

# Impact of Visual Merchandising on Impulsive Buying Behavior of Sri Lankan Modern Trade Customers

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## ABSTRACT

The focus of the research was to see how different visual marketing approaches affected the impulsive purchase behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade clients. Modern retailers utilize visual merchandising as one of their primary tactics for differentiating their offers and attracting and persuading customers to buy. In-store marketing and visual merchandising have attracted a lot of attention recently, and the amount of money spent on visual merchandising has also skyrocketed. As a result, determining the efficiency of the money that is spent on these diverse visual merchandising strategies is critical for all supermarkets. A well-structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data for the study. A total of 392 Sri Lankan modern trade clients were chosen as the sample for the study. The sampling method was snowball sampling, and the data was analyzed using SPSS 25 software. The multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data. Charts and graphs are used to display the research findings. The study's findings demonstrated that product display and promotional signs have a strong favorable impact on impulsive purchase behavior among Sri Lankan modern trade clients. Based on these findings, businesses may determine which visual merchandising methods are the most effective and devote time and resources to improving them, resulting in increased foot traffic and revenue.

**KEYWORDS:** Graphene, material sciences, applications, synthesis

## INTRODUCTION

The management of the design, positioning, and the illumination of window displays, interior displays, floor displays, and marketing signs is known as visual merchandising (Sathyanarayana et al., 2017). Visual merchandising includes the architecture of supermarkets, which varies depending on the types of shelves, brand portfolios, and retail atmospheres. This is about visual product awareness, brand image, and how to form a sales partnership with consumers. Visual merchandising is a type of marketing that builds a direct and intimate relationship with potential customers (Bhatti & Latif, 2014). Visual merchandising's aim is to raise awareness, make a supermarket look more enticing, and sell a lot more by grouping products together. As a result, each store uses visual presentations to establish and enhance its image and philosophy to gain brand loyalty and

influence consumer purchasing decisions (Sathyanarayana et al., 2017).

Impulsive buying is typically unmoderated purchasing; it is best defined as an unanticipated purchase made by a person who did not intend to buy it. Store owners are aware of this consumer buying tendency and aim to lure customers into making impulse purchases by designing their store's structure, shelving, branding, and so on. In recent years, the concept has gained a lot of traction. Marketers and retailers are aiming to boost the frequency of spontaneous or unexpected purchases these days. Companies are researching their stores' ecosystems, collecting data, and analyzing how to influence consumers' purchase behavior for their brands (Bhatti & Latif, 2014). Under competitive pressure, businesses use visual merchandising strategies such

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as signage and point-of-purchase displays to set their products apart from the competition and increase their relative desirability. Retailers can increase their profit margins by identifying elements that contribute to impulse purchases and regulating these variables through strategic marketing and merchandising efforts (Kim, 2003).

The supermarket industry is booming right now. Every day, new supermarkets open in the market. Concerns about in-store marketing are growing by the day. Many new visual merchandising techniques/practices have arisen, and supermarkets' spending on visual merchandising has risen as well. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which supermarket visual merchandising tactics influence customers' impulsive purchasing decisions. The study investigates how changes in visual merchandising tactics influenced purchasers' spontaneous purchases. The retail business has accelerated as a result of changes in customer shopping behavior and shifting consumer desires (Arjun Pawar et al., 2016). Retailers must now improve their marketing methods to grow their market share. What customers perceive at the time of purchase has a long-term impact on them (Inman et al., 2009). While in Sri Lanka, most supermarkets use visual marketing to increase sales in specific areas. In Sri Lanka, top supermarket chains spend between 40 and 60 percent of their budget on in-store marketing. The fundamental rationale is that many advertisers appear to assume that by leveraging visual merchandising, they can influence customers' impulsive purchasing intentions (Wanninayake & Randiwela, 2007).

Consumer skepticism of retailer marketing is growing by the day. The proliferation of visual merchandising methods and activities, as well as increased supermarket spending on visual merchandising. The purpose of this study was to see how different visual marketing methods affected impulsive purchasing behavior in today's Sri Lanka. This research aims to analyze the degree to which supermarkets' visual merchandising strategies affect consumers' decisions to purchase goods which can be obtained as follows;

- To identify the impact of product display on the impulsive buying behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade customers.
- To identify the effects of floor merchandising on the impulsive behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade customers.
- To identify how promotional signage influences the impulsive buying behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade customers

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Consumer Behavior

Consumer buying behavior is the study of how people make purchases and how they obtain the goods and services they want. Consumer research is looking at the consumer's mental, emotional, and physical states, as well as how they interact with marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Customers as individuals or communities choose, acquire, use, or dispose of services and products, and how they communicate their opinions to meet their desires or needs, marketing departments must analyze customer behavior (Solomon, 2007). Customers' purchasing decisions are influenced by external elements such as marketing mix and socio-cultural atmosphere, as well as interior factors such as the psychological realm. Consumers must make a selection based on their characteristics, experiences, and desires. This, however, may result in a buyer making a purchase (Sathyanarayana et al., 2017).

