

## **Examining The Key Determinants Of Visual Merchandising In Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Study of Men's Apparel Brands**

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**Abstract:** *The hyperbolic cut-throat competition prevailing in the present scenario have made the life of the retailers cumbersome than ever. Myriad retailers are offering merchandise similar to each other causing the retailers to use visual merchandising in order to dissimilate their offerings from other retailers, sometimes making their standards inimitable that customers are easily intrigued by. In this era of unflinching advancements, which is transient than ever before, it has been observed that the customers are mired in a labyrinth as they are buoyed by the uncanny developments in visual merchandising. The objective of this research study is to find out the impact and relationship of visual merchandising on buying behaviour of the consumers and investigating the vital determinants of visual merchandising that have the highest impact on such behaviour. The findings bring out the different determinants of visual merchandising that influence consumer buying behaviour. This research is helpful as it also provides valuable insights as to how customers could be influenced by different combinations of visual merchandising.*

**Keywords:** *Visual Merchandising; Impulse Buying Behaviour; Window Display; In-Store Layout/Mannequin Display; Floor Merchandising; Promotional Signage; Cross Merchandising.*

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### **I. Introduction to the study**

#### **1.1 Growth of organized retail sector in India**

The genesis of retailing can be traced back to centuries when the then popular Barter system prevailed, where the exchange of goods took place. Then it was some other retail formats like 'haats', 'mandis' and 'melas' in the Indian landscape during the Medieval period. It was at the flustered era of independence in 1947, when the Indian economy hit a nadir and was abysmally subdued, that saw the baptism of many multipurpose departmental stores which had a proclivity for fulfilling human needs by providing convenient buying near the doorstep of the consumers. The need of the situation at this time was access to a wide array of goods under one roof that saw the kirana stores (mom and pop stores) form the basis for the emergence of retail in India, thereby fostering the advent of organized retail stores in India. Since then, the Indian retail sectors have gone wholesome transformation which is indeed baffling. In the contemporary panorama, we have witnessed an incredulous escalation in globalization and metamorphic consumption patterns in India, which bears a strong testimony to the astounding growth saga of organized retail sectors in India which is quite surreal. The transient attitudes and shopping orientation of Indian consumers accentuated the retail revolution embarking a new dawn in the history of Indian retailing. This saw the dominance of petite bourgeoisie having a penchant for more convenient style of shopping, better quality products and an 'all-in-one' store. This has propelled the growth of multi-storied malls, shopping centres and sprawling complexes not only in metropolitan cities but also in tier-II cities in India. These retail stores are offering food, shopping and entertainment all under the same roof where consumers are basking in. Indian retail industry has bolstered over the years, albeit being fragmented. As per BMI India retail report of 2011, the total size of the market was around USD 600 billion as in 2015, registering a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 7.45% since 2000. The KPMG Report 2014 stated that retail sector was expecting a growth of USD1.3 trillion by 2020, hitting a CAGR of 7.46% between 2000 and 2015 and anticipated the overall growth of the retail sector of 12-13 per cent whose value would be INR55 trillion in 2018-19. As per the reports of research analyst at Euromonitor International in 2018, "the overall retail market in India stood at Rs. 43,251 billion and is forecast to grow by 6.4% CAGR in 2018-2023."

Market size over the past few years (US\$ billion)

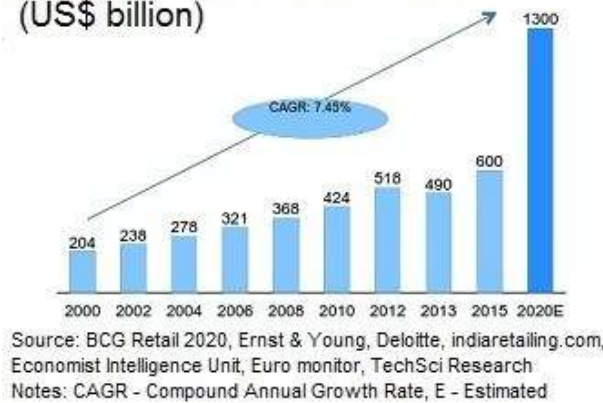


Figure 1: Market size in India over the past few years

Truth to be told, Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) in India has been a nifty driving force in India’s retail milieu. Once forbidden ownership in Indian retail vistas by the Central Government of India, FDI in India has pulled off a stunning heist after being permitted 51% of ownership in Indian multi-brand retail by the Federal Government of India in 2012. There is much hype and anticipation swirling these global retail gargantuans such as Apple, Walmart, Nike, Gucci, Tesco, Armani, etc. who are expected to play a pivotal role in bolstering the Indian retail sector.

