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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Influence of Visual Merchandising on Fashion Oriented Impulse Buying Behavior of Women in Kurunegala District

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of visual merchandising on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior among women in Kurunegala District, Sri Lanka. The research addresses a critical gap in understanding how visual merchandising elements affect consumer purchasing decisions in the post-pandemic retail environment, where shopping patterns have evolved significantly. The study employed a quantitative research approach using a structured online survey methodology. Data were collected from 384 women consumers aged 25 and above through convenience sampling. The research framework was grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response model, examining four key visual merchandising dimensions: window display, lighting, store layout, and promotional signage as predictors of impulse buying behavior. Primary data collection was conducted through social media platforms using a validated questionnaire with 5-point Likert scale measurements. Multiple regression analysis was utilized to examine relationships between visual merchandising elements and the impulse buying behavior. Data reliability and validity were ensured through Cronbach's alpha testing and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) analysis. The research findings reveal significant relationships between visual merchandising elements and women's impulse buying behavior in the fashion retail context. The study contributes valuable insights by identifying which visual merchandising strategies most effectively influence consumer behavior in the Sri Lankan market, providing practical implications for retailers seeking to optimize their strategies to enhance customer engagement and increase sales performance.

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Keywords: *Consumer Behavior, Fashion Retail, Impulse Buying Behavior, SOR Model, Sri Lanka, Visual Merchandising*

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Impulse buying has been investigated from different perspectives (Verplanken & Sato, 2011) and a general agreement on its core elements is arguably established in the literature (Xiao & Nicholson, 2013). All impulse purchases can be considered as unplanned; not all unplanned purchases can be considered impulsive. Unplanned purchases can occur, simply because the consumer needs to purchase a product, but for whatever reason has not been placed on the shopping list in advance. This suggests that unplanned purchases are not necessarily accompanied by the urgent desire that generally characterizes impulse purchases (Sohn & Ko, 2021). Impulsive shopping in addition to having an emotional content can be triggered by several factors, including: the store environment, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and the emotional state of the consumer at that time (Gogoi, 2020). According to Foroughi et al. (2013), one of the many tactics that companies practice includes encouraging customers to shop impulsively.

Consumer behavior refers to the activities directly involved in obtaining products /services, so it includes the decision-making processes that precede and succeed these actions. Thus, it appears that the advertising message can cause a certain psychological influence that motivates individuals to desire and, consequently, buy a certain product/service (Wertenbroch et al., 2020). Impulse buying is a complicated human buying behavior. It is influenced by factors such as income level, consumption pattern, lifestyle changes, sociocultural variables, and increased buying power. Under its influence, consumers buy unreasonably and in an unplanned fashion (Hasanpoor et al., 2019). Chen and Kesari (2018) explain impulsive buying behaviors as unplanned or a sudden buying decision as well as decisions taken under the feeling of excitement, pleasure and / or the urge to buy. Thereby, this concept is theoretically and practically significant in different fields such as; Economics, Consumer Behavior and Psychology. Nevertheless, similarly, this type of behaviors remains largely in unknown areas.

Before the mid-19th century, clothing was handmade, but industrialization and globalization transformed it into a mass-produced and highly international industry, contributing significantly to the global economy (John et al., 2023). In Sri Lanka, fashion retailers face intense competition and must differentiate themselves to attract consumers. Visual merchandising plays a key role in this process by enhancing product appeal, shaping brand personality, and influencing impulse buying behavior (Mubarak & Mufeeth, 2020). Elements such as store design, signage, and imagery help retailers build brand identity, foster loyalty, and align with consumer values (Tesfaye, 2022).

Visual merchandising, often referred to as the "silent salesman," is a widely used technique to attract customers and enhance the shopping experience (Kaur, 2013). isual merchandising represents a systematic and strategic approach to presenting merchandise, extending from the exterior to the interior of the store, and serves as a powerful tool for influencing consumers' purchasing decisions (Mopidevi & Lolla, 2013). As a direct marketing communication tool, it encompasses promotional signage such as billboards, posters, banners, and in-store displays that impact customer perceptions (Dixit & Singh, 2018). Store interiors, particularly elements such as layout and lighting, can influence consumers' browsing and purchasing behaviour, highlighting the importance of visual merchandising in creating effective retail environments (Bailey & Baker, 2021).

In the face of intense competition, retailers rely on store design and ambience to differentiate themselves, as merchandise alone is insufficient for competitive advantage (Thomas et al., 2018). Research highlights gender-based differences, showing that women place greater emphasis on visual merchandising, especially at the beginning of fashion seasons, and display heightened sensitivity to novelty compared to men, who are more prone to impulse buying (Akhilendra & Aravendan, 2023).

Accordingly, this study focuses on the effects of four dimensions of visual merchandising window displays, lighting, store layout, and promotional signage on the impulse buying behavior of women.

1.2. Problem Statement

Visual merchandising extends from the exterior to the interior of the store and plays a vital role in influencing consumer purchase decisions (Rama et al., 2013). Although the fashion industry had shown continuous growth, it was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted consumer markets, supply-side operations, and retail activities, creating significant challenges for the industry (Ong et al., 2021; Shetty et al., 2020).he pandemic altered consumer behavior worldwide, shifting preferences from in-store shopping to online channels (Alaimo et al., 2020; Laato, 2020). In Sri Lanka, the apparel sector was heavily impacted, with factory closures, job losses, and declining sales due to global order cancellations (Sen et al., 2020). The overall consumption and general customer behavior were changed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and more people started to utilize the online channels for reaching their needs (Alaimo et al., 2020). To bring back customers to in person shopping, business owners gave added responsibilities to the visual merchandisers to make the in-person shopping experience safe and enjoyable, as visual merchandising is a vital part of any retail operation.

