

## Consumer Perception towards Visual Merchandising in Apparel Retailing

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**ABSTRACT:** Fashion is a major part in our day to day life. Persistent changes define a fashion and this change has been influenced by the introduction of visual merchandising in apparel retailing. Over the years there have been significant improvements in the field of small-scale apparel industries. It has turned into a consumer centered approach rather than the profit centered approach. At present retail industry is consumer centric. Therefore, most of the retailing industries are trying to attract the consumer with the visual merchandising tools. The fashion is also fast changing. Every now and then new fashions are introduced into the market. This creates competition among retailers. Today's fierce competition force the retailer to utilize various aspects of the visual merchandising technique to introduce new products to the consumer and also to improve the desirability of apparel products. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the tendency of consumer towards visual merchandising in retailing. The aim is to examine the influence of visual merchandising elements on consumer buying behavior. The study will explain the necessity of visual merchandising in the field of apparel business to meet the consumer demand.

**KEYWORDS:** Fashion, Apparel, Retailing, Visual Merchandising, Consumer Perception, Buying Behaviour.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Consumers of today's competitive world expects varieties in the way of market offering as well as differentiation in merchandise and buying environment [1]. In spite of having very good features in the apparel product of the retailing industry, it may face turbulent times for the lack of differentiation. At present competitive situation, the apparel business are characterized by a huge cut throat competition and the brands and retailers are ready to pay for undifferentiated merchandising. Fashion retailers in general, particularly apparel retailers give more importance on visual merchandising to make their offering special and unique [2]. Visual Merchandising has become the backbone of small-scale apparel industry, is totally aesthetic in science. Visual merchandising is a silent selling technique which aids in reducing the employee mix and increase per square feet returns so as to curtail overall marketing budget to a significant portion [3]. Visual merchandising comprises of activities which coordinate proper merchandise selection with appropriate and aesthetic display of merchandise. It is therefore, concerned with how the merchandise or a specific brand or an organization is connected visually to the consumer as well as whether the promotional activities are effective to convey the message appropriately [4]. Visual merchandising is the presentation of goods in attractive and eye catching techniques to display merchandise to potential customers [5]. The purpose of visual merchandising is to educate the customer, to enhance the company's or brand's image so as to encourage multiple sales by visual display of apparel together with accessories [6]. Due to the higher impact of visual merchandising in this competitive world, the retailers are ready to spend more on this prospect to attract consumers [7]. Retailing industries has drawn attention since last one decade. These small scale apparel industries has been one of the growth areas of the global economy, particularly in the developing countries [8]. Retailing business is a very much familiar business for the young entrepreneurs now-a-days, who invest their capitals in these small-scale industries working hard and try to attract their target consumers in a consumer centered approach-visual merchandising. Considering the issue of fulfillments of consumer demand, the most widely known scale for measuring quality is SERVQUAL, established to examine five dimensions of service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy [9]. Merchandise display, point to point display

and architectural display are the three types of interior display. In this study, we will focus on merchandise display which emphasizes various factors such as Layout of the store, fixturing, merchandising techniques, presentation techniques, color and packing of the merchandise etc. Visual merchandising includes various aspects of consumer such as sensory pleasure, affective pleasure and cognitive pleasure [10]. Under stress, consumers will make planned or nondiscretionary purchase and won't spend as much time or money on unplanned purchases [11]. The physical surroundings always influence buying behavior of the consumer is an observable feature that includes location of the store, merchandise display, store interior as well as exterior design, and noise level of the store [12]. Knowledge about consumer buying behavior is critical for apparel retailers due to the strong understanding of buyer behavior may help retailers to understand what is important to the consumer. It might also reflect the important influences on consumer decision-making. In using the above-mentioned information, apparel retailers can create visual merchandising displays that they believe will be of value to consumers. Images of the merchandise, music, icons, color, background patterns, animation, and fonts- all of these may influence a buyer to purchase for a specific product [13]. In this paper, we will try to investigate the perception of consumer towards visual merchandising in retailing industry.