### Impulsive Buying Behavior

Since impulsive buying involves unplanned and unexpected purchases, the cognitive and emotional variables that regulate the purchase are frequently present at the time and location of purchase. Strong sensations such as a strong want to buy, as well as feelings of pleasure and contentment, are frequently associated with the desire to purchase something (Rook, 1987). The individuals are only concerned with purchasing the item they desire based on factors other than meeting a necessity (Youn & Faber, 2000). Purchasing decisions are sometimes misinterpreted as irrational purchasing behavior and poor behavioral management. Even when purchasing somewhat expensive goods, impulse purchases are prevalent (Rook, 1987). On the surface, making an impulse buy appears to be associated with contentment. Impulse buyers appear to be motivated by high-arousal emotions such as enthusiasm and pleasure rather than practical factors while making purchases, and their shopping experiences appear to be motivated by hedonic rather than practical concerns (Verplanken et al., 2005). Several academics believe that impulsive purchases have a sensory or emotional component. According to a new study, impulse purchase behavior is more complicated and involves various aspects such as the need to satisfy. (Hausman, 2000).

### Theories on Impulsive Buying Behavior

The sequence between input (independent) and output (dependent) is described by process theory. This input-process-output paradigm was originally developed by researchers to define team success. This process has recently been applied to ITs to define

what motivates individuals to use them (Stewart & Barrick, 2000). This study investigates the link between impulsive conduct and the desire to buy impulsively by looking at the purchasing values (May et al., 2009).

The theory of commodities, the theory of need for individuality, the theory of psychological reaction, and the naive economic theory were provided to comprehend the effect of scarcity. These beliefs suggest that scarcity increases the value of products and services. Because of these beliefs, consumers have considerably stronger cravings for singular or scarce items and services. Hamilton et al. 2019 described the phenomena as "an all-encompassing element of human life and a crucial prerequisite for economic conduct".

Novelty, variation, and surprise are among the higher-order requirements shown by consumer reports in the literature. Similarly, shoppers say impulse purchase fulfills a variety of hedonistic desires. Furthermore, the social connection inherent in the shopping experience may be able to meet emotional support needs. In some qualitative research, for example, shoppers report feeling elevated or energetic following a shopping trip. These sources appear to support a relationship between hedonic shopping motives and impulse buying behavior on a conceptual level (Tatic, 2011).

The most widely utilized emotion regulation tactics are usually categorized based on where they intervene in the emotion-generating process. This organizational scheme, known as the process model of emotion regulation, shows five different types of emotion regulation strategies: scenario selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive restructuring, and response modulation (McRae, 2016).

### **Factors contributing to impulsive buying**

There hasn't been much research that looks at the factors that impact impulsive buying. Internal and external factors, according to researchers, can play a role in impulsively acquiring commodities. As a reflection of minimal participation adoption, research shows that situational circumstances have functional and theoretical value in customer buying behavior (Hoyer, 1984). The study investigates the link between shopper attributes and the elements that influence how customers interact with retailers. Engagement, temperament, and race are all qualities of customers. The size of the store, the format of the store, and the personality of the store are all retail characteristics (Kim, 2003).

Emotion and emotion are considered important factors in impulse purchases (Gardner et al., 1988).

An optimistic attitude, according to 85 percent of those polled, would make impulsive shopping a more positive experience than a negative mood. Respondents said that being in a good mood made them feel rewarded, gave them more energy, and made them want to reward themselves. Donovan and Rossiter (1982) discovered that enjoyment was positively connected with a purchase urge, while Weinberg and Gottwald (1982) discovered that impulsive buyers expressed sensations of happiness, enthusiasm, and joy.

Because of the dynamic and adaptive nature of attitudes, preferences, and behaviors, specific circumstances and retail environments influence both in-store reactions and future store choice decisions (Hausman, 2000). Customers appreciate inviting and flowing store experiences (Stoltman et al., 1999). Approach actions are linked to the likelihood of encountering pleasant feelings, and avoidance behaviors are linked to the suppression of negative feelings. The results of the study reveal how many characteristics of retail shopping environments influence customer behavior. Atmospheric are important in retailing, according to (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Color and music can affect customer behavior, which means that visual merchandising does as well (Kim, 2003).

