The Influence of Visual Merchandising and Store Design on Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Comparative Study of Window Display Design

Saniya Kunnure
Vishwakarma University, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Abstract— **Retail stores today are built as experiences rather than just places to buy things, and visual merchandising is an important part of how they catch a shopper's eye. This study looks at window display design, one of the main tools of visual merchandising, and how it shapes consumer buying behaviour in fashion retail in Pune, Maharashtra, India. A window display is where a store first meets its customers, through colour, lighting, product arrangement, mannequins and signage. The research is quantitative. Primary data came from an online questionnaire answered by 52 valid respondents (55.8% female, 42.3% male; 90.4% aged 18–25), selected by convenience sampling, and the answers were analysed using percentages and frequencies. A comparative case study of two fashion stores, Westside and Zudio at Amanora Mall, Pune, supports the survey. The study asks which display element attracts customers most, how visual merchandising shapes brand image, and how window display affects the shopping experience, and it addresses a gap in research on repeat visits and customer satisfaction. Of the respondents, 63.5% said store display design influences their buying behaviour, 61.5% named product display as the first element that catches their attention, and thematic display was the most attractive window display style (23.1%).**

Index Terms— **Visual merchandising, window display, consumer buying behaviour, store design, impulse buying, retail interior design, Pune.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Retail stores today do more than sell products; they are expected to give shoppers an experience worth remembering. Interior design and visual merchandising have a real say in what draws consumers in and whether they intend to buy. Window displays, store layout, lighting, colour, product arrangement, mannequins and signage together create an environment that invites customers to explore the store and make purchase decisions.

Visual merchandising also covers the layout of the store, the shelving style, the sections of the store, its atmosphere and the brands it carries (Bhatti & Latif, 2014). Shopping malls and branded stores have spread quickly, and as competition grows, retailers depend on attractive interiors and good marketing to win customers, build a strong brand image and raise sales. Window display is central to visual merchandising because it forms the first visual link between a retail store and its consumer. At the international level, colour is regarded as the most powerful tool in window display. It sets the background, and a professionally designed window transmits the right energy to consumers. A good colour scheme draws customers in, so the window has to stay eye-catching, and graphics and photography are another efficient way of communicating with them. In India, colour, theme and pattern are likewise the principal elements used to grab customers' attention. Product arrangement matters alongside colour and lighting, and windows are changed to match Indian festivals, seasons, fashion trends and promotional campaigns. Colour, composition and the other major design components have been identified as primary drivers of successful window display (Labrecque & Milne, 2012). Augmented reality (AR) displays and touch-screen interfaces improve brand recall and attract more attention than traditional displays, and kinetic displays increase dwell time by creating a 22% more dynamic store environment (Roba & Lali Priya).

This study asks how visual merchandising elements, and window display in particular, affect consumer buying behaviour. Interior designers, business owners

and retailers who want to build more attractive and functional retail spaces may find the findings useful.



(a) Minimal / elegant (b) Seasonal

(c) Festival-based (d) Thematic / luxury

Fig. 1. Examples of window display styles considered in the study. [Add the source or credit for each image.]

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research looks at how a retail store's visual merchandising shapes what customers feel, notice and buy, and how it relates to impulse buying. Kim (2013) describes visual merchandising design as covering every part of a store, from the exterior and interior to the layout, window display, lighting, colours, product arrangement and signboards, and even the service attitude of sales staff, with the aim of highlighting brand image and drawing customers in. Pillai et al. (2011) studied the design, effectiveness and role of visual merchandising and concluded that a store needs an attractive window display, a proper layout, an appealing theme and good lighting to attract consumers. Can't and Wiid (2020) similarly observed that visual merchandising has become a crucial element of retail strategy, and that retailers must understand how consumers react to its different forms in order to design a better shopping experience.

