhavi, S., & Leelavati, T. S., 2013). Another study's findings support the notion that window displays, in-store forms/mannequins, and promotional signs all have a significant impact on Iranian young adult females' impulse purchase behaviour. The results help merchants understand the nature of impulsive purchase behaviour and the variables, including visual merchandising, that might affect the impulsive buying behaviours of consumers (Moayery, M., Zamani, S., & Vazifehdooost, H., 2014).

In-fashion, beauty, and function are the three aspects of visual merchandising cognition, according to another study using confirmatory factor analysis. The visual qualities of a brand are considerably influenced positively by being in style and beautiful. Function substantially improves the utilitarian characteristics of a brand. Positive brand attitudes that are favourably correlated with purchase intentions immediately translate to positive brand attitudes towards visual merchandising (Park, H. H., Jeon, J. O., & Sullivan, P., 2015).

According to rank analysis, some studies also found that "promotional signage" is the major factor that affects visual merchandising, while "customer attractiveness" receives top rank through majority over responses. According to the results of the current study, visual merchandising has a favourable effect on consumers' impulse buying tendencies in organised retail outlets. If visual merchandising is successful in retail establishments, impulse buying will subsequently increase (Kaur, A., & Jain, R., 2016). Some findings showed that respondents were knowledgeable about specific VMDs both outside and within stores, while other VMDs were thought to be inappropriate for their area of work. This means that all of the respondents who were contacted on the ground concurred with certain assertions made by existing theories on the use of VMDs and their function in promoting clothes in retail stores (Ofori-Okyere, I., & Kweku, S. A., 2016). Another study looks out at the factors that attract customers to improve the intention over purchase of apparel through strategies (Randhawa, K., & Saluja, R. 2017). The merchants are implementing appealing shop designs and retail layouts employing visual merchandising techniques including beautiful packaging, attention-grabbing displays, and strategic placement of advertising signage inside the store. Visual merchandising is increasingly taken into account when making strategic marketing decisions to boost store traffic and sales. Another empirical research study looks at the effects of several visual merchandising elements on impulsive purchasing in Vadodara (Shukla, P. S., Vyas, P. H., & Pandya, M. N., 2018).

The contribution that other research studies provide to the creation of tactical visual merchandising components that can be incorporated into the retail strategies of clothing merchants is what gives them worth. By using visual merchandising features, designers and planners may increase their visual merchandising expertise and, as a result, have a bigger influence on the layout and design of existing stores as well as when creating new ones (Cant, M. C., & Wiid, J. A., 2020). Visual merchandising was introduced in the clothing retailing industry, and persistent alterations are what characterise fashion. The small-scale garment industry has seen tremendous advancements throughout the years. Instead of being profit-centred, it has changed to be consumer-centred. The majority of retailing sectors use visual merchandising tactics to draw in customers. The latest trends change quickly as well. New trends are occasionally introduced to the market. Retailers now face competition as a result. Due to the intense rivalry in today's market, retailers are required to use a variety of visual merchandising techniques to increase consumer desire for clothing goods while also introducing new products to the market (Rahman, M. M., Alam, M. A., Helal, M. M., Biswas, J., & Chowdhury, I., 2021). According to a study, some visual marketing aspects, such as displays and photos, colours, pricing, and celebrity endorsements, have been shown to have a favourable impact on customers' purchasing decisions. The most effective visual merchandising elements in clothing stores were found to be their prices, while the least effective ones were celebrity endorsements. It was also discovered that gender and age do not significantly affect consumers' preferences for visual merchandising elements or their purchasing behaviour (Jelani, F., Arumugam, N., Mohamad, F., & Sulaiman, J., 2022). Chinese women's clothing and accessories have been the subject of studies in the past and present, and the underlying culture that supports this clothing and accessory production helps this emerging world in certain ways. For a better understanding of global cultural exchange, globalisation, social development, and other factors, it is critical to assess the international reputation of these types of clothing and accessories. However, this reputation is unknown, so this work aims to measure and forecast this reputation for Chinese women's clothing and accessories (Cheng, Y., Zhou, F., & Zhao, Y., 2023).

Research Gaps

Based on the earlier studies, it is understood that there are many studies already available. However, there are only a few studies that address the region-specific. Hence, this study focuses on Kerala State, India. This study will analyse customer behaviour, their interest, attractiveness, and buying tendency over visual merchandising, which will bring more perceptions to Kerala garment factory owners, Kerala shop owners, and the retail industry in Kerala, which will be helpful in defining strategies for their businesses to make more profits.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the correlation between visual merchandising impact on sales and customer purchasing behaviour.
- To identify the influence of visual merchandising on customer purchasing behaviour, construct a regression equation prediction model.