### **Shopper Marketing**

The preparation and implementation of all marketing actions that affect a shopper from the moment at which they are lured to buy, through consumption, repurchase, and recommendation are known as shopper marketing. Brand marketing is defined as a retail advertisement in (Chandon et al., 2009) post. Category management, exhibitions, distribution, packaging, and promotion are all part of the marketing effort. Marketing to a specific audience is expensive. It entails understanding how to target customers behave as shoppers in multiple channels and formats, as well as how to use that information to the benefit of all stakeholders, including brands, consumers, retailers, and shoppers (Ståhlberg & Ville, 2010).

### **Visual Merchandising concerning Impulsive Buying Behavior**

In-store shopping occurs as a consequence of a combination of internal and external factors, or as a result of impulse buying. People go to the store to establish a link between their internal processes, wants, and expectations, and the type of retail environment in which they find themselves. Furthermore, consumers visit the business to establish a link between their impulse purchases and the type of external and interior displays. Because of the

variety of products they encounter, those who shop at malls have more than the average person. Consumers will eventually come across stimuli that will lead to a more recurrent experience of impulsive cravings if they seek for longer. This study backs up Stern's (1966) claim that impulse buying is caused by the consumer's exposure to advertisements in the shopping area (Kim, 2003).

Shoppers can use this activity to organize their shopping trips at the store (Rook, 1987). It functions as a form of organization that lacks a decision-making process or a clear concept of the services it wishes to offer. Anybody can submit a proposal to it. Customers are told or given indicators of what they may require or what may be needed after they enter the shop. The corporation has no idea what it requires and does not know what it requires. This study looked at consumers' impulse buying behavior when they are confronted with stimuli that elicit a desire, leading to an unplanned purchase decision as soon as they enter the store. The more a store's stimuli, such as visual merchandising, serves as a shopping help, the more likely an urge or need would emerge, leading to an impulse purchase (Han et al., 1991). The value of window displays to the industry has never been mentioned before. Because customers enter a store with no intention of purchasing, the window display's first impression of the store has a significant impact on customers. Approach people through the front door to encourage them to enter your store (Kim, 2003).

The exhibition of products in various shapes or forms to attract customers and elicit desire. The visual merchandising of customers is one of the main reasons for creating product displays. You anticipate what can entice such clients by creating themed displays and guiding them in the proper route. You should clarify where things may be found in the business, for example, so that the customer never feels lost. To do so, arrange and display goods using carefully placed racks, pins, and brackets. The theory of reasoned action, which was established by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in the late 1960s and evaluates the relevance of previous attitudes in decision-making, will be utilized to discuss the product display independent variable. According to Crosier (2003), "Theory states that precision is vital in the decision-making process" A specific action is executed only when a consumer anticipates a similar specific outcome. If the customer is persuaded, such as by product displays, he or she will be able to alter his or her mind and choose a new course of action from the day the consumer chooses to act until the action is finished. As a result, the following hypothesis was developed:

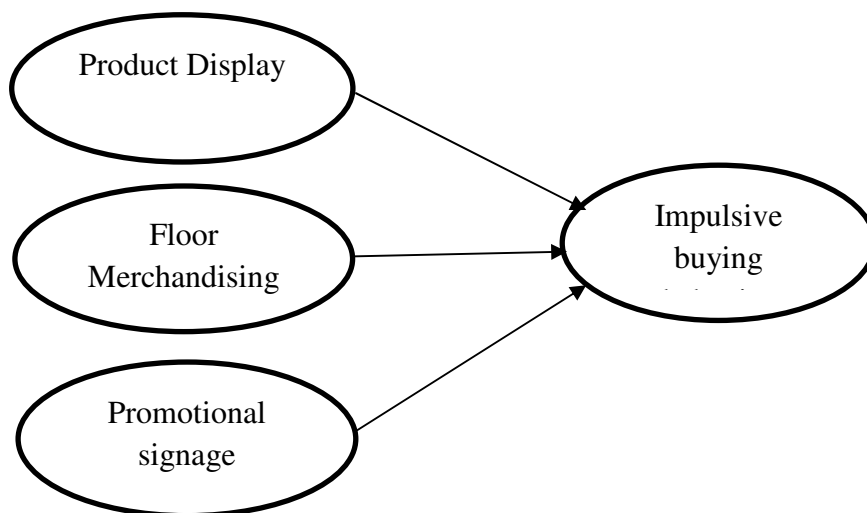
H1: There is a significant impact of product display on the impulsive buying behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade customers