Hefer and Can't (2013) explored how visual merchandising displays affect consumer buying behaviour and found that displays guide customers towards the products they are looking for and influence their decisions. On impulse buying, Bhatti and Latif (2014) surveyed 344 consumers at a supermarket in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, and tested four hypotheses using regression analysis in SPSS. Window display, forum display, floor merchandising and the shop's brand name were all significantly associated with impulse buying; window display, floor merchandising and brand name were related positively, and forum display negatively. Jain et al. (2012) surveyed 150 women in Delhi and found that window display has a significant impact on women's purchase decisions, with 42% of them choosing which store to shop in because of an eye-catching window display. Kerfoot et al. (2003) found that the themes most strongly linked to purchase intention were merchandise colours, presentation style, awareness of fixtures, path finding, the sensory qualities of materials and lighting, and that liking a display makes a purchase four times more likely.

III. RESEARCH GAP AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

3.1. Research Gap

Most earlier research has examined visual merchandising elements such as window displays, mannequins, colour, store layout and product presentation in relation to consumer buying behaviour. Customer satisfaction, repeat visits and the overall shopping experience have received less attention. This study tries to fill that gap.

3.2. Problem Statement

Retail in Pune, Maharashtra, India is growing quickly with the rise of shopping malls, branded stores and increasing consumer spending. Even so, many stores still do not make effective use of visual merchandising and interior design to attract customers. Window display, product arrangement, mannequins, lighting, colours and store layout are often poorly executed, although research shows that they shape consumers' impressions and purchase decisions. This study therefore looks at how visual merchandising elements, such as window display design, influence consumers and their buying behaviour.

IV. RESEARCH AIM

The aim of this study is to understand how visual merchandising elements, specifically window displays, affect consumer buying behaviour.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study takes a quantitative approach to examine how visual merchandising and store design influence consumer buying behaviour in fashion retail stores in Pune, Maharashtra, India. The quantitative method was chosen because it allows consumers' preferences to be measured numerically and summarised as percentages, frequencies and means. Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data were collected directly from consumers through a questionnaire covering age, gender, purpose of visiting malls and the factors that influence purchase decisions, while secondary data were drawn from research papers, articles and journals on visual merchandising and store design. The target population was customers who visit malls, with a targeted sample mix of 60% women and 40% men. A comparative case study of two fashion retail stores supplements the survey (see the case study section below).

The questionnaire was administered as an online survey form. It asked respondents for their age and gender, how often they visit retail stores, their main reason for visiting, which factor most influences their purchase decision, whether store display influences their buying behaviour, which element attracts them most and what catches their attention first.

The target audience was customers who visit retail stores in Pune, Maharashtra, India, and non-probability convenience sampling was used. The survey yielded 52 valid responses. Of these, 55.8% of respondents were female and 42.3% were male, which is close to the targeted mix of 60% women and 40% men, and 90.4% belonged to the 18–25 age group. The data were analysed using percentage analysis, frequency distribution and mean analysis to examine the relationship between visual merchandising, retail interior design and consumer buying behaviour.

VI. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES: VISUAL MERCHANDISING IN FASHION RETAIL STORES

These case studies compare two fashion retail stores, Westside and Zudio at Amanora Mall, Pune, to see how store presentation, product arrangement, storefront communication and window displays may attract customers and shape the shopping experience. The analysis is linked to the survey of 52 respondents reported in the Results and Discussion section.

6.1. Case Study 1: Westside, Amanora Mall, Pune

Store profile. Westside is a fashion and lifestyle retailer offering apparel, footwear, accessories, beauty and other lifestyle products (Amanora Mall, n.d.-a; Trent Limited, 2023). The brand is associated with contemporary fashion and curated collections. Here, the store is looked at for how its product presentation communicates style and helps customers explore coordinated looks.

Visual merchandising style. The proposed style for analysis is contemporary, curated and lifestyle-oriented. The aspects examined are:

- Mannequin styling: whether complete outfits are styled to show how garments can be worn together.