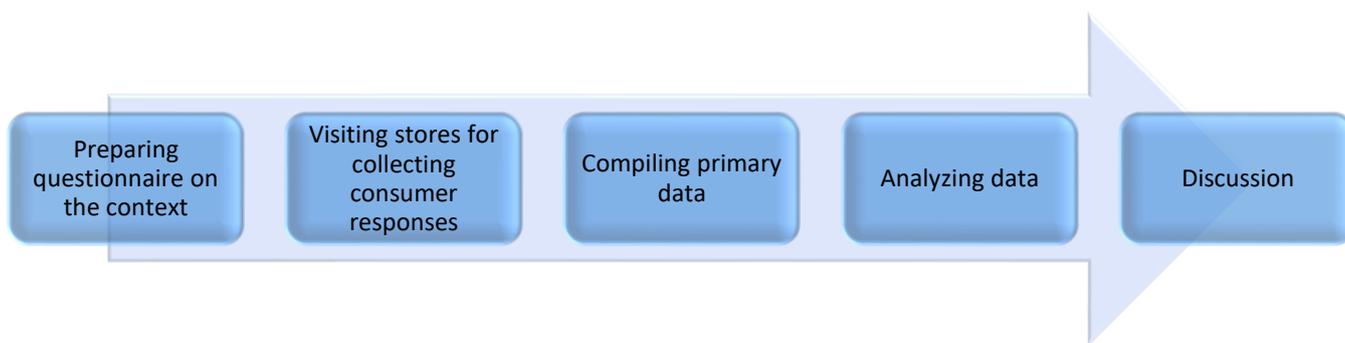
## **2 EXPERIMENTAL**

### **2.1 DATA COLLECTION**

The data was collected from the customers by using questionnaires in the super marts or big retailers shop who came there for shopping and they were also our samples. The 300 questionnaires were filled by the actual shoppers. They were asked several questions to find out some key dimensions such as-frequency of visiting in apparel retail stores, how the consumer get informed once a new product is launched, their perception on store layout, how store color affect their purchase behavior, how an attractive window or software leads towards purchasing etc.

### **2.2 METHODOLOGY**

In this study, we have collected quantitative data such as consumer's perceptions against different dimensions. A fixed number of consumers (300 people) were asked several questions to find out their preference on visual merchandising. After collecting data, the impact of visual merchandising on buying decisions of customers were understood. The overall flow process is shown here.



*Fig. 1. Overall Process sequence of the study*

## **3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 DEMOGRAPHIC RESULT**

The purpose of the research is to show how consumers respond to visual merchandising and how an application of visual merchandising strategies can benefit small apparel stores. Survey has done with three hundred (300) people.

Table 1. Demography of the respondents

Description Frequency			Percentage
Gender	Male	150	50.00%
	Female	150	50.00%
Age	20-30	134	44.67%
	30-40	166	56.33%