Market penetration is a strategy as well as a theoretical metric. In a developed market, a company will utilize a strategy to join the market. The goal is to swiftly get into the product or service and gain a considerable market share. The percentage of the market capable of capturing the commodity or service is also known as market penetration. Increased sales of current items to an established market are part of a marketing penetration plan. This is done to achieve a larger market share than the company's competitors. This is where planograms play the most important role, and these will be determined by evaluating visual heat maps of customers. In this aspect, market penetration provides businesses with the opportunity to boost both sales and revenue. Market penetration refers to the degree to which a product is recognized and purchased by clients in a certain market. In this scenario, taking floor merchandising as an independent variable, this theory influences buyers' impulsive purchasing decisions (Hooper & David, 2009). As a result, the following hypothesis was developed:

H2: There is a significant impact of floor merchandising on the impulsive buying behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade customers

The Promotion Mix theory describes how a company uses a combination of promotional tactics to develop, sustain, and expand demand for goods and services. The word "sales promotion" refers to short-term incentives given to clients to enhance sales for a set period of time. In most cases, sales promotion programs are launched in the market during festivals or after the season. Discounts, coupons, payback incentives, freebies, and other sales promotion techniques are just a few examples. The corporation focuses on improved short-term profitability with the sales promotion by attracting both existing and new clients. A pull marketing strategy, also known as a pull promotional strategy, is one in which a company attempts to raise demand for its products by attracting (or "pulling") customers to them. The goal of pull marketing is to entice customers to want a specific product. As a result, promotional signage is an excellent pull promotional tactic that can impact impulsive purchases (Corniani, 2008), leading to the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a significant impact of promotional signage on the impulsive buying behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade customers



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

**METHOD**

Since the research's goals are to analyze the effect of visual merchandising on buyer behavior in retail buying, the analysis is powered by descriptive research. Males and females from various age groups, income levels, and race categories make up the sample size 392. To represent the researcher's convenience, the researcher will have a snowball sample. The poll was performed via a questionnaire, with the first questionnaire being examined by a small group of people to determine the technical language that is unfamiliar to persons outside of an academic setting. SPSS software was used in arriving at the statistical inferences testing the hypothesis and assert how often visual merchandising tactics affect impulsive buying behavior.

**MEASURES**

The survey began with a section devoted to impulsive buying behavior, which allowed researchers to determine how aware respondents were of their impulse purchases. A five-point Likert scale was used to analyze all of the independent variables of visual merchandising that influence Impulsive purchasing behavior, with 1 representing "Strongly Disagree" and 5 representing "Strongly Agree." The overall influence of visual merchandising on impulsive purchases was assessed using a 5-point Likert Scale. Other questions focused on the respondent's general demographics, including gender, age, education level, monthly income, and employment status.

**Reliability and validity of measures**

As demonstrated in Table 1, all of the constructs' Cronbach's values were near to or above 0.7, ensuring internal consistency. The content, construct, convergent, and discriminant validity of the measuring model used in the study were all evaluated to validate it (Hair et al., 2019). For the study, a thorough literature review was conducted, which confirmed the content validity. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) must be greater than 0.5 to demonstrate construct validity and convergence. Table 1 shows the AVEs for the evaluated constructs that were validated on construct validity and convergent with values greater than 0.5. According to Hair et al. (2019), to accept a dimension under component analysis, the composite dependability must be more than 0.7, as indicated in Table 1. To evaluate discriminant validity, the shared variances among constructs can be compared to the AVE (average variance extracted) on the individual constructs, as mentioned in (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). As demonstrated in Table 1, the discriminant validity of the respective notions has also been validated.

**Table 1: Results of Reliability and Validity of Measures**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability	AVE	Discriminant Validity		
				1	2	3
Product Display	0.87	0.91	0.716	<b>0.716</b>		
Floor Merchandising	0.84	0.90	0.757	0.003	<b>0.757</b>	
Promotional Signage	0.85	0.89	0.701	0.003	0.102	<b>0.701</b>

*Note:* The information was derived through the analysis using SPSS software

**AVE (Bolded values along the diagonal) > r<sup>2</sup> value of other dimensions**

The measurements for the Impulsive purchasing behavior were also validated under the reliability analysis with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.814 and a Composite reliability value of 0.88.