- Colour coordination: whether related colours, patterns or collections are grouped to create a consistent visual appearance.
- Product arrangement: how apparel and accessories are grouped by category, collection or style.
- Window display: how selected outfits, mannequins, colours and signage create the first visual impression.
- Lighting: how the lighting makes garments, colours and display features visible.
- Store organisation: whether display spacing and category arrangement make products easy to browse.

Table 1. Observation framework for Westside

Element observed	Aspects recorded
Window display	Main theme, mannequins, colour palette, product focus and signage
Mannequin styling	Complete outfits, accessories and coordination between items
Product arrangement	Grouping by category, colour, collection or intended use
Lighting and colour	Brightness, accent lighting, contrast and visibility of products
Customer interaction	Whether customers pause at displays, browse nearby products or enter after viewing the storefront

Preliminary inference. A curated, coordinated presentation can help communicate a fashion identity and make styling ideas easier to grasp. Mannequins and complete outfits may encourage customers to picture how products could be worn together, but the actual effect on customer attention should come from direct observation rather than assumption.



Fig. 2. Westside storefront / window display at Amanora Mall.



Fig. 3. Westside in-store product display.

6.2. Case Study 2: Zudio, Amanora Mall, Pune

Store profile. Zudio is a fashion retail brand that sells apparel and accessories with an emphasis on current styles and affordability (Amanora Mall, n.d.-b). The store is looked at for how its storefront, visible merchandise, product organisation and price or promotional messages support browsing and product discovery.

Visual merchandising style. The proposed style for analysis is trend-led, value-focused and product-oriented. The aspects examined are:

- Storefront branding: the visibility of the name, logo, entrance and any window graphics.
- Product visibility: how much merchandise can be seen from the entrance or mall corridor.
- Product arrangement: how garments are organised on racks, hangers, tables or feature displays.
- Promotional signage: any visible price, offer or campaign messages, if present.
- Colour and lighting: whether lighting and colour contrast make garments and signs easy to notice.
- Product variety: how separate categories are arranged and how easily customers can browse between them.

Table 2. Observation framework for Zudio

Element observed	Aspects recorded
Storefront and logo	Visibility of brand name, entrance and window or façade treatment
Product visibility	Products visible from outside and the first display customers encounter
Racks and tables	Arrangement density, spacing, category grouping and ease of access

Element observed	Aspects recorded
Price or offer signage	Message, placement, readability and relationship to displayed products
Customer interaction	Whether shoppers browse quickly, compare items, handle products or respond to a display

Preliminary inference. Clear product visibility, accessible merchandise and readable pricing may support quick browsing and value comparison. What remains to be assessed is whether the product arrangement makes categories easy to locate and whether storefront displays encourage customers to approach or enter the store.



Fig. 4. Zudio storefront / window display at Amanora Mall.



Fig. 5. Zudio in-store product arrangement.

6.3. Comparative Analysis: Westside and Zudio

Table 3 lists the main aspects examined in the two stores. The observation column should be completed or revised after visits to both stores so that the final analysis reflects actual site conditions.

Table 3. Comparison of Westside and Zudio

Comparison factor	Westside: focus of examination	Zudio: focus of examination
Retail positioning	Contemporary fashion and lifestyle; curated collections	Trend-led fashion and affordability communication
Visual presentation	Coordination of outfits and collections	Visibility and accessibility of individual products
Window / storefront	How styling, theme and display composition communicate brand identity	How branding, visible products and promotional messages attract attention
Mannequins	Use of complete looks and accessory coordination	Whether mannequins feature trends, featured products or complete outfits
Product arrangement	Category grouping and presentation of coordinated looks	Rack/table organisation, product density and ease of browsing
Signage	Collection or brand communication	Price and promotional communication, where present
Customer experience	Potential for style inspiration and collection exploration	Potential for product discovery and value comparison

6.4. Connection with Survey Findings

The questionnaire collected 52 responses, and Table 4 links the results to the case studies. The results describe the survey sample as a whole; they do not show that respondents preferred one of the two stores.