1.2 Organized versus Unorganized retail sector in India

Granted the fact, the juggernaut of organized retailing in India is making deep inroads and emerging as a powerful fulcrum of retailing in India, which itself forms one of the backbones of the Indian economy. But, that does not undermine the efficacy of unorganized retail sector which is still predominant in India showing no signs of waning. We all know that the Indian retail sector is fragmented and highly unorganized. Unorganized retailing refers to the “traditional forms of cheap priced retailing taking the shape of local kirana shops, general stores, paan-beedi shops, convenience store, footwear shops, apparel shops, hand cart hawkers and pavement vendors which dominates the Indian retail sector.” Retailing in unorganized sector is actually non-profit vocation. It is seen as a source of livelihood requiring miniscule investment in capital and rudimentary infrastructure. As per a survey conducted by AT Kearney, a exhilarating Rs. 4,00,000 crore retail markets are actually unorganized in the Indian subcontinent compared to the organized sector having a proportion of Rs. 20,000 crore. As per the reports of Ernst & Young Report in 2006, the sector was said to be highly fragmented with almost 97% of its business operated by the unorganized retailers. Post liberalisation, the advent of eminent retail players like Shoppers Stop, Pantaloons, Marks & Spencer, the so called “pioneers of the organized Indian retail formats” coupled with the Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) fuelled the growth of organized retail sector thus unfolding a new chapter in the Indian retail space. As per KPMG Connect Report of 2014, almost 92% of business comes from the fragmented unorganized sector, with the rest stemming out from organized sector. Thus what we have observed is a bewildering paradigm shift in the organized retail sector, thus ameliorating its share position to 8% in 2014 juxtaposed with a paltry 3% in 2006.



Figure 2: The share market of organized and unorganized retail sector in 2006



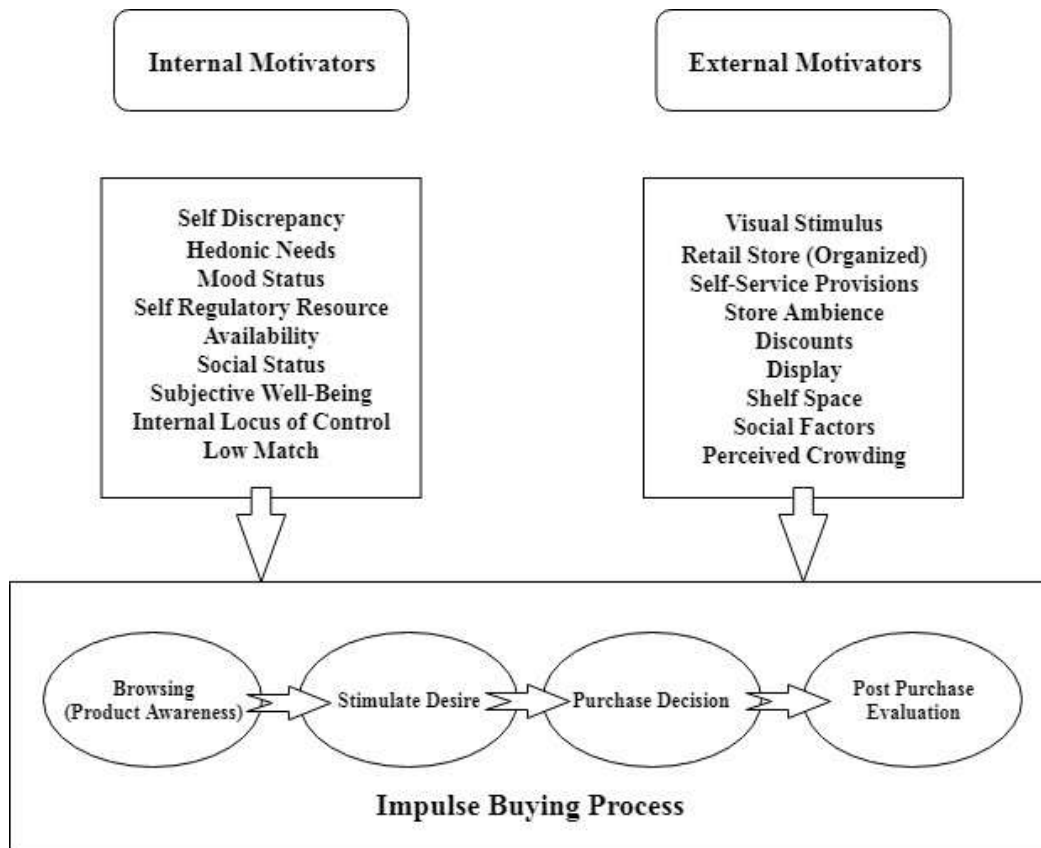
*Figure 3: The share market of organized and unorganized retail sector in 2014*

### 1.3 Visual Merchandising

In the backdrop of this preponderant hypercompetitive business era, it is indispensable that the apparel and fashion retail stores distinguish themselves by ameliorating the desirability of their products. The retailers of apparels especially lay more emphasis in differentiating their offerings from others. In order to achieve this, visual merchandising serves as a crux weapon differentiating merchandise across a plethora of apparel brands. Visual merchandising is a profession involving the display of merchandise and decor in a store that enkindles a positive store image, grabs the attention of the customers and entices such customers to buy. With the retail circa, ever transient than before the retail practitioners are lurching for better vanguard solutions for an efficient product display. The sole purpose of visual merchandising lies not only in bringing shoppers into the store but also making them procure apparels. In a nutshell, visual merchandising is the ‘crème de la crème’ of retailing. It is about the way of presenting products before the customers where the essence lies in the attraction, engagement and motivation of customers towards making a purchase provided that the decision making takes place in the subconscious mind of the consumers. Visual merchandising typically takes place in retail spaces such as stores, where it may take the conventional form of window display or intricate form of promotional signage.

