

**VISUAL MERCHANDISING IN A RETAIL STORE****Pradeep Kumar B<sup>\*1</sup>, Sharan U<sup>\*2</sup>**<sup>\*1,2</sup>Department of Fashion Technology, Bannari Amman Institute of Technology, Sathyamangalam, India**ABSTRACT**

Visual merchandising has gained importance in contemporary retail research and practice. Initially considered as an essential element of retail store atmospherics, the scope of visual merchandising has now extended well beyond the usual reference of a visual stimulus. As research on visual merchandising and store atmospherics continues to converge, this systematic literature review aims to identify the research gaps and overlaps to help researchers with directions on formulating original research ideas in this cross-over domain. A framework-based review using Theory, Context, Characteristics, and Methods (TCCM) typology with an integrated analysis of 88 research articles published between 2000 and 2024 was carried out. It was found that visual merchandising as a product-driven display function has been closely related to store atmosphere as a store-wide display function. Hence an integrated framework of research in visual merchandising and store atmospherics becomes imperative to understand their interplay