3.2 PARAMETERS

3.2.1 FREQUENCY OF VISITORS TO APPAREL STORE

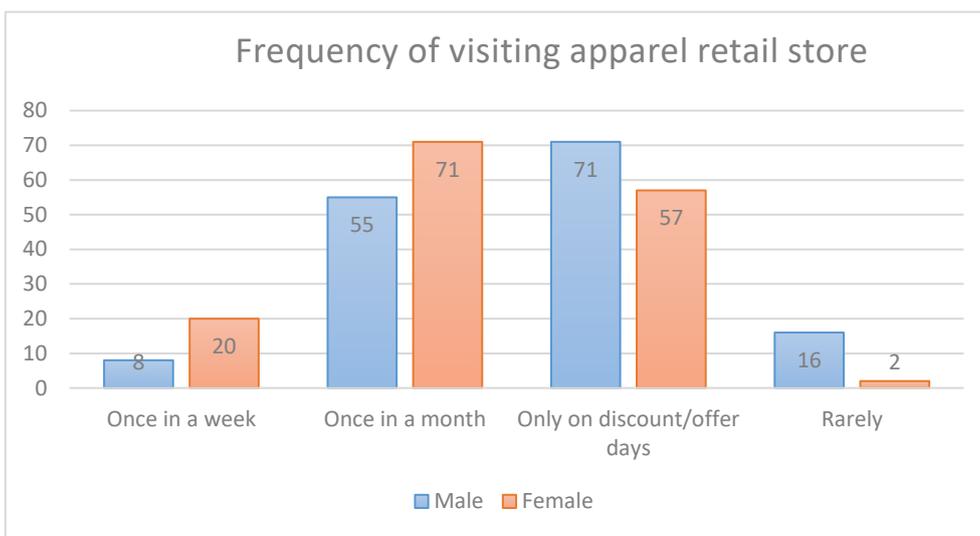


Fig. 2. Frequency of visiting apparel retail store

It is observed that 9.33% of consumers are coming the store once in the week, 42.00% visitors are coming once in a month, 42.67% of them are interested to come only on offer days, and male samples are mostly interested in offer days.

3.2.2 IMPACT ON NEW PRODUCT ARRIVAL IN THE STORE

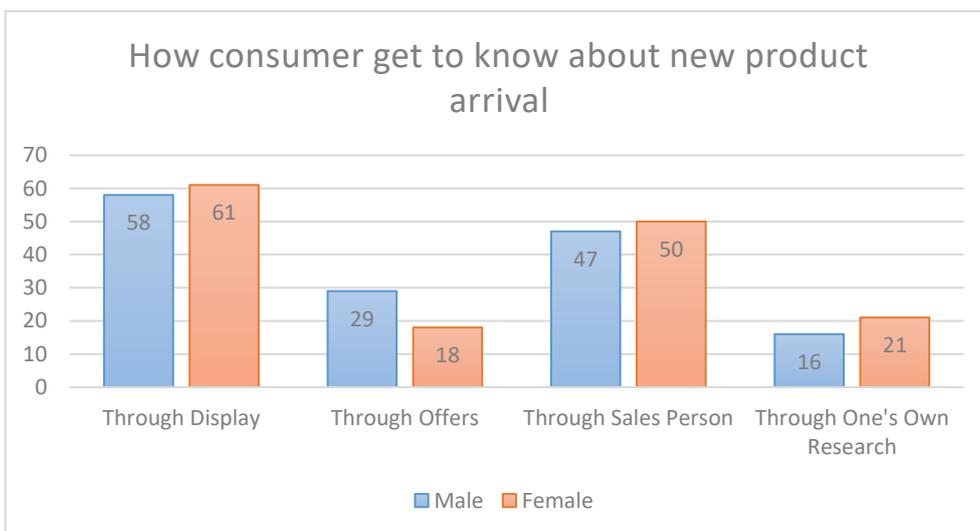
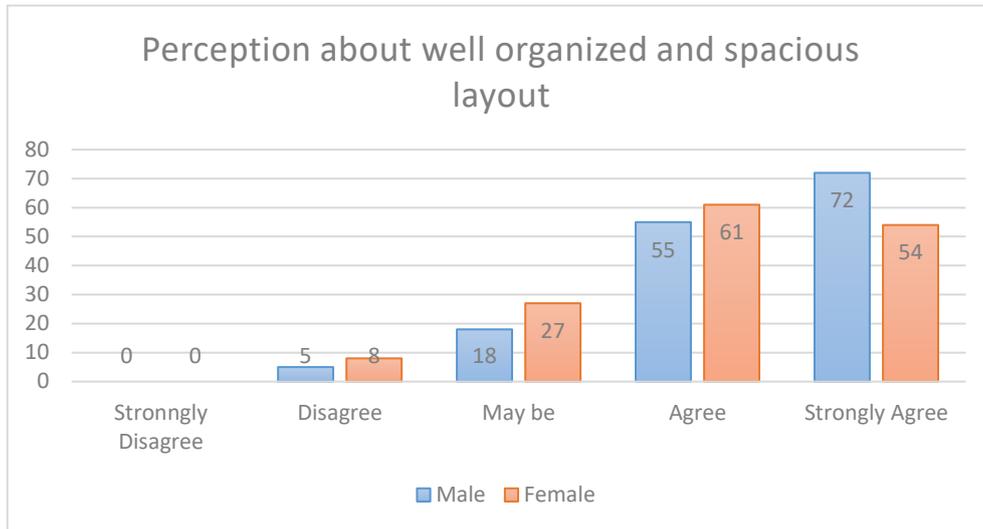