Visual merchandising enhances the attractiveness of a store and its perceived image from the customer ‘s viewpoint (Bide, 2018). In the late stages, the customer behavior starts adopting the digital online channels in most of their needs and wants especially in the countries that faced lockdown and strict restrictions (Alaimo et al., 2020). Covid-19 affected the Sri Lankan economy too immensely. Almost all the income sectors were affected, and the fashion and apparel industry can be considered as one of the most affected sectors among all. Due to the shortages of raw materials, the factory owners have to close down the factories, and workers in the apparel industry lost their job opportunities without any payment from fashion brands, they cancelled and refunded money back because they were struggling to handle the orders and only few companies have been continuing their work with ensuring the safety precautions (Sen et al., 2020). When considering shopping behaviour in the post-pandemic era, it is important to understand previous shopping methods and compare them with the changes that occurred in the post-pandemic period (Siriwardana & Ranaweera, 2023). The comparison of shopping behaviours revealed a clear shift towards hybrid shopping after the pandemic, with consumers increasingly combining in-store and online shopping, while some consumers who

previously relied solely on in-store or online shopping also adopted both channels in the post-pandemic period (Siriwardana & Ranaweera, 2023). The comparison of shopping behaviours revealed a clear shift towards hybrid shopping after the pandemic, with consumers increasingly combining in-store and online shopping, while some consumers who previously relied solely on in-store or online shopping also adopted both channels in the post-pandemic period (Siriwardana & Ranaweera, 2023).

The research clearly showed that during the post-pandemic era, consumers have shifted into both online shopping and physical or in-store shopping with the influence and the experience they gained during the pandemic.Moreover, this research offers a comprehensive understanding of how the store environment impact on purchasing behavior (Siriwardana & Ranaweera, 2023). The data clearly indicate that consumer behavior in physical shopping has changed after the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a decline in in-store purchases. Existing literature on visual merchandising has primarily emphasized elements such as promotional signage, window displays, floor layout, and product displays, while limited attention has been given to other important factors such as lighting and music (Dash et al., 2016). For example, Kaldeen and Mufeeth (2020) examined visual merchandising elements such as window displays, mannequin displays, promotional signage, and floor displays in relation to consumers' impulse buying behaviour. Kahaduwa and Rasanjalee (2021) found that product display and promotional signage had a significant positive influence on the impulsive buying behaviour of Sri Lankan modern trade customers and Faitira and Kaviya (2023) considered floor merchandising, shop brand names, window displays, and forum displays. However, research in both global and Sri Lankan contexts has given little emphasis to the role of lighting in visual merchandising.

Moreover, there remains a practical gap in understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer shopping patterns. No study has specifically investigated the combined effects of window displays, lighting, store layout, and promotional signage on impulse buying behavior of women in fashion stores, particularly in the Kurunegala District. This highlights a clear literature gap and justifies the need for the present study.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The research is significant as it systematically examines how visual merchandising influences women's impulse buying behavior in Sri Lanka. It provides valuable insights for fashion retailers to design attractive displays, enhance customer experiences, and optimize marketing strategies, ultimately boosting sales and gaining a competitive edge. The study also deepens understanding of consumer behavior within a specific cultural context, offering guidance for policymakers on responsible retail practices and contributing to academic knowledge for future research. By considering sociocultural factors, it helps retailers tailor strategies to local preferences and societal norms, creating more engaging and customer-centric shopping environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

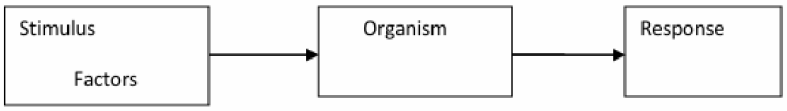
Stimulus organism response model Stimulus-organism-response model was developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). This model explains consumer behavior was directed by stimulus factors that enhance the internal state of people (organism) and then this emotion later transforms into specific behavior (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). The three dimensions based on the emotional responses to the environment elaborated by Mehrabian and Russell (1974): 1. Measuring pleasure regarding the verbal judgments based on the emotions such as happiness, joy, or satisfaction level in some scenarios. 2. Arousal can be measured using verbal judgment, such as the person ‘s happiness level or situation-based activeness. 3. Dominance can be predicted using the feelings of the respondent ‘s indication, which is in the form of willingness to be dominant and based on environmental situation influence.

Based on the three dimensions, assume that every individual may affect by emotional conditions by each environment. In the past decades, stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model has become one of the most commonly used frameworks that integrate input, process and outputs in a single model. To a great extent, this model helps in understanding the causes behind individual ‘s behavior and hence it is applied in addressing human behavior-related issues. Stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model is generally used to examine the

association between stimulus and response and to examine how the organisms mediate these relationships. This process occurs through different pathways in which environmental stimuli influence individuals' cognitive and emotional states, which subsequently lead to behavioural responses (Islam & Rahman, 2017). In this model, stimuli (S) induce two opposing types of responses (R) in the user: approach or avoidance.

Thus, internal assessments of individuals (O) of several motions in the world produce these behaviors. Figure 1 below presents the stimulus-organism-response framework by Mehrabian and Russell (1974).

Figure 1
Stimulus–Organism–Response Model



Note. Adapted from Mehrabian and Russell (1974).

Also, this model is considered to be best suited for understanding consumer decisions whether to admit and adopt or not (response) as it establishes cognitive appraisal of individuals (stimuli) (apprehensions & facilitating conditions).