### 1.4 Impulse Buying Behaviour

There was a need to comprehend impulse buying behaviour in retail stores which was first explored in the domain of marketing about five decades back. The search for a congruent definition of impulse buying behaviour by consumer psychology researchers was a much talked about conundrum. Impulse buying may be defined as “a purchase which is unplanned or otherwise spontaneous and decided on-the-spot as a result of an exposure to a stimulus. After the purchase the consumer faces an emotional and /or cognitive reaction.” One who intends to make such a purchase is an ‘impulse buyer.’ Impulse items may be anything like a sample or a new product. Taking into consideration the characteristics of impulse buying, the model developed by Gilber A. Churchill and J Paul. Peter in the year 1998 has been ameliorated by Kim in the year 2003 to better describe impulse buying. The nous steering such impulse is often enigmatic to the impulse buyers themselves. But research studies in this particular field highlighted that impulse buying process initiates with product awareness. Impulse buyers start to browse without even having any intention to buy a certain item or visiting a certain store. As they browse, in the process they start encountering stimuli, which inducts customers’ urge to purchase on impetuosity. Impulse buyers make such purchase decision as soon as they feel a purchase desire even without searching for further information or evaluating any alternatives. Such capricious customers are said to experience either positive or negative reaction via post-purchase evaluation. So, in the process, customers are provoked by both internal and external factors that trigger their impulse purchase behaviour. These factors provide information regarding new products, current trends or coordination tips. The theoretical model of impulse purchase is better described by the following diagram:



*Figure 4: Theoretical Model of Impulse Purchase by Kim (2003) and his modifications*

Myriad research studies on impulse purchases have already been conducted in major developed and developing countries. In such studies, consumer behaviour and marketing researchers have primarily emphasized on investigating the generalized factors that stimulate impulse purchases. These factors may be divided into four categories which are given below in the model.

Consumer Characteristics	Store Characteristics	Situational Factors	Product Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Mood</li> <li>• Materialism</li> <li>• Shopping Enjoyment</li> <li>• Impulse Buying Tendency</li> <li>• Self-discrepancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store Layout</li> <li>• Presence of Salesperson</li> <li>• Store Atmospheric</li> <li>• Store Type</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time</li> <li>• Money</li> <li>• The Presence of Others</li> <li>• In-store Browsing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product Category</li> <li>• Product Price</li> </ul>

*Table 1: General factors that increase impulse buying*

## II. Objectives of the study

- 1) To identify the dominant visual merchandising factors among men for apparel shopping in Kolkata by the use of Factor Analysis through Principal Component Analysis
- 2) To examine if impulse purchase are dependent on Age, Income and Occupation
- 3) To investigate if consumers procuring on impulse are influenced by Visual Merchandising
- 4) To assess into whether consumers procuring on impulse are influenced by Window Display
- 5) To probe whether if consumers procuring on impulse are influenced by In-Store form/Mannequin Displays
- 6) To examine if consumers procuring on impulse are influenced by Floor Merchandising

- 7) To analyse if consumers procuring on impulse are influenced by Promotional Signage
- 8) To find out if consumers procuring on impulse are influenced by Cross Merchandising

### **III. Theoretical Framework**

Visual Merchandising and Impulse Buying Behaviour In-store browsing might be the needed potential bridge between the internal and external factors of impulse purchases. It may be relevant as a crux factor in the process of impulse buying and a link between consumers' impulse buying behaviour and retail setting which includes interior and exterior display.

Jarboe & McDaniel in their study conducted in the year 1987 concluded that "those customers who browsed in a store made more unplanned purchases than non-browsers in a regional mall setting." The rationale behind this thought is that as a particular customer browses longer, that particular customer tends to come across more stimuli, which increases the likelihood of experiencing impulse urges. It in itself validates Stern's (1963) conceptualization of impulse buying as a response to consumer's exposure to in-store stimuli.

Bloch et al. (1989) identified in-store browsing as an internal examination of the merchandise of a retailer for purposes oriented towards recreation and information without immediate intent to buy.

The store stimuli provides the base of information for those who visit stores without any plan of what they require or what they want to buy, and once they keep their foot inside the store, they get an idea of what they might require after having a look around the store. Hence, impulse buying behaviour is the response triggered after countering with stimuli that provoke a desire which ultimately influence the customer to make an unplanned purchase.