Research Methodology

The main purpose of this study is to identify the correlation, relationship, and influence of visual merchandising on sales and customer purchasing behaviour. This research study has been carried out in Kerala State, India. A total of 150 respondents were selected through the random sampling method. A structure questionnaire has been prepared based on the earlier studies and the identified research gap that needs to be addressed in this study. Data has been collected on retail stores, garment shops, shopping malls, apparel factory outlets, etc., and further analysis was carried out to interpret the results. Simple percentage analysis has been used to identify the respondent’s profile, and a simple linear regression method has been used to predict the sales impact of visual merchandising. This study will provide more insights to garment factory owners, shop owners, and the retail industry, which will be helpful in defining strategies for their businesses.

Results Summary

• **Profile of Respondents**

Table 1 indicates the profile of respondents along with their role and age group. The sample size is 150, where 22.67% of respondents fall under the 20–30 year age group, 24.67% of respondents fall under the 30–40 year age group, 24.00% of respondents fall under the 40–50 year age group, and 28.67% of respondents fall under the above 50 year age group. Out of 150 respondents, 50.00% were customers, whereas 16.67% were shop proprietors, shop employees, and sales representatives, respectively.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Age Group	N=150	% Percentage
20-30 years	34	22.67
30-40 Years	37	24.67
40-50 years	36	24.00
above 50 years	43	28.67
Respondent Profile		
Customer	75	50.00
Shop proprietor	25	16.67
Shop Employee	25	16.67
Sales representative	25	16.67

• **Linear Regression Analysis to Predict the Impact of Visual Merchandising on Sales**

Visual-Merchandising Impact on Sales and Purchasing Behaviour of Women Relationship: R-Squared (R2) equals 0.6248. This means that 62.5% of the variability of the visual merchandise impact on sales is explained by the purchasing behaviour of women. The correlation (R) equals 0.7904. This means that there is a strong direct relationship between the purchasing behaviour of women and the visual merchandise impact on sales. Figure 1 indicates the distribution and degree of freedom, along with the p and α values. Table 2 represents the results of the regression ANOVA. Figure 2 indicates the regression line fit plot, Figure 3 indicates the prediction interval between the visual merchandising impact on sales and purchasing behaviour, and Figure 4 indicates the residual histogram and Q-Q plot, whereas Figure 5 indicates the residual plot of the purchasing behaviour of women.

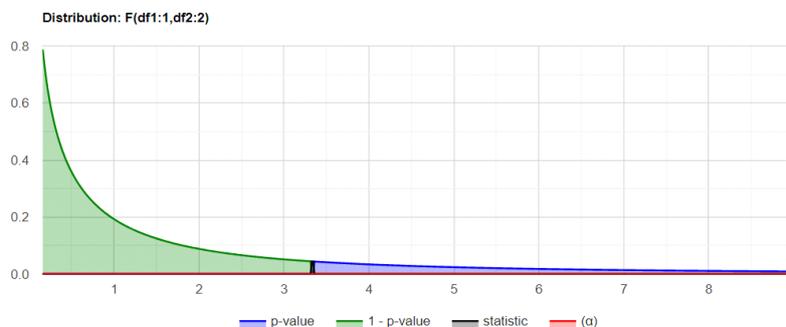


Figure 1: Degree of freedom (p value and α)

Table 2: Regression ANOVA Results

Source	DF	Sum of Square	Mean Square	F Statistic (df ₁ ,df ₂)	P-value
Regression (between \hat{y}_i and \bar{y})	1	161.8159	161.8159	3.3301 (1,2)	0.2096
Residual (between y_i and \hat{y}_i)	2	97.1841	48.5921		
Total (between y_i and \bar{y})	3	259	86.3333		

*At 1 % Significance level

Regression line equation: $\hat{Y} = 12.1105 + 0.6771X$

Where $R^2 = .62$, $F(1,2) = 3.33$, $p = .210$.

$\beta = .68$, $p = .210$, $\alpha = 12.11$, $p = .487$.