However, other models such as (Technology acceptance model) TAM, unified technology acceptance and use theory (UTAUT) etc. are constrained and insufficient in elucidating how a stimulus initiates attitude and intention of the consumers (Dzandu et al., 2020). Thus, researchers have adapted the SOR methodology to incorporate complex aspects like cognitive and affective components into the process in their own study settings, due to its widespread applicability (Kim et al., 2020). Researchers have widely embraced and used the stimulus-organism-response model (S-O-R) to analyze behavior in the context of social media engagement (Islam & Rahman, 2017), mobile auctions (Chen & Yao, 2018), healthcare (Suess & Mody, 2018), online hotel booking behavior (Emir et al., 2016). To conclude, the S-O-R model signifies the relation among stimuli in the environment, emotional states of people and the behavior of approach or avoidance which arises from the collaboration of stimuli and emotion. Kim (2003) has developed a model of impulse purchasing process my

using the model adapted from Churchill and Peter (1998). In that model has mentioned visual merchandising factors (window display, in-store form display, floor merchandising and promotional signage) as external factors of the model. In the research of Visual merchandising and store atmospheric, has developed S-O-R model using product focused and retail focused.

Under product focused it has mentioned visual merchandising elements (colour, Mannequin, Sound and Smell) Basu et al. (2022). The SOR (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model, which was conceptualized in 1974, remains a relevant and widely applied framework in various fields to understand the intricate dynamics between individuals and their environment. The model is rooted in psychology and consumer behavior, and its enduring utility is a testament to its insightful structure. That model has used in numerous researches.

Validation of an S O-R model for situation, enduring, and response components of involvement (Arora, 1982), Application of the Stimuli-Organism- (S-O-R) Framework to Online Shopping Behavior (Kai, 2004), Consumers 'Shopping Value and their Responses to Visual Merchandise Displays in an In-store Retail Setting (Fister, 2009), Towards a Better Specification of the Store Environment Stimulus (Dublin, 2012), Visual merchandising and store atmospherics (Basu et al., 2022) are some of them. From its inception in 1974 to the present day, the SOR model has evolved and adapted to new technologies and changing societal dynamics. Its enduring relevance lies in its ability to capture the complexities of human responses to stimuli and its applications across an array of fields, ultimately aiding in understanding, predicting, and influencing human behavior in diverse contexts. SOR model is important for measuring the impact of visual merchandising on impulse buying behavior because it offers a systematic and holistic approach to understanding how external stimuli, internal processes, and consumer responses interact within a retail environment. This understanding can guide businesses in creating more effective and targeted visual merchandising strategies to influence consumer behavior and drive impulse purchases.

2.2. Empirical Literature

Table 1
Empirical Review

Authors	Title	Main Variables	Sample & Industry focused	Findings
Fernando et al. (2019)	Influence of Visual Merchandising on Fashion Oriented Impulse Buying Behavior	• Window Display • Interior Design • Floor Merchandising • Promotional Signage	100 respondents Fashion Industry	In this study, researcher identified that there is a strong positive relationship between promotion signage and impulse buying behavior and the analyzed results interpreted that the promotional signage would be more influencing factor on the fashion oriented impulse buying behavior in Colombo District.
Kaldeen and Mufeeth (2020)	Impact of Visual Merchandising of clothing stores on impulse buying behavior	• Window Display • Mannequin Display • Promotional Signage • Floor Display	200 Clothing Stores	Findings showed that there was a positive vital link between the impulse buying behavior of consumers and window display, mannequin display, floor merchandising and promotional signage and it was obvious that there was a significant association between the chosen visual merchandising practices and peoples 'impulse behavior in Ampara District. (Sri Lanka)
Mitra et al. (2020)	Examining The Key Determinants Of Visual Merchandising In Influencing Consumer Buying Behavior	• Window Display • Store Layout • Floor Merchandising • Promotional Signage • Cross Signage Visual Merchandising	130 respondents Fashion Industry	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.
Kahaduwa and Rasanjalee (2021)	Impact of visual merchandising on impulsive buying behavior of Sri Lankan modern trade customers	• Product Display • Floor Merchandising • Promotional Signage	392 Modern Trade Customers	Study discovered that visual merchandising methods had a significant customers' impulse buying behavior. Product Display is the most effective visual merchandising approach for enticing people to make impulsive purchases (Sri Lanka)
Thomas et al. (2018)	Impact of visual merchandising, on impulse buying	• Window Display • Mannequin Display	100 Retail Industry	Results proved that there were significant relationship between consumers' impulse buying

Authors	Title	Main Variables	Sample & Industry focused	Findings
	behavior of retail customers.	• Floor Merchandising • Promotional Signage		behavior and four types of visual merchandising.
Iberahim et al. (2019)	Visual merchandising and customers impulse buying behavior : A case of Fashion Specialty Store	• Window Display • Mannequin Display • Floor Merchandising • Promotional Signage • Lighting	150 Fashion Industry	In this study, floor merchandising and lighting were insignificant in influencing customers impulse buying behavior but equally relevant to entice customers into the stores as they were positively correlated.
Tesfaye (2022)	Effect of visual merchandising on consumer impulse buying behavior	• Window Display • Store Layout • Mannequin • Promotional Signage • Lighting • Pricing	116 Retail Industry	This study concludes that visual merchandising has an impact on consumer attention along with enhancing the consumer behavior
Faitira and Kaviya (2023)	The Effect of Visual Merchandising on Impulse Buying Behavior of Consumers in the clothing industry	• Floor Merchandising • Shop Brand Name • Window Display • Forum Display	200 Fashion Industry	The study revealed that there is a positive relationship between floor merchandising, shop brand name, window display and forum display.
Hasfa and Sobia (2018)	Role of Visual Merchandising in Impulse buying behavior: An exploration from the lens of young adult consumers	• Window Display • Store Layout • Brand Name • Lighting • Promotional Signage	300 respondents	There is sufficient evidence provided by the data, regarding significant relationships between selected visual merchandising techniques.
Adam (2020)	Impact of Visual Merchandising on customer impulse buying behavior in retail stores in Sudan	• Window Display • In store form • Floor Merchandising • Promotional Signage	All current buyers Alanfal mall in Khartoum city Retail Industry	Results of this study show that visual merchandising significantly influences customer impulse buying behavior in retail stores

Note. Researcher constructed (2023).