A minute analysis of the literature review would indicate that window displays has been minimally touched upon in former studies, despite being one of the most promising and potential factors in shaping visual merchandising. Since the choice of a store by a consumer is influenced by the stores' physical beauty and the first impression about the image of the store is normally created at the facade level, it would not be unfair to recommend that window display even to the slightest of degree may influence consumer's choice of a store when they are unsure about their purpose of patronizing a particular store and making a purchase.

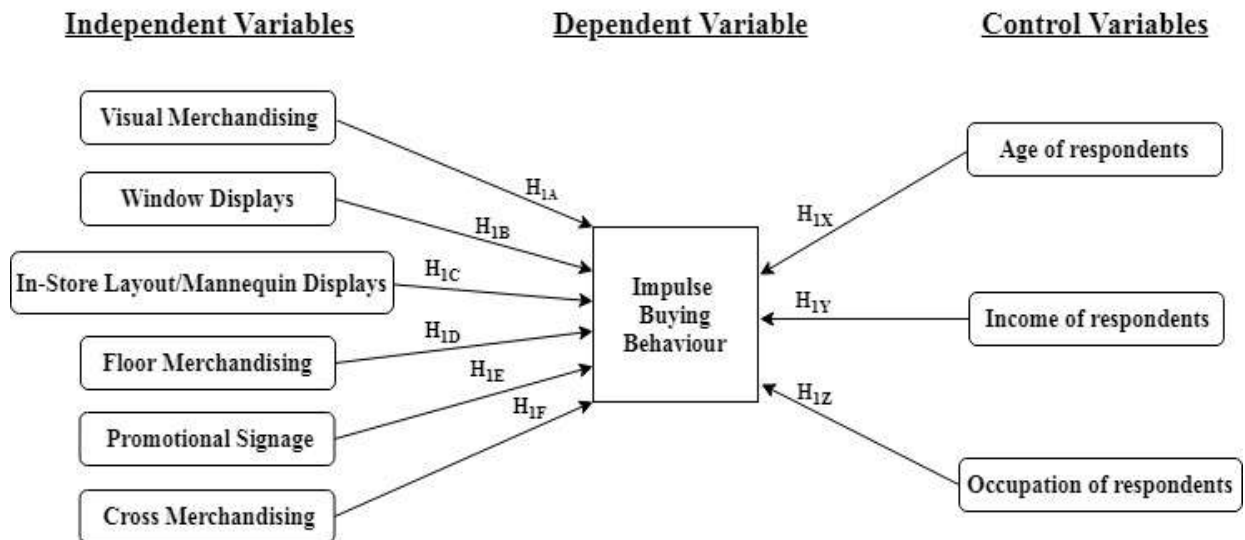
It was also evident from the literature that cross merchandising has been a grossly untouched domain. The fact that customers tend to pick up several accessories all at once simply by viewing a mannequin display or other display mechanism, speaks volumes about the efficacy of this technique. When you, as a customer wish to procure a shirt and you come across a mannequin paired up with a matching lapel, scarf, suit, socks, ties and shoes, you are led to believe that it is the ideal fashion of wearing the shirt, you end up buying all the accessories to ensure that you are dressed in the best possible manner. This efficacy has not been addressed in researches and has been overlooked by several researchers in the past.

Simply put, effective visual merchandising compels the shopper to make an impulse purchase because of the rising aspirations that it is successfully able to tap into.

### **IV. Research Model and Hypothesis Formulation**

Myriad research studies have been conducted with reference to visual merchandising, several types of visual merchandising, impulse buying and quite a few in the apparel and fashion accessories segment. Blending these keywords together, we find it extremely gruelling to come across research studies which address visual merchandising with reference to impulse purchases especially in the apparel segment and further, in the Indian context. Since the purpose of this study is to further evaluate and draw conclusions regarding the relation between independent variables (visual merchandising, window display, in-store layout/mannequin display, floor merchandising, promotional signage and cross merchandising) and dependent variable (impulse buying) as well as the control variables (age, income and occupation), a conceptual or theoretical framework model has been developed which outline the basic hypotheses which serves the purpose. The alternate hypothesis has been developed instead of null hypotheses to validate their liaison with impulse buying behaviour.