Table 4. Survey findings and their relevance to the case studies

Survey finding	Result	Relevance to case studies
Store display design influences buying behaviour	63.5% answered Yes	Examine how storefront and in-store presentation may attract attention.
First element noticed in a store	61.5% selected Product Display	Compare product visibility and arrangement at both stores.

Survey finding	Result	Relevance to case studies
Most attractive display style	23.1% selected Thematic	Observe whether either store uses a clear display concept or theme.
Luxury / elegant displays	21.2% selected this style	Consider how styling, composition and finish contribute to store identity.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

7.1. Data Analysis

Figs. 6 to 12 show the questionnaire responses (n = 52). In each chart, the bars give the number of respondents, and the line or second set of bars gives the matching percentage.

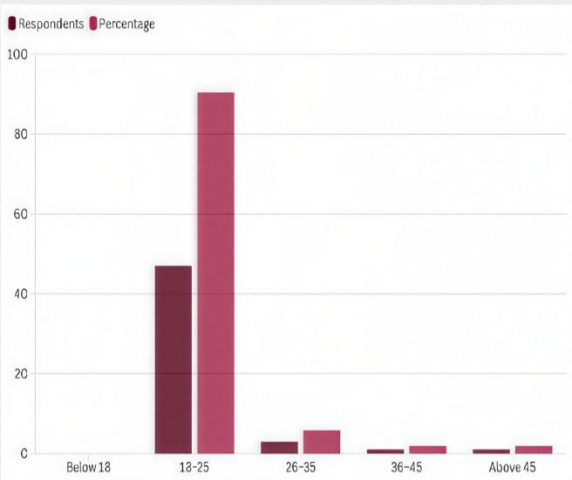


Fig. 6. Age group of respondents (n = 52).

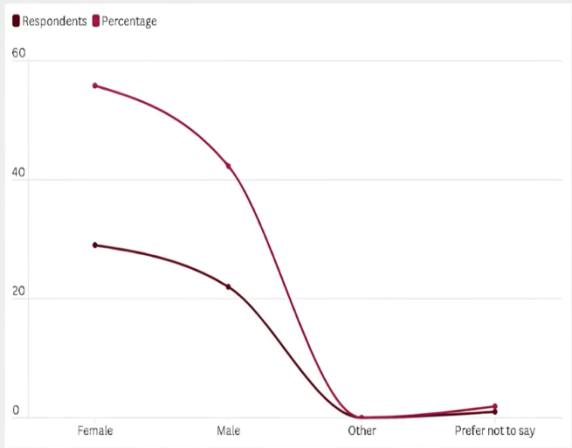


Fig. 7. Gender of respondents (n = 52).

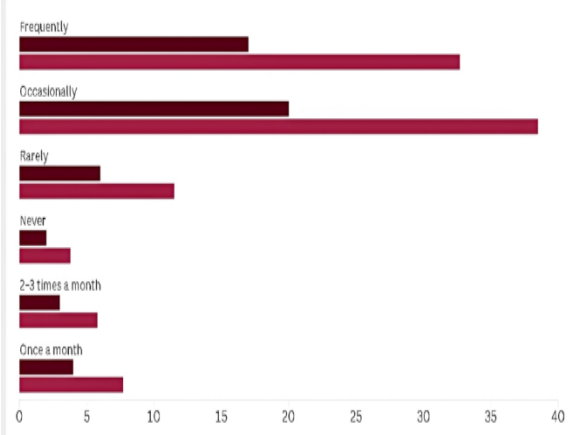


Fig. 8. Frequency of visiting fashion retail stores in malls (n = 52).