Based on empirical findings from past literature, the elements that give positive impact on customers ‘responses and their impulse buying behavior. From this table, several important

elements can be identified and used in the development of conceptual framework in the present study.

2.3. Impulse Buying Behavior

The importance of impulse buying in consumer behavior has been studied since the 1940's, since it represents between 40.0 and 80.0% of all purchases. This type of purchase obeys non-rational reasons that are characterized by the sudden appearance and the (in) satisfaction between the act of buying and the results obtained (Reisch & Zhao, 2017). Aragoncillo and Orús (2018) also refer that a considerable percentage of sales comes from purchases that are not planned and do not correspond to the intended products before entering the store.

Impulse buying behavior is considered an unplanned purchase by the consumer (Bellini & Aiolfi, 2019). Impulse buying behavior is a quick process that does not involve pre-planning or intention to buy beforehand. Generally, the customers do not plan to purchase the product in advance, and the decision is made on the spot. According to impulse buying behaviors occur when customers have a persistent, anticipatory, and intense need to purchase something immediately. It is an investment made for a specific reason, and the choice to purchase something is not based on deep thoughts (Iyer et al., 2020; Zafar et al., 2021).

According to Burton et al. (2018), impulse purchases occur when there is a sudden and strong emotional desire, which arises from a reactive behavior that is characterized by low cognitive control. This tendency to buy spontaneously and without reflection can be explained by the immediate gratification it provides to the buyer (Pradhan, 2018).Sohn and Ko (2021), argue that although all impulse purchases can be considered as unplanned, not all unplanned purchases can be considered impulsive. Unplanned purchases can occur, simply because the consumer needs to purchase a product, but for whatever reason has not been placed on the shopping list in advance. This suggests that unplanned purchases are not necessarily accompanied by the urgent desire that generally characterizes impulse purchases.

The impulse purchases arise from sensory experiences (e.g., store atmosphere, product layout), so purchases made in physical stores tend to be more impulsive than purchases made online. This type of shopping results from the stimulation of the five senses and the internet

does not have this capacity, so that online shopping can be less encouraging of impulse purchases than shopping in physical stores (Moreira et al., 2017).The buying experience increasingly depends on the interaction between the person and the point-of-sale environment, but it is not just the atmosphere that stimulates the impulsive behavior of the consumer Visual Merchandising.According to Iberahim et al. (2019), visual merchandising is an extremely important element as the first visual cue that affects buying behavior of customers. This study aims to identify determinants of visual merchandising that influence customer ‘s impulse buying behavior. This study focuses on five elements of visual merchandising which are window display, mannequin display, floor merchandising, promotional signage and lighting. Investigation was conducted at a popular fashion specialty store in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

A study conducted by Ellis, (2018), about the effect of visual merchandising on female consumer shopping behavior. The purpose of this qualitative research proposal is to investigate the effect visual merchandising has on female consumer shopping behavior.Kaldeen and Mufeeth (2020), conducted research about impact of visual merchandising of clothing stores on impulse buying behavior. The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between customer apparel impulse buying behaviors and visual merchandising such that window display, mannequin display, floor merchandising and promotional signage. The study was conducted at 20 selected famous clothing stores in Ampara district. A response of 200 fashion cloth customers was collected through the structured questionnaire.

According to Thomas et al. (2018), visual merchandising has been over the years through to be marketing tools in retail industries. The researchers embarked upon a study to find the impact of visual merchandising with reference to the retail sector. For this they have taken the reliance trend as a case and has done an in-depth study using its sample customers to find the impact of their buying behavior. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain information and to assess the impact of visual merchandising, on impulse buying behavior of customers. A sample size of 100 respondents was taken from Cochin and kottayam.

2.4. Window Display

Window displays are an essential instrument of communication and visual merchandising strategy for retailers that contribute 80 percent of the store exterior (Arulalan & Fields, 2021). The purposes of window displays are to convey types and positioning of merchandise in order to promote appealing images (Somoon & Sahachaisaree, 2018). Shoppers pay even more interest to an appealing, pleasing display; consequently, they are prone to buy instantly (Miao et al., 2019). Window display refers to the decorated display of a stores window to attract customers to the products. Usually, the term refers to larger windows in a shop arcade displaying items for sale or otherwise designed to attract customers to the store (Pushpa et al., 2017). A prospective customer when entering a mall is most attracted by the creative, elegant or stylish window displays. It often includes the merchandise displayed, props, theme display, fully dressed mannequins as well as accessories on plinths or hanging from special display equipment. Window displays can communicate style, content, and price. Display windows may also be used to advertise seasonal sales or inform passers-by of other current promotions. The main goal of display is to showcase the products within the overall display area. Customers give three to five seconds of their attention to window display. The retailer ‘s visual message should be conveyed to the customer in that short period of time (Nyagba & Tsetim, 2022).

2.5. Lighting

Lighting is used to highlight products. It creates excitement and has a positive impact on consumer purchasing behavior. A great deal of research has been undertaken on the impact of lighting on a customer ‘s purchase behavior. Results clearly indicate that in general, stores that are brightly lit, with the lights cleverly blending with the interiors lead to higher customer comfort, and as such, more sales. Different types of lighting and interiors are used on different floors, the change reflecting the various products that are on display on a particular floor, the proposed target audience and the time of the year. The ladies’ floor, for instance, is most often subtly lit with soft lights or then again, in summers, cool bluish lights are used to impact an impression of purchasing (Nyagba & Tsetim, 2022).

2.6. Store Layout

The layout of a store has been found to have a major impact on consumer behavior in both traditional and online settings (Krasonikolakis et al., 2018), and it has the ability to enhance shopper traffic, average transaction values, profitability, and optimize consumers‘shopping experiences to boost revenue and profitability (Hwangbo et al., 2017). Store layout, also referred to as store design or layout design, is a term used for the way retailers set up product displays, fixtures, and merchandise in-store. There’s no right or wrong way to lay out your store, but it‘s important to focus on your targetmarket, your space, and the types of products you sell to come up with a retail store layout that works for your business (Alexis, 2021).