*Figure 5: Research Framework for the present study*

**Hypothesis I: Age of respondents**

This segment aims in studying the effect of various Visual Merchandising dimensions on the age of the respondents

- H<sub>1A</sub>: Visual Merchandising has an insignificant impact on the age of the respondents
- H<sub>1B</sub>: Window Displays has an insignificant impact on the age of the respondents
- H<sub>1C</sub>: In-store Layout/Mannequin Displays has an insignificant impact on the age of the respondents
- H<sub>1D</sub>: Floor Merchandising has an insignificant impact on the age of the respondents
- H<sub>1E</sub>: Promotional Signage has an insignificant impact on the age of the respondents
- H<sub>1F</sub>: Cross Merchandising has an insignificant impact on the age of the respondents

**Hypothesis II: Income of respondents**

This segment aims in studying the effect of various Visual Merchandising dimensions on the income of the respondents

- H<sub>1A</sub>: Visual Merchandising has an insignificant impact on the income of the respondents
- H<sub>1B</sub>: Window Displays has an insignificant impact on the income of the respondents
- H<sub>1C</sub>: In-store Layout/Mannequin Displays has an insignificant impact on the income of the respondents
- H<sub>1D</sub>: Floor Merchandising has an insignificant impact on the income of the respondents
- H<sub>1E</sub>: Promotional Signage has an insignificant impact on the income of the respondents
- H<sub>1F</sub>: Cross Merchandising has an insignificant impact on the income of the respondents

**Hypothesis III: Occupation of respondents**

This segment aims in studying the effect of various Visual Merchandising dimensions on the occupation of the respondents

- H<sub>1A</sub>: Visual Merchandising has an insignificant impact on the occupation of the respondents
- H<sub>1B</sub>: Window Displays has an insignificant impact on the occupation of the respondents
- H<sub>1C</sub>: In-store Layout/Mannequin Displays has an insignificant impact on the occupation of the respondents
- H<sub>1D</sub>: Floor Merchandising has an insignificant impact on the occupation of the respondents
- H<sub>1E</sub>: Promotional Signage has an insignificant impact on the occupation of the respondents
- H<sub>1F</sub>: Cross Merchandising has an insignificant impact on the occupation of the respondents

**V. Data and Methodology**

For the process of Primary Data collection, a structured questionnaire has been developed for conducting the research based on the objectives of the study. The questionnaire is a long drawn one to scrutinize the variables used for the purpose of this study. The questionnaire contains 8 segments consisting of 45 questions distributed in several factors such as Window Displays, Mannequin Displays etc. The sample size is 130 respondents constituting only male respondents. The sampling technique used for collecting responses in the study was random sampling for 168 respondents. Out of these, only 130 responses were selected and the rest were rejected due to incomplete or erroneous responses. Out of these 130 responses, 28 responses were collected through questionnaires randomly administered directly to the shoppers in Quest Mall. The rest 102 responses were collected through questionnaires mailed to other respondents. The questions in the questionnaire were primarily

adapted from Kim (2003) and a host of other sources. However some questions and segments were added and modified to ensure its suitability in the Indian scenario which mainly arises from perceptions, feelings or observations of the respondents. A five point Likert scale (1= Highly important/Strongly Agree and 5= Highly unimportant/Strongly Disagree) has been adopted to measure the concepts. The data collected have been meticulously edited, scrutinized and classified in order to make them amenable to statistical analysis. The data has been processed using IBM's SPSS 23.0.

Data from Secondary sources were used to create a strong base for the conceptual framework. Information were found and collected from various e-resource databases such as INFLIBNET, DOAJ, BASE, etc.

**VI. Data Presentation**

**Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Profiling**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid %</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
<b>Below 18</b>	17	13.07	13.07
<b>18-24</b>	45	34.63	47.70
<b>25-34</b>	33	25.39	73.09
<b>35-55</b>	28	21.53	94.62
<b>Above 55</b>	7	5.38	100.0
<b>Total</b>	130	100.0	

*Table 2: Frequency Statistics for Age Classification*

As we can see a larger proportion of age group between 18-24 years have a penchant towards retail sectors. We also see a very significant proportion of respondents in the age group of 25-34 keeping the same perspective. These two categories consist of a relatively young respondents.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid %</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
<b>Below 10000</b>	9	6.92	6.92
<b>10001-25000</b>	51	39.24	46.16
<b>25001-50000</b>	45	34.61	80.77
<b>50001-100000</b>	17	13.08	93.85
<b>Above 100000</b>	8	6.15	100.0
<b>Total</b>	130	100.0	

*Table 3: Frequency Statistics for Income Classification*

Here we have respondents in the two major income groups of 10001-25000 and 25001-50000 making the highest retail purchase

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid %</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
<b>Student</b>	42	32.30	32.30
<b>Service</b>	33	25.39	57.69
<b>Businessman</b>	19	14.62	72.31
<b>Others</b>	36	27.69	100.0
<b>Total</b>	130	100.0	

*Table 4: Frequency Statistics for Occupation Classification*

Here we have respondents employed in different occupations and as per our study it is revealed that a very high proportion of respondents who are students are very much buoyed by retail sectors.

Since, the first objective of this study is to prune out the dominating factors of visual merchandising amongst shoppers for men's apparel in the metropolitan setting of Kolkata, hence, in order to fulfil this objective, a factor analysis has been run in order to investigate the most crux factors in visual merchandising.

KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity has been conducted in order to check for the adequacy of the sample size and the importance of conducting the research. KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also explains whether it is worthwhile to conduct a Factor Analysis.

**KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.730
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	819.645
	df
	36
	Sig.
	.000

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test

As per the results obtained from Factor Analysis, the KMO test confirms that the Factor Analysis conducted is appropriate. Ideally the values should be greater than 0.6. This is explained by the KMO Test statistic which is 0.730 (larger than the acceptable value of 0.6). The significance value is perched at 5% level, showing that  $p=0.000$  which is ( $p<0.05$ ). Hence it is worthwhile to conduct a Factor Analysis on the nine variables responsible for shaping the integrity of visual merchandising.

The KMO and Bartlett's Test is followed by Total Variance Explained (TVE). According to TVE, the results will show the number of factors obtained provided that Eigen values are greater than 1 (Eigen value > 1). It is proof of the fact that Factor (Component 1) explains 42.69% of the variance and (Component 2) accounts for 11.40% of the total variance explained. Principal Component Analysis have helped us to extract the variable according to the fulfilled requisite that the Eigen values should be greater than 1 (Eigen values > 1). The two factors have a strong degree of interdependence and hence decrease moving downwards.

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.101	42.690	42.690	3.001	33.603	33.603
2	1.113	11.400	54.090	2.213	24.812	58.415
3	0.874	9.115	63.205			
4	0.755	8.226	71.431			
5	0.649	7.508	78.939			
6	0.564	6.728	85.667			
7	0.437	5.814	91.481			
8	0.321	4.707	96.188			
9	0.186	3.812	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 6: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Below is the Rotated Component Matrix, according to which the variables will get accommodated in the factor loadings, thus providing us with the final results.

**Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component	
	1	2
Store Display	0.749	0.123
Background Music	0.788	0.170
Promotional Signage	0.538	0.321
Layout	0.595	0.371
Lighting	0.485	0.490
Store Interior	-0.004	0.870
Fragrance	0.265	0.742
Theme Colour	0.429	0.604
Cleanliness	0.816	0.171

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.<sup>a</sup>

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Table 7: Rotated Component Matrix



The component may be arranged in the following manner

Component I	Component II
Store Display	Lighting System
Store Interior	Background Music
Promotional Signage	Theme/Colour
Store Layout	
Cleanliness	

*Table 8: Arrangements of components*

The 9 variables as observed are disintegrated into 2 factors. Each factor is a compilation of closely knitted variables. We can rename Component I as Store Design and Component II as Store Atmospherics

In order to test whether the questionnaire is valid or not, we have used Cronbach’s Alpha to analyse whether all questions or variables fit the existing model adequately. The following table shows the reliability statistics for 31 variables distributed in segments from Visual Merchandising to Cross Merchandising

Cronbach’s Alpha	Cronbach’s Alpha based on Standardized Items	N of items
0.749	0.749	31

*Table 9: Reliability Statistics for All Variables (n=31)*

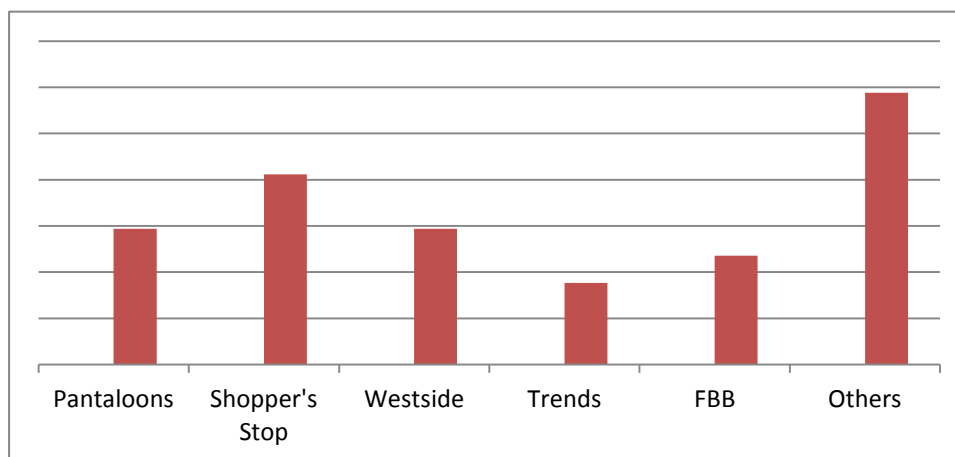
The standardized Cronbach’s Alpha value is 0.749, which is acceptable value, showcasing that the questionnaire along with its variables fits perfectly into the proposed modelling.

### VII. Findings & Discussions

1) One of the crux highlight of this study is the fact that we have come across a major share of respondents who are young, but have significantly high disposable incomes. This can be a boon to retailers given that this is an impressionable age group. They are zealous of reaching the apex of success and associating store merchandising with success mantras and motivational cues can significantly entice these customers into the store.

2) The analysis dealing with age and impulse buying also furnished an interesting result. Impulse purchases vary significantly with age. A young customer say aged 25 years will probably not have the same taste and preference when juxtaposed with a customer whose comparatively older say 45 years. They have different orientations and motivations towards the purchase of the product.