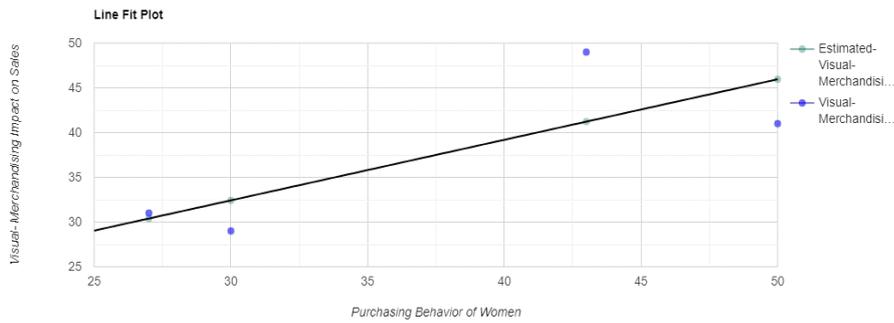


Figure 2: Regression Line fit Plot

The slope: $b_1=0.6771$ CI [-3.0052, 4.3594] means that when you increase the purchasing behaviour of women by 1, the value of the visual merchandise impact on sales increases by 0.6771. The y-intercept: $b_0=12.1105$ CI [-130.2426, 154.4636] means that when Purchasing Behaviour of Women equals 0, the prediction of Visual-Merchandising Impact on Sales's value is 12.1105. The x-intercept equals -17.887.

Figure 3: Prediction Interval between VMD Impact and Purchasing behaviour

Goodness of fit: Overall regression- right-tailed, $F(1,2) = 3.3301$, $p\text{-value} = 0.2096$. Since the $p\text{-value}$ is $\geq \alpha$ (0.01), we accept H_0 . The linear regression model, $Y = b_0 + b_1X + \epsilon$, doesn't provide a better fit than the model without the independent variable, resulting in $Y = b_0 + \epsilon$. The slope (b_1) is two-tailed, with $T(2) = 1.8249$ and a $p\text{-value}$ of 0.2096. For one predictor, it is the same as the $p\text{-value}$ for the overall model. The y-intercept (b_0) is two-tailed, with $T(2) = 0.8443$ and a $p\text{-value}$ of 0.4874. Hence, b_0 is not significantly different from zero. It is still most likely recommended not to force b_0 to be zero.

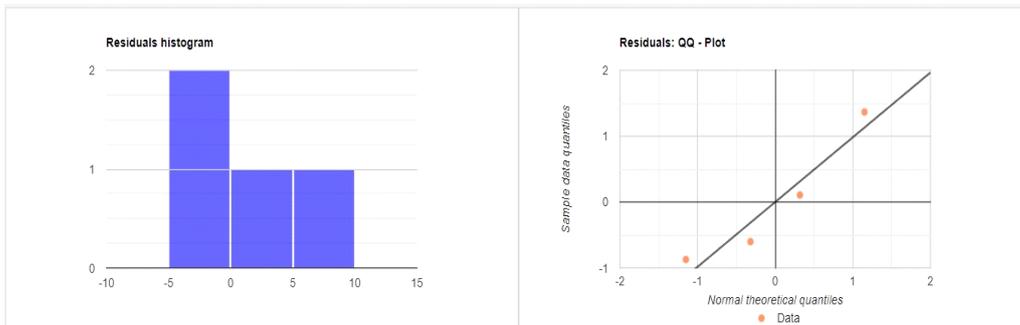


Figure 4: Residuals Histogram and Q-Q Plot

Residual normality: The linear regression model assumes normality for residual errors. The Shapiro-Wilk p-value equals 0.705. It is assumed that the data is normally distributed. Outliers: The data does not contain any outliers.