Fig. 3. How consumer get to know about new product arrival

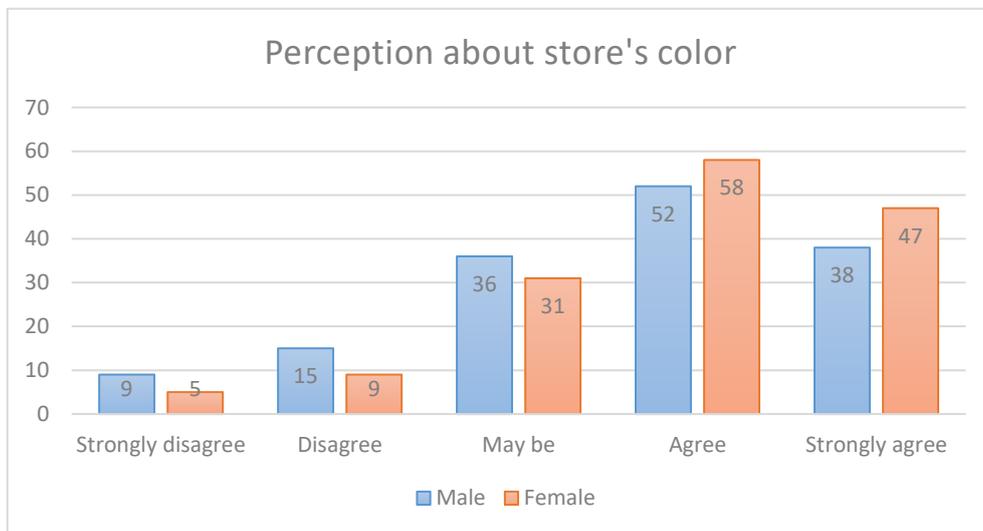
From the above interpretation it was observed that 38.67% of the male consumers and 40.67% of female consumers came to know about the new product arrival in the store through display of the product which indicated that visual merchandising is making awareness about new product better than offers offered for the customers on new products.

**3.2.3 PERCEPTION ABOUT STORE LAYOUT/DESIGN**



**Fig. 4. Perception about well-organized and spacious layout**

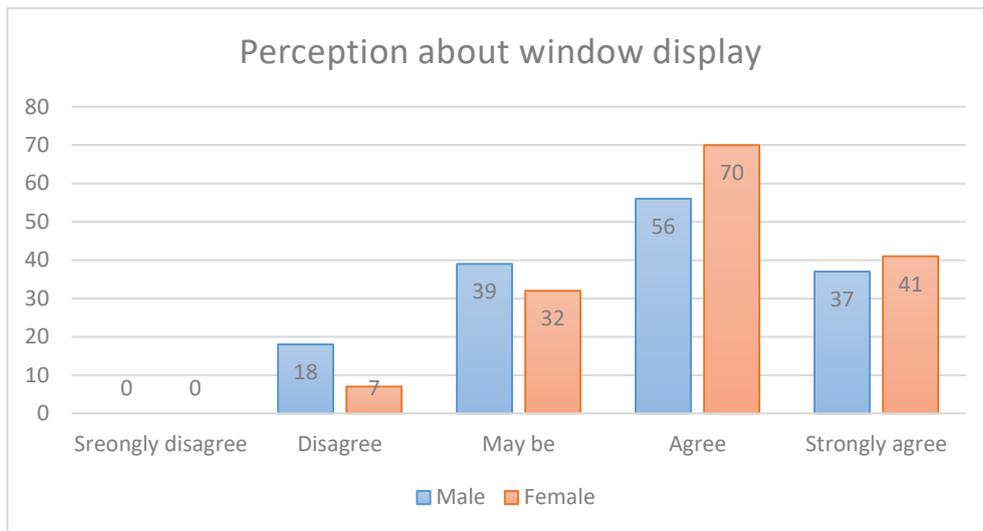
**3.2.4 PERCEPTION ABOUT STORE'S COLOR**



**Fig. 5. Perception about store's color**

Customers like colorful store, as they find it very comfortable to browse for the longer time. Store’s color is a key dimensions for both male and female consumers but the later has the significant proportions.