3) The study has identified certain modern retail stores such as Pantaloons, Shopper’s Stop, Westside, etc. among others which have been the most popular shopping destinations for customers. The display of mannequins and other forms of merchandise in these stores such as mannequins boost customer inclination to make impulse purchase ably supported by pay-back offers by the retailers.



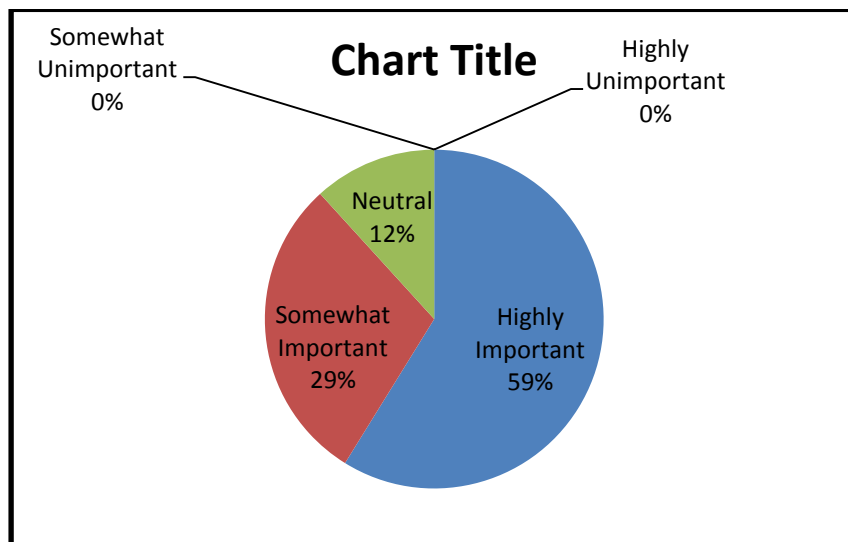
*Figure 6: Most popular retail stores*

4) One of the questions contained in the questionnaire investigated about the frequency of visit to a retail store. The responses have been collected in the following frequency table

	Frequency	Valid %	Cumulative %
<b>Once or more in a month</b>	12	9.23	9.23
<b>Once in 2 months</b>	26	20	29.23
<b>Once in 3 months</b>	11	8.46	37.69
<b>Once in 6 months</b>	15	11.54	49.23
<b>Special Occasions</b>	42	32.31	81.54
<b>Only when necessary</b>	24	18.46	100.0
<b>Total</b>		100.0	

*Table 10: Frequency of visit to a retail store*

5) In another question we have asked the respondents about their attitude towards visual merchandising in the context of men’s apparel store. The results are a direct translation of the visual merchandising in the Indian context. The findings ensued from this particular statement is revealed below



*Figure 7: Attitude of respondents towards Visual Merchandising*

6) We have identified Store Design and Store Atmospheric as two fundamental components shaping visual merchandising. While store atmospheric govern the overall aura of store and beyond, store design is accountable for stimulating immediate purchases. The atmospheric of the store create a kind of trance, which mesmerizes the customer into making retail purchases impulsively. The logic behind this that when customers are on a shopping spree, they are high on a certain type of hormone called “dopamine.” So with dopamine levels being high, customers hedonically make purchases, on the spur of the moment, being induced by the atmospheric and overall design of the store.

7) We have observed that visual merchandising role playing is extremely pivotal in stimulating impulse purchases, as evidenced through inferential statistics by virtue of testing of hypothesis. When looked at the concept in general, it plays a momentous role in shaping impulse purchases. It is also capable of generating long term brand equity and recall.

8) The study also revealed that Window Displays are highly efficacious in stimulating impulse purchases. The first trust with the store from customer’s dimensions is from the display of merchandise on the window. Hence, if the first impression is capable of leaving an indelible impact in the minds of the customers, it will be successful in stimulating him/her into making an impulse purchase.

9) Mannequin Displays are another form of alluring customers into making impulse purchases. It works on the same lines as window displays. Such mannequins may be played within or outside the store. Often the latest styles adorning such mannequins or other forms in the store are picked up by customers.

10) Floor Merchandising, although having an ineffectual result in this study is a crux component, which needs attention on the parts of the retailers, given that customers are unable to pick up cues from floor merchandising. The appearance and layout of a retail store is just as important to success as the products are being sold. The

composition of merchandise, the store décor and visual merchandising techniques all are important. In fact, floor merchandising can spell the distinction between customers who make multiple purchases and those who wander in and out of the store empty-handed. For floor merchandising to be effective certain strategies could be adopted by the retailers. Tables, shelves, racks, end caps and wall fixtures can all showcase the products' features and benefits. But this is no easy taking into consideration the travails of the merchandisers who decide the merchandise on display and props used which is a gruelling task. This calls for seeking help of planogram, which are basically diagrams of a retail outlet that decide where and how products should be displayed. It is also important to choose the present context, in terms of current inventory and consumer behaviour when choosing items to display.