2.7. Promotional Signage

Promotional signage in stores serves as a verbal cue to customers and influences store entry propensity (Lick et al., 2020). Signage can guide the customer through the store, name various departments and announce sales and merchandise (Flegar et al., 2020). Signage has been defined as "wording used either alone or in conjunction with in-store display to convey a product or promotional information to customers to inform and create demand for the merchandise" (Durai & Stella, 2020). It helps customers locate specific products, gives related information, explains customer benefits, and describes merchandise features. Benefit signs, or a combination of benefit and price, are among the most effective visual merchandising tools (Arulalan & Fields, 2021).

2.8. Importance of Visual Merchandising on Fashion Industry

Visual merchandising supports customers to have a better shopping experience, serves as a powerful marketing tool for the stores and enhances customer loyalty. As well as visual merchandising that is effective and well-designed can have a significant and beneficial impact on store sales.

- Visual merchandising helps the customers to easily find out what they are looking for.
- It helps the customers to know about the latest trends in fashion.
- The customer without any help can actually decide what he intends to buy.

- Visual Merchandising gives the store its unique image and makes it distinct from others.
- It increases the sales of the store and results in increased level of customer satisfaction.

2.9. Relationship Between Impulse Buying Behavior and Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandising is the way of optimizing the presentation of products and services to better highlight their features and benefits. Impulse buying has been described as an unplanned an immediate purchase where the consumer has no prior plans to purchase. Simply it is associated with an unplanned and sudden purchase which is united on the spot.

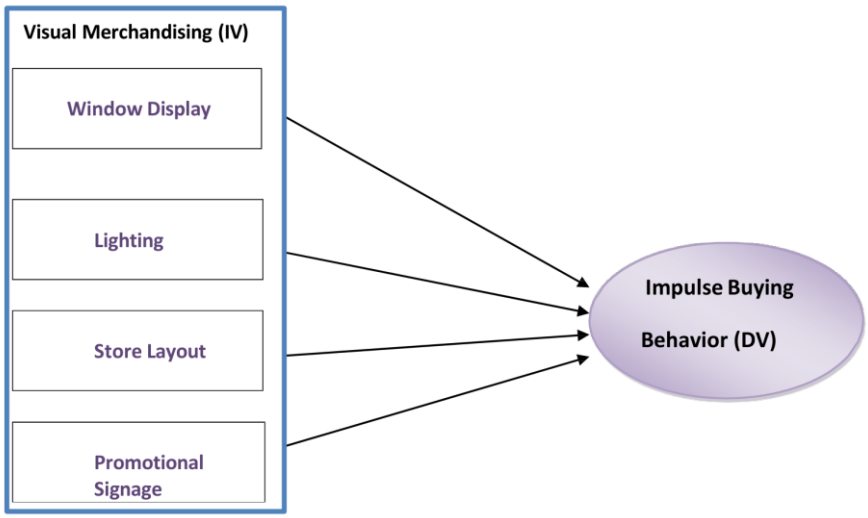
In the research of visual merchandising and customers 'impulse buying behavior has proven that window display, mannequin display and promotional signage are positively related and identified as determinants of effective visual merchandising for impulse buying decision at the women fashion store (Iberahim et al., 2019).

Randhawa et al. (2017) have attempted to explain the relationship between respondent 's impulse buying behavior and various types of visual merchandising. An important finding of this study was that visual merchandising practices certainly influence respondents 'impulse buying behavior. The results proved that there were significant relationships between respondents 'impulse buying behavior and window display and in-store/mannequin display.

This study investigates the effect of visual merchandising on customer in retail stores in Sudan. The findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between visual merchandising and consumers 'impulse buying behavior. Moreover, the study revealed that the strongest correlation exists between impulse buying behavior and window display next to floor merchandising followed by in store form and promotional signage (Adam et al, 2020).

2.10. Conceptual Framework

Figure 2
Conceptual Framework



Note. Conceptual framework developed by Tesfaye (2022).

To achieve research objects, researchers have developed four hypotheses as follow as;

H1: Window Display has a significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District

H2: Light has a significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District

H3: Store layout has a significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District

H4: Promotional Signage has a significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, positivist approach to examine the influence of visual merchandising on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior among women in the

Kurunegala District, Sri Lanka. A deductive strategy guided hypothesis development based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model.

A cross-sectional design was used, targeting women aged 25 and above who engage in fashion shopping. Using Cochran's (1977) formula, a minimum sample of 384 respondents was determined. Data were collected via a structured, self-administered online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms, covering demographics, four independent variables (window display, lighting, store layout, promotional signage), and impulse buying behavior, all measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Convenience sampling ensured respondents met the study criteria. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression to test hypotheses.

The study consisted of 384 female respondents residing in the Kurunegala District. Since the study specifically focused on women's fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour, all respondents were female.

Table 2
Demographic and Social Media Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	384	100
Education	Up to A/L	90	24
	Diploma	67	17.1
	Undergraduate	201	52.3
	Graduate	26	6.6
Monthly Income	Less than 20,000	28	7.1
	20,001–40,000	68	17.9
	40,001–60,000	122	58.1
	60,001–80,000	48	13.8
	Above 80,001	18	3.1
Total		384	100

Note. Survey data (2023).

As expected from the sampling criteria, all respondents were female. Regarding educational qualifications, the largest proportion of respondents were undergraduates, representing 52.3% of the sample. Respondents educated up to G.C.E. Advanced Level represented 24.0%, while

17.1% possessed diploma-level qualifications and 6.6% were graduates. This indicates that the sample was predominantly composed of women with undergraduate-level educational backgrounds.