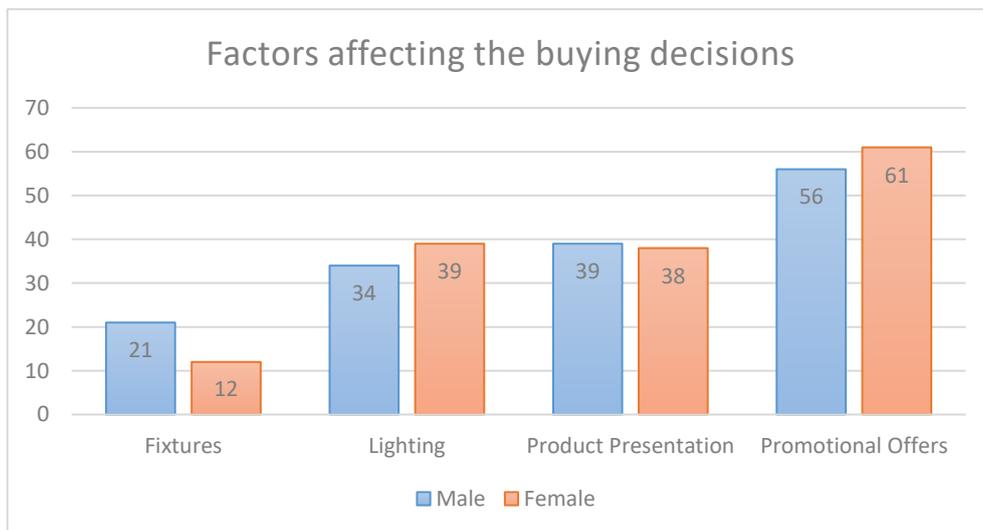
**3.2.5 PERCEPTION ABOUT WINDOW DISPLAY**



**Fig. 6. Effect of window display on purchase**

Maximum of the respondents’ emphasis on the window display, as it’s the first thing through which customers get connected to the stores. It is the great way to showcase store’s offerings and draw customer’s attention.

**3.2.6 FACTORS AFFECTING THE BUYING DECISIONS**



**Fig. 7. Factors affecting the buying decisions**

Fixtures make easy findings of products both for retailers and customers. But, it has no such affect in buying decisions. On the other hand lighting and product presentation has a great effect on customer’s decision making. Proper lighting and appropriate product presentation helps customers to visualize the aesthetics of the product before buying. Again, small retail space appears more open with proper lighting. Around 39% people are influenced by promotional offers.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the approaches of customers towards visual merchandising as well as how visual merchandising strategies could benefit small apparel clothing stores. Visual merchandising has numerous aspects and its application area is vast, but this study focused primarily on top most elements of visual merchandising strategies. The study is more specific for small scale apparel retail business. It is the store layout design that got most preferences from the consumers, who were interviewed. The respondents enjoyed shopping in stores with innovative and well-organized designs. This study also shows that colorful visual assortment increases their probability of making a purchase. Thus, small apparel stores may benefit by utilizing colors to encourage sales. Another strategy was window display in which maximum number of respondents strongly believes that window displays make retail stores more attractive which leads towards repeat purchasing. The study on store lighting revealed that proper lighting influences customer's shopping experience. In addition, respondents can match the items and visualize how the product will suit him/her before buying. Appropriate use of lighting and product display help store to boost its sale. Unique fixtures capture attention, but it has very little effect on purchase. Well decorated entrance also attract potential buyers. So, it is clear that all the techniques of visual merchandising have significant impact on consumers purchasing behavior.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The authors are grateful to the Department of Textile Engineering, Green University of Bangladesh for providing various support.

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