11) Promotional Signage is our next segment which is also very important. Even the cash-rich individuals are known to look out for discounts and promotional offers. Through the effective use of signage, the pertinent information can be visually represented to convey the message of the retailer to a particular target audience. Our research indicates that consumers are more likely to engage in impulse purchases on attractive promotional cues being displayed. Even the slightest reduction in the prices can trigger mass purchases.

12) One of the striking revelations of the study has been the analysis on the impact of cross merchandising on impulse purchases. Often attributed with mannequin displays, this form of merchandising has been regarded as an underdog. In this study, we have observed that cross merchandising works best when mannequins are associated with closely knitted accessories. A shirt for instance, may be surrounded by coat, tie, scarf, vest-coat, etc. These concoction of products all complement each other in the likely event of a consumer purchasing activity. Employing the concept of cross merchandising benefits both the customers as well as the retailers. For the former, to be able to grab everything needed to go along with a product instead traversing multiple aisles saves valuable time. For retailers, it is the benefit of selling additional items simultaneously coupled with building customer loyalty, who appreciate the fact they could meet their requirements instead of travelling several aisles. The aftermath is increased sales for retailers and more satisfaction in shopping experienced by the consumers. However for cross merchandising to deliver effective results, it is imperative for the products which are displayed to possess some sort of logical connection.

### **VIII. Limitations of the study**

- 1) Due to paucity of time, this study could be conducted only in specific areas of Kolkata albeit in focuses in the entire Kolkata.
- 2) The respondents were limited to only 130. A larger sample size could have shown different results.
- 3) This study can be extended to apparels among women and children also.
- 4) One important drawback of the current research study is that the collection of sample is entirely on male respondents. It might so happen that a woman (either a spouse or a mother) may buy a men's apparel to gift to their dear ones. In that case, the results might have differed.

### **IX. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The findings of the present research study show that there exist a significant relationship between impulse buying behaviour and visual merchandising as exhibited by the sample of respondents. We investigated some of the external factors that provoke impulse buying behaviour. For the purpose of examining this correlation, this research study attempted in explaining the relationship between impulse buying behaviour of respondents and several kinds of visual merchandising. A very pertinent found show that visual merchandising genuinely influences impulse buying behaviour of respondents. The result well and truly proves that there is a significant relationship between the impulse buying behaviour and all forms of visual merchandising except Floor Merchandising, which is not pivotal in accordance with our study. When consumers encounter these visual stimuli, they are increased chances for them to make purchase decisions based on impulse. This proves that the practices of visual merchandising, serve as stimuli that arouse a desire, thus, finally motivating a consumer to make an unplanned purchase decision when entering store. This study has also revealed the impact of impulse purchase and visual merchandising with reference to demographic variables of age and income. Effective use of visual merchandising is of critical relevance for long term sustainability. It is very important for every store to create a suitable ambience and appealing arrangements in order to trigger the consumer's buying decision. Layout and presentation can emerge as a key differentiating factor where there is identical merchandise in more than one store. The study also reveals that impulse buying behaviour is strongly associated with affective reactions and behaviour in spite of the fact that it might have been the result of the influence of external cues. The study is best conducted on the retail floor, where a first-hand understanding of the consumer psyche is

ascertained. Since impulse buying is quite a regular phenomenon, robust research blended with different demographic and geographic groups as well as influence of visual merchandising in non-store formats are strongly recommended for further research in this domain.

### **X. Managerial Implications**

The modern retailers leave no stone unturned by their persistent tenacity and travails to make profitable use of the space in the store. Effective usage of visual merchandising is the key to long term sustainability. Intricate floor patterns, location of merchandise, levels of inventory and appropriate window or mannequin displays are all key factors in ensuring the best use of available finite space. Misapplication of the existing space can be detrimental to the success of visual merchandising. It is pretty normal to come across similar merchandise in more than one store. In that case, layout and presentation takes up the charge of being the key differentiating factor. Visual merchandising does not just include enticing displays and a merchandised rich store, but also about possessing the ability to converse with well-informed salespeople and a touch-n-feel experience of the displays in offering customers something to be chuffed about. The findings of this study provided valuable insights with reference to the significant impact of in-store form/mannequin display, window display, promotional signage and cross merchandising, which strongly influences the impulse buying instincts of consumers. It is advisable that retailers should perennially reinforce the use of in-store form/mannequin displays and functions of cross merchandising in relatively larger proportions compared to promotional cues and signs so as to influence in-store responses and future responses of the consumers. Although floor merchandising seemed unlikely to influence impulse buying behaviour of respondents, it is not implied that the component is irrelevant. Strategies need to be undertaken to position eye-catching displays so that floor merchandising can find its relevance. When the benefits of impulse buying like satisfaction from purchase or use, fulfilments of the desire from internal states, etc. outweigh the negative consequences, it contributes heavily in establishing store loyalty and perceived value of the customers and their satiation which provoke purchase decisions in the future.

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