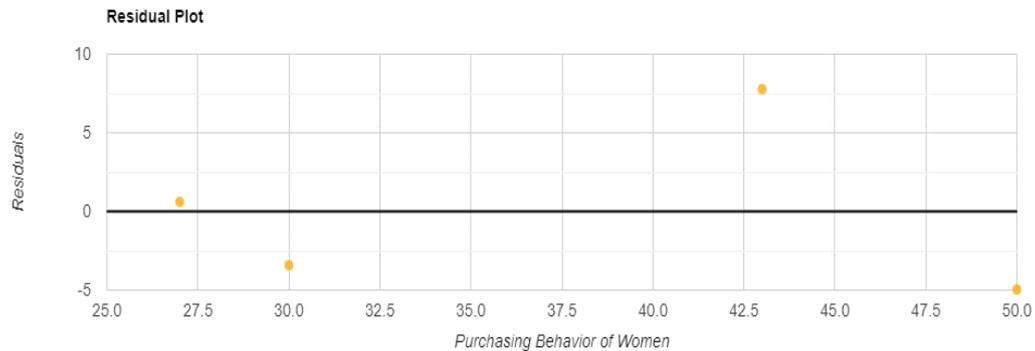


Figure 5: Residual plot Purchasing behaviour of women

Discussions

The results of certain research studies highlighted a number of topics, including sustainability concerns in the textile and apparel (T&A) industry, enhanced value generation methods with cutting-edge BI solutions, and perceived challenges in the adoption of BIS. Because garment firms are more likely to combine Industry 4.0 technology with cutting-edge business intelligence (BI) solutions, the apparel retail industry has seen significant advancements. The findings demonstrate the critical role that economic sustainability plays in T&A enterprises' adoption of BIS and Industry 4.0 technologies (Ahmad, S., Miskon, S., Alabdan, R., & Tlili, I., 2020). Seven advanced digital fashions (ADFs) and 34 luxury brands that joined Luxury Stores by the end of the first half of 2021 were the subjects of an empirical analysis that used a techno-economic analysis, analogical evidence approach, literature review, and SWOT analysis (Watanabe, C., Akhtar, W., Tou, Y., & Neittaanmäki, P., 2021). According to other research, there is a strong and positive correlation between store layout and consumers' inclination to buy. Then, a favourable and substantial correlation between product presentation and customer purchase intent is discovered. Additionally, a favourable and strong correlation between colour and illumination and consumers' inclination to buy has been discovered. Furthermore, there is little evidence of a strong correlation between cleanliness and consumers' inclination to buy (Mondol, Edward Probir, et al., 2021). Another study suggests that theme presentation, which came in at the top with a weighted mean score for the visual merchandising criteria, is the most important one. With a weighted mean score, visual merchandising, which comprises techniques for drawing clients into a store to increase foot traffic, was voted top by respondents. About 25% of merchants were motivated by specific websites, followed by about 35% who were motivated by their prior experiences. The majority of respondents thought that visual merchandising initiatives increased customer foot traffic, which increased sales turnover at the retail establishment (Kaur, K., & Saini, H. K., 2022). The development of size-inclusive garment design has the potential to be supported by cutting-edge computer-aided design tools, but little design study has been done to outline these tools' potential uses. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study sought to understand the demands of plus-size women and include 3D prototyping to improve plus-size clothing design. With the combination of 3D prototyping and the functional, expressive, and aesthetic (FEA) process, this study addresses the pressing need to improve clothing design for plus-size customers. This new method puts plus-size women at the centre of the model. The study's findings may also give designers and students who are less familiar with plus-size women's body types useful advice and increase their interest in designing for larger body types to encourage a sense of inclusion (Hudson, K., & Hwang, C., 2022). Some study findings suggest that virtual wardrobe marketers should emphasise technology innovation and social responsibility in their product and service offerings. Consumers may be more strategic about their clothing consumption, use, and disposal by obtaining insight into their closets (Bang, H., & Su, J., 2022).

As retail companies, particularly fashion labels, attempt to compete in a market that is already crowded, visual merchandising becomes a crucial differentiator from merchants in the same sector. Today, successful branding is essential to the success of all kinds of fashion businesses. Fashion businesses may boost profitability, foster customer brand loyalty, and generate equity by employing powerful branding strategies. For businesses to grow and get value from their consumers, visual merchandising is essential. Its main objective is now to stand out, create the right brand image, and provide the best customer experience rather than making products appealing in order to sell them quickly (Akhilendra, S. P., & Aravendan, M., 2023). The effects of "virtual try-on" technology (AR) and "3D virtual store" (VR) integrated into an apparel retail website on purchase intentions have been studied. The research emphasises the mediating role of cognitive elaboration in the process through which these technologies influence purchase intentions, and it looks at how consumers' shopping goals (searching vs. browsing) interact with the website technology and influence their responses. Additionally, for browsers rather than searchers, cognitive elaboration mediated the relationship between a technology and a shopping aim on purchase inclinations (Park, H., & Kim, S., 2023).

Adoption intention was significantly impacted by the inspiration brought on by the customization affordance in the exploratory assignment, just as Fit Confidence was. Users' pleasure with their avatar image for both scenarios had a greater impact on perceived augmentation than did the individual quality of body esteem. The research also exemplifies how TIME's Sense of Agency component may aid in theorising favourable customer reactions to mobile marketing technologies, which were in this case triggered by the Mix and Match function of the app. Additionally, it was shown that body-image emotional judgements made during the pre-task VTO avatar construction phase might have an impact on perceived augmentation (Tawira, L., & Ivanov, A., 2023).

Conclusion

Visual merchandising is vital to improving the sales of women's apparel, especially in the current scenario. Further, this study also proves there is a strong direct relationship between the purchasing behaviour of women and the visual merchandise impact on sales. Virtual reality-based apparel modelling and showing how the apparel suits the customer through body image scanning are the current trends in visual merchandising. Similarly, online-based visual merchandising also brings the cost benefit of advertising models to garment shop owners for marketing their products. This study's results are limited to Kerala State only. It might differ from region to region and country to country. There is further research scope in this subject to explore how the sales percentage varies with respect to year on year with changes in apparel models, sizes, nuance, trends, fashions for different age groups, etc.

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