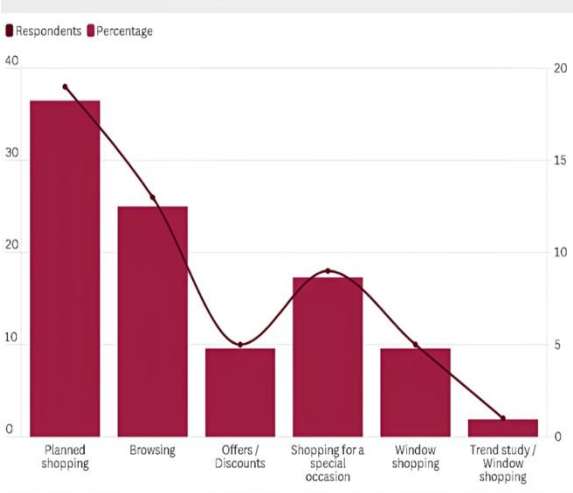


Fig. 9. Main reason for visiting fashion retail stores (n = 52).

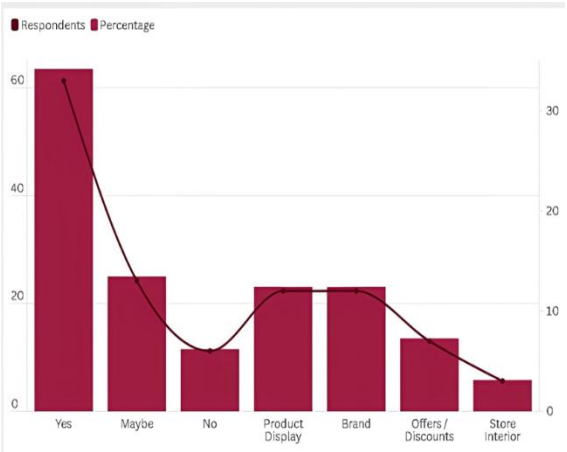


Fig. 10. Perceived influence of store display design on buying behaviour (Yes / Maybe / No) and the factor that influences the purchase decision most (n = 52).

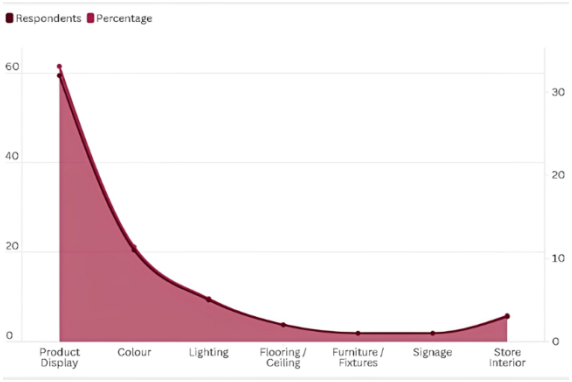


Fig. 11. Element that catches attention first on entering a store (n = 52).

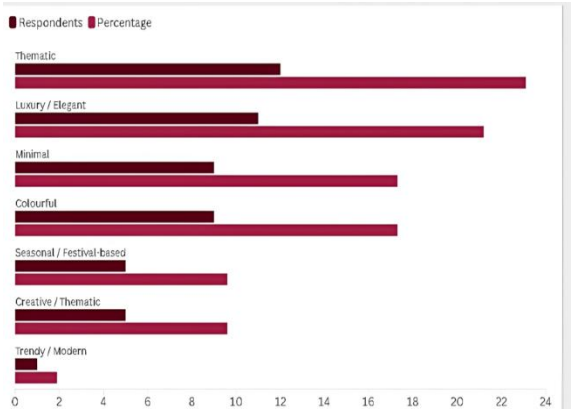


Fig. 12. Most attractive window display style (n = 52).

7.2. Results and Findings

The questionnaire produced 52 valid responses, which were analysed using percentage analysis, frequency distribution and mean analysis to examine the relationship between visual merchandising, retail interior design and consumer buying behaviour. The results show that store display design is perceived to influence purchase decisions. Among visual merchandising elements, window display is reported as an influential design element for buying behaviour, and on entering a store, product display, colours and lighting are the first things to capture customers' attention.