## RESULTS

Only 392 questionnaires were useable for this study and met the required inclusion criteria out of a total of 417 responses. Because the discovered outliers were eliminated for subsequent studies, 25 questionnaires were declared unsuitable. There were 176 females and 216 males in the sample. Twenty-four respondents, or 18.4 percent of the sample, are between the ages of 20 and 24. The age group of 25-29 has 160 responses, accounting for 40.8 percent of the sample, the highest proportion. The age groups of 30-34 and 35 years and above include 112 and 48 responses, respectively, accounting for 28.6% and 12.2% of the total. MBA or higher qualification holders make up a sizable portion of the sample, accounting for 42.9 percent of the total. The next greatest group of respondents have passed up to postgraduate or similar qualification with a total of 144 respondents and representing 36.7 percent of the sample studied. The lowest representation is 20.4 percent of respondents who have completed a degree or similar qualification.

The correlation and regression results for each of the variables of product display, floor merchandising, and promotional signage are shown in Table 2. The Pearson correlation coefficient "r" for the test of Product display and Impulsive buying is +0.524, indicating a strong positive relationship, whereas the correlation coefficients "r" for floor merchandising and promotional signage and Impulsive buying are +0.404 and +0.456, respectively, indicating a moderate positive relationship.

According to Table 2, for the regression tests conducted on the relationships between the predictor variables and the dependent variable, all of the independent variables of visual merchandising received significance values less than 0.05 (alpha value), indicating that the alternative hypothesis H1, H2, H3 can be accepted, confirming that all of the variables considered have a significant impact. As a result, all of the parameters that must be met as outlined in the literature study were met satisfactorily.

**Table 1: Correlation and Regression Results**

Variable	Coefficient	R	Coefficient Beta	Sig
Product Display	0.524	0.275	0.463	0.000
Floor Merchandising	0.404	0.163	0.356	0.000
Promotional Signage	0.456	0.208	0.355	0.000

*Note:* The information was derived through the analysis using SPSS software

When all of the Visual Merchandising techniques are applied in combination with Impulsive Buying Behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade customers and the t statistic, it is discovered that the impact of Floor Merchandising is insignificant ( $\text{Sig} > 0.05$ ), whereas the other two techniques (Product Display & Promotional Signage) have a significant impact on Impulsive Buying Behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade customers. ( $\text{Sig} < 0.05$ ). Product Display and Promotional Signage are the most influential Visual Merchandising strategies on Impulsive Buying Behavior of Sri Lankan modern commerce clients, according to the study.

**Table 3: Multiple regression values**

Variable	Coefficient Beta	Sig
Product Display	0.365	0.000
Floor Merchandising	0.008	0.863
Promotional Signage	0.241	0.000

*Note:* The information was derived through the analysis using SPSS software

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Impulse buying is described as a purchase made on the spur of the moment without any prior planning to acquire a certain item or complete a specified task. The researcher looked into various external elements that influence impulse buying behavior (visual merchandising techniques employed in Sri Lankan supermarkets). This study attempted to explain the relationship between Sri Lankan modern trade customers' impulse buying behavior and various forms of visual merchandising strategies to investigate this relationship. This study discovered that visual merchandising methods had a significant

impact on the impulse buying behavior of Sri Lankan contemporary trade clients.

The findings revealed that there are significant links between the impulsive buying behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade customers and product display and promotional signage used in Sri Lankan supermarkets, but the researcher was unable to find a significant impact from floor merchandising on customers' impulsive buying tendencies. (Buying Impulse =  $0.414 + 0.365 \text{ PD} + 0.241 \text{ PS}$ ) According to the above-mentioned multiple linear regression model, there is a significant positive relationship between product display and promotional signage and

customers' impulse buying behavior. According to the findings of the study, product display is the most effective visual marketing approach for enticing people to make impulsive purchases.

The independent variables explain 36.2 percent of the dependent variable Impulsive Buying Behavior among Sri Lankan modern commerce clients, according to the multiple linear regression model fit. As a result, 63.8 percent of other elements that could explain the Impulsive Buying Behavior of Sri Lankan modern commerce clients have been identified.

#### LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AREAS

The study focused primarily on customers in the western provinces, and any conclusions drawn from this sample may not represent the entire Sri Lankan population. Furthermore, because the respondents were simple to reach via an online questionnaire, the majority of those who took part in the poll were employed workers. The findings, on the other hand, are based on the opinions of 392 modern trade consumers in Sri Lanka.

Future research should look at a broader and more representative sample of Sri Lankan contemporary commerce clients. Because visual merchandising is such a dynamic and innovative industry, the researcher feels that include some new visual merchandising strategies in future studies will result in more useful data. Furthermore, the researcher feels that combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in future studies will be more efficient in detecting the true impact of visual merchandising on impulsive purchase behavior.

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