The income distribution indicates that respondents represented several income categories, enabling the study to capture impulse buying behaviour across different economic backgrounds. The research therefore provides an understanding of fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour among women with different socioeconomic characteristics.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Reliability and Validity Test

4.1.1.Reliability Testing

The results of the reliability test depicted that all constructs in the study recorded Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.80, indicating strong internal consistency across the measurement scales. This confirms that the instrument used in the study is both reliable and appropriate for further statistical analysis. The table below presents the reliability statistics for each construct.

Table 3
Reliability Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	No of items	Internal Consistency
Window Display	0.918	3	Accepted
Lighting	0.889	3	Accepted
Store Layout	0.954	3	Accepted
Promotional Signage	0.938	3	Accepted
Impulse Buying	0.972	5	Accepted

Note. Survey data (2023).

The results indicate strong internal consistency among the measurement items. Store Layout recorded the highest Cronbach's alpha value (α = 0.954), followed by Impulse Buying (α = 0.972), Promotional Signage (α = 0.938), Window Display (α = 0.918), and Lighting (α = 0.889). These results demonstrate that the items used to measure each construct consistently represented their respective variables.

4.1.2.Validity Test

Table 4
KMO and Bartlett's Test Results of Constructs

Variable	KMO and Bartlett's value	P - Value	Adequacy
Window Display	0.747	0.0000	Accepted
Lighting	0.724	0.0000	Accepted
Store Layout	0.740	0.0000	Accepted
Promotional Signage	0.745	0.0000	Accepted
Impulse Buying	0.889	0.0000	Accepted

Note. Survey data (2023).

The findings demonstrate that all constructs achieved acceptable levels of sampling adequacy. The KMO value for impulse buying was particularly high at 0.889, while the values for the four visual merchandising dimensions were above 0.70. Furthermore, the significance values were below the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, the correlation patterns among the measurement items were sufficiently appropriate for subsequent statistical analysis.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

This section presents the descriptive statistics of the study's independent variables and dependent variable.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

		Impulse buying	Window Display	Lighting	Store Layout	Promotional Signage
N	Valid	384	384	384	384	384
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.5434	2.5417	2.5339	2.5530	2.5354
Median		2.0000	2.0000	4.0000	3.0000	2.0000
Std. Deviation		1.20987	1.22770	1.39746	1.32581	1.37057
Variance		1.464	1.507	1.953	1.758	1.878
Skewness		.458	.429	.439	.425	.448
Kurtosis		-1.516	-1.575	-1.605	-1.696	-1.633

Note. Survey data (2023).

The descriptive statistics indicate that the mean values of the study variables were relatively similar, ranging from 2.5339 to 2.5530. Store Layout recorded the highest mean value (M =

2.5530), followed by Impulse Buying (M = 2.5434), Window Display (M = 2.5417), Promotional Signage (M = 2.5354), and Lighting (M = 2.5339).

Lighting recorded the highest standard deviation (SD = 1.39746), indicating comparatively greater variation in respondents' perceptions, whereas Window Display recorded the lowest standard deviation (SD = 1.22770).The skewness values of all variables were within the range of -1 to +1, suggesting that the distributions were reasonably symmetrical and did not demonstrate substantial skewness.

4.3. Correlation Analysis

Table 6
Correlation Matrix of the Study's Variables

		Impulse Buying	Window Display	Lighting	Store Layout	Promotional Signage
Impulse Buying	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	384				
Window Display	Pearson Correlation	.925**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	384	384			
Lighting	Pearson Correlation	.944**	.946**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	384	384	384		
Store Layout	Pearson Correlation	.925**	.951**	.924**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	384	384	384	384	
Promotional Signage	Pearson Correlation	.945**	.939**	.933**	.948**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	384	384	384	384	384

Note. Survey data (2023). N = 384.
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation results demonstrate strong positive relationships between all four visual merchandising dimensions and fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour. The correlation

between Window Display and Impulse Buying was r = 0.925, while Lighting demonstrated r = 0.944. Store Layout was positively correlated with Impulse Buying at r = 0.925, and Promotional Signage demonstrated the strongest correlation with Impulse Buying at r = 0.945. All relationships were statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

These findings indicate that women who reported stronger perceptions of visual merchandising practices also tended to report stronger fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour. The results are broadly consistent with previous research identified in the study, which has reported positive relationships between visual merchandising and impulse buying behaviour. For example, previous studies cited in the research identified significant relationships involving window displays, store layout, and promotional signage.

4.4. Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the individual and combined influence of Window Display, Lighting, Store Layout, and Promotional Signage on fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour.

4.4.1.Model Summary

The model summary presents the overall power of the regression model.

Table 7
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.962[a]	.924	.924	.37856

Note. Survey data (2023).
a. Predictors: (Constant), Window display, Lighting, Store Layout and Promotional Signage. b. Dependent Variable: Impulse Buying.

The regression model produced an R value of 0.962, indicating a very strong overall association between the four visual merchandising dimensions and impulse buying behaviour. The R^2 value of 0.924 indicates that 92.4% of the variance in fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour is explained collectively by Window Display, Lighting, Store Layout, and Promotional Signage. The remaining 7.6% can be attributed to other factors not incorporated into the present model.

The high explanatory power of the model indicates that visual merchandising represents an important set of factors in explaining fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour among women in the study context.

4.4.2.ANOVA

The overall significance of the regression model is tested by the ANOVA results. The table below presents the ANOVA statistics.

Table 8
ANOVA Statistics

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	677.289	4	169.322	1181.546	.000[b]
	Residual	55.316	379	.143		
	Total	732.605	383			

Note. Survey data (2023).
a. Dependent Variable: Impulse Buying. b. Predictors: (Constant), Window display, Lighting, Store Layout and Promotional Signage.

The ANOVA results demonstrate that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F = 1181.546$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the combination of Window Display, Lighting, Store Layout, and Promotional Signage significantly explains variation in fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour.