7.3. Discussion

This study examined visual merchandising, focusing on window display design, and its effect on consumer buying behaviour. The responses of the 52 participants show that store display design influences their buying behaviour and purchase decisions. Window display creates the first visual connection between the store and the consumer, as argued by Bhatti and Latif (2014). On entering a store, customers notice product display first. Thematic display was the most attractive style, with men preferring thematic concepts and women preferring a luxury style. Overall, product display, window display and thematic styles all influence buying behaviour.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study examined how visual merchandising influences consumer buying behaviour, focusing on window display design among retail consumers in Pune, Maharashtra, India. Across 52 survey responses, store display design emerged as an important influence: 63.5% (33 of 52) of respondents stated that it influences their buying behaviour, while 25% answered "maybe". The findings also show which visual merchandising elements attract customers. Asked what catches their attention when they enter a store, 61.5% of respondents named product display, followed by colour (21.3%) and lighting (9.6%), and a well-designed display draws consumers towards the products it emphasises. Among window display styles, thematic display attracted the largest share of respondents (23.1%), followed by colourful display (17.3%). In addition, 90% of respondents were aged 18 to 25, most visited retail stores occasionally (38.5%) or frequently (32.7%), and their main purposes were planned shopping (36.5%) and browsing (25%). Product display and colour were the dominant attention-grabbing elements.

The comparison of Westside and Zudio offers a framework for looking at two different approaches to visual merchandising in fashion retail. Westside can be examined for curated presentation and coordinated looks, and Zudio for product visibility, accessible merchandise and value-oriented communication. These are directions to verify through site visits, not a claim that one store performs better than the other. The survey findings reinforce the importance of studying product presentation, so the study suggests that window displays, product arrangement, lighting, signage and a consistent visual identity should be considered together when designing fashion retail environments. Further observation and customer interviews would be needed to establish which

strategy has the strongest effect on store entry, purchase decisions or repeat visits.

REFERENCES

[1] Amanora Mall, "Westside brand listing and store location," [Online]. Available: https://www.amanoramall.com/brands/westside.

[2] Amanora Mall, "Zudio brand listing and store location," [Online]. Available: https://www.amanoramall.com/brands/zudio.

[3] K. L. Bhatti and S. Latif, "The impact of visual merchandising on consumer impulse buying behavior," *Eurasian J. Bus. Manage.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 24–35, 2014.

[4] M. C. Can't and J. A. Wiid, "Visual merchandising elements: Drivers of retail strategies?" *J. Appl. Bus. Res.*, vol. 36, no. 5, 2020.

[5] Y. Hefer and M. C. Can't, "Visual merchandising displays' effect on consumers: A valuable asset or an unnecessary burden for apparel retailers," *Int. Bus. Econ. Res. J.*, 2013.

[6] V. Jain, A. Sharma, and P. Narwal, "Impact of visual merchandising on consumer behaviour towards women's apparel," 2012.

[7] S. Kerfoot, B. Davies, and P. Ward, "Visual merchandising and the creation of discernible retail brands," *Int. J. Retail Distrib. Manage.*, vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 143–152, 2003, doi: 10.1108/09590550310465521.

[8] J. S. Kim, "A study on the effect of V.M.D. (visual merchandising design) in-store has on purchasing products," 2013.

[9] L. I. Labrecque and G. R. Milne, "Exciting red and competent blue: The importance of color in marketing," *J. Acad. Marketing Sci.*, vol. 40, no. 5, pp. 711–727, 2012, doi: 10.1007/s11747-010-0245-y.

[10] H. H. Park, J. O. Jeon, and P. Sullivan, "How does visual merchandising in fashion retail stores affect consumers' brand attitude and purchase intention?" 2015.

[11] S. Pillai, I. Rajeshkharan, A. Iqbal, H. Umer, A. Maqbool, and N. Sunil, "Design, effectiveness and role of visual merchandising in creating customer appeal," 2011.

[12] Trent Limited, "Westside launches its 225th store in Pune," Aug. 14, 2023. [Online]. Available: https://docs.trentlimited.com/investor/Regulation_30-_Press_Release_-_Launch_of_225th_Westside_Store_-_14.08.2023.pdf.

[13] "Primary research: Survey responses collected for the study, \(n=52\)," unpublished research data.