The significant F-statistic provides evidence that the independent variables, when considered collectively, have explanatory value in relation to women's fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour in Kurunegala District.

4.4.3. Coefficient Statistics

Table 9
Coefficient Statistics

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.069	.054		1.290	.198
	Window Display	-.017	.063	-.017	.267	.790
	Lighting	.509	.053	.456	9.684	.000
	Store Layout	.118	.052	.120	2.273	.024
	Promotional Signage	.434	.052	.420	8.371	.000

Note. Survey data (2023).
a. Dependent Variable: Impulse Buying.

The coefficient analysis provides evidence regarding the individual contribution of each visual merchandising dimension.

Lighting demonstrated the strongest positive effect on impulse buying behaviour ($B = 0.509$, $\beta = 0.456$, $p < 0.001$). This was followed by Promotional Signage ($B = 0.434$, $\beta = 0.420$, $p < 0.001$) and Store Layout ($B = 0.118$, $\beta = 0.120$, $p = 0.024$). In contrast, Window Display demonstrated a negative but statistically insignificant coefficient ($B = -0.017$, $\beta = -0.017$, $p = 0.790$).

Accordingly, Lighting was the most influential predictor among the four visual merchandising dimensions, followed by Promotional Signage and Store Layout. The original research also identifies Lighting as having the highest coefficient, followed by Promotional Signage and Store Layout.

The resulting regression equation can therefore be expressed as:

$$IB = 0.069 - 0.017WD + 0.509L + 0.118SL + 0.434PS + e$$

Where:

- IB = Fashion-oriented Impulse Buying Behaviour
- WD = Window Display

- L = Lighting
- SL = Store Layout
- PS = Promotional Signage
- e = Error term

4.5. Discussion

4.5.1.Window Display

According to the Table 9 Significant level window display and impulse buying is 0.790. Under the 95% confidence interval, if the p value is less than 0.05, then that relationship is significant and if p value is greater than 0.05 then relationship is insignificant. Significant value of impulse buying and window display is greater than 0.05 (0.790>0.05). Therefore, window display has no significant impact on impulse buying. The coefficient for window display is - 0. 017.Significant value is use to test hypothesis. If relationship is significant between independent and dependent variable, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted based on the statistical significance of the results. This means that analysis provides evidence to support the idea that there is indeed a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the study. According to Table 9 significant value is greater than 0.05 and relationship is insignificant. So null hypothesis is accepted and alternative hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, following hypothesis is not accepted,

> H1: Window Display has no significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District

According to the Thomas et al. (2018), there is a strong relationship between window display and impulse buying behavior. Windows display acts as a stimulus for the customers to enter the store. Window display and impulse buying behavior are directly related; the regression analysis showed that window display had comparatively weak significance on customers 'impulse buying behavior (Sub Rata, 2022). In past studies had found that window display has a significant impact on impulse buying behavior.

4.5.2.Lighting

According to the Table 9 Significant level of lighting and impulse buying is 0.000. Under the 95% confidence interval, if the p value is less than 0.05, then that relationship is significant and if p value is greater than 0.05 then relationship is insignificant. Significant value of impulse buying and lighting is less than 0.05 (0.000<0.05). Therefore, lighting has significant impact on impulse buying. The coefficient for lighting is 0.509. It indicates that one unit increase in lighting leads to 0.509 units change in impulse buying.

Significant value is use to test hypothesis. If relationship is significant between independent and dependent variable, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. According to Table 9 significant value is less than 0.05 and relationship is significant. So null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, following hypothesis is accepted,

> H2: Lighting has a significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District

Lighting was found to be insignificant in influencing impulse buying behavior the (Iberahim et al., 2019). findings showed that the relationship between light and impulse buying behavior, as hypothesized in H1, is positive and significant, which supports the findings of prior research (Mohan et al., 2013; Saad & Metawie, 2015). In some past studies had found that light has no Signiant impact on impulse buying behavior and some researches had found that light has a significant impact on impulse buying behavior.

4.5.3.Store Layout

According to the Table 9 Significant level of store layout and impulse buying is 0.024. Under the 95% confidence interval, If the p value is less than 0.05, then that relationship is significant and if p value is greater than 0.05 then relationship is insignificant. Significant value of impulse buying and store layout is less than 0.05 (0.024<0.05). Therefore, relationship between store layout and impulse buying is significant. It can be identified as store layout has significant impact on impulse buying behavior.

Significant value is use to test hypothesis. If relationship is significant between independent and dependent variable, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. According to Table 4.14 significant value is less than 0.05 and relationship is significant. So null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, following hypothesis is accepted,

> H3: Store Layout has a significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District.

According to the Faitira and Kaviya (2023), Floor merchandising (store layout) has a positive impact on customer buying. A positive relationship between store layout and consumer impulse buying could be observed as described by (Bhatti & Latif, 2014).

4.5.4. Promotional Signage

According to the Table 9 Significant level of promotional signage and impulse buying behavior is 0.000. Under the 95% confidence interval, if the p value is less than 0.05, then that relationship is significant and if p value is greater than 0.05 then relationship is insignificant. Significant value of impulse buying behavior and promotional signage is less than 0.05 (0.000<0.05). Therefore, promotional signage has significant impact on impulse buying behavior. The coefficient for promotional signage is 0.434. It indicates that one unit increase in promotional signage leads to 0.434 units increase in impulse buying behavior.

Significant value is use to test hypothesis. If relationship is significant between independent and dependent variable, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. According to Table 4.14 significant value is less than 0.05 and relationship is significant. So null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, following hypothesis is accepted.

> H4: Promotional Signage has a significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District.

According to the Iberahim et al. (2019), promotional signage influenced the decision made by the customers on impulse buying. From observations done at the store, it was found that

the manager used attractive signage. The Pearson correlation test found a significant correlation between impulse buying and promotional signage. As expected, the regression analysis found that promotional signage significantly influenced customers 'impulse buying behavior. The R square value also showed positive relation of promotional signage with impulse buying behavior. This result suggests that promotional signage significantly influenced customers 'impulse buying behavior (Neha et al., 2013) attractive keywords such as buy one free one‖, clearance sales‖ and no rounded big price tags. The colorful promotional signage was located every corner of the store and almost on every mannequin and product displayed. The utilization of numerous numbers of signage at eye-level and above the head level has evidently conveyed the message that direct

The hypotheses were evaluated using the significance values obtained from the regression analysis. A relationship was considered statistically significant when the p-value was below 0.05.

Table 10
Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Variable	Hypothesis	Sig. value	Remark
Window Display	H1: Window Display has no significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District	0.79	Insignificant
Lighting	H2: Lighting has a significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District	0	Significant
Store Layout	H3: Store Layout has a significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District	0.024	Significant
Promotional Signage	H4: Promotional Signage has a significant impact on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala District	0	Significant

The results indicate that three of the four proposed hypotheses were supported. Lighting, Store Layout, and Promotional Signage demonstrated statistically significant positive effects on fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour. However, Window Display did not demonstrate a statistically significant effect.

According to the Thomas et al. (2018), there is a strong relationship between window display and impulse buying behavior. Windows display acts as a stimulus for the customers to enter the store. Window display and impulse buying behavior are directly related; the regression analysis showed that window display had comparatively weak significance on customers 'impulse buying behavior (Sub Rata, 2022). In past studies had found that window display has a significant impact on impulse buying behavior. But in here researcher conclude that women in Kurunegala District not attract with window display.

Lighting was found to be insignificant in influencing impulse buying behavior the (Iberahim et al., 2019). findings showed that the relationship between light and impulse buying behavior, as hypothesized in H1, is positive and significant, which supports the findings of prior research (Mohan et al., 2013; Saad & Metawie, 2015). In some past studies had found that light has no significant impact on impulse buying behavior and some researches had found that light has a significant impact on impulse buying behavior. In Kurunegala district lighting has a significant impact on impulse buying behavior.

If the p value is less than 0.05, then that relationship is significant and if p value is greater than 0.05 then relationship is insignificant. Significant value of impulse buying and store layout is less than 0.05 ($0.024<0.05$). Therefore, relationship between store layout and impulse buying is significant. It can be identified as store layout has significant impact on impulse buying behavior.

According to the Faitira and Kaviya (2023), Floor merchandising (store layout) has a positive impact on customer buying. A positive relationship between store layout and consumer impulse buying could be observed as described by (Bhatti & Latif, 2014).

According to the Iberahim et al. (2019), promotional signage influenced the decision made by the customers on impulse buying. From observations done at the store, it was found that the manager used attractive signage. The Pearson correlation test found a significant correlation between impulse buying and promotional signage. As expected, the regression analysis found that promotional signage significantly influenced customers 'impulse buying behavior. The R square value also showed positive relation of promotional signage with

impulse buying behavior. This result suggests that promotional signage significantly influenced customers 'impulse buying behavior (Neha et al., 2013). Significant value is use to test hypothesis. If relationship is significant between independent and dependent variable, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. So, it can be identified as promotional signage has significant impact on impulse buying behavior.

5. Conclusion

The research aimed to investigate the factors influencing impulse buying behavior by employing Stimulus Organism Response Model (SOR) as theoretical framework. These models have been utilized in prior research to understand the impact of factors like window display, lighting, store layout and promotional signage.

The study revealed several important findings:

- Lighting, store layout and promotional signage were found to have a positive and significant impact on impulse buying behavior of women in Kurunegala district.
- However, the relationship between window display and impulse buying behavior was deemed insignificant in this context.

Retailers operating in Kurunegala District are encouraged to fully appreciate the impact of visual merchandising on impulse buying behavior, particularly among women shoppers. By customizing lighting schemes, displays, and signage to align with the unique preferences and shopping behaviors of this demographic, retailers can create an environment that not only captures attention but also inspires spontaneous purchasing decisions. Recognizing the importance of visual merchandising in this Context can lead to increased sales, improved customer satisfaction, and a more dynamic and engaging shopping experience for women in Kurunegala District.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of visual merchandising on fashion-oriented impulse buying behavior among women in Kurunegala District. The study employs Stimulus Organism Response Model (SOR) as theoretical framework. The results show that lighting, store layout, and promotional signage were found to have a positive and significant

impact on fashion oriented impulse purchasing behavior of women. In addition, the Pearson correlation test found that promotional signage significantly influenced customers' impulse buying behaviors. The findings of this research validate the findings of the study. Retailers operating in the district are encouraged to fully appreciate this impact, particularly among women shoppers. By customizing lighting schemes, displays, and signage to align with the unique preferences and shopping behaviors of this demographic, retailers can create an environment that not only captures attention but also inspires spontaneous purchasing decisions. Recognizing the importance of visual marketing in this context can lead to increased sales, improved customer satisfaction, and a more dynamic and engaging shopping experience.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, several recommendations can be proposed for future research. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate additional visual merchandising elements beyond window display, lighting, store layout, and promotional signage, as visual merchandising is a multifaceted concept comprising various techniques that may influence consumer behavior. Further studies could also examine the impact of visual merchandising across different retail contexts and industries, considering variations in product categories, target consumer groups, and cultural factors. In addition, future researchers may employ experimental research designs alongside observational approaches to establish stronger causal relationships between specific visual merchandising elements and impulse buying behavior. Given the rapid growth of e-commerce, future studies should also explore how digital visual merchandising elements, such as website design, product presentation, product images, and interactive features, influence consumers' impulse buying behavior in online retail environments. Finally, cross-cultural studies are recommended to examine how differences in cultural values and consumer characteristics affect the effectiveness of visual merchandising strategies and their influence on impulse buying behavior across different cultural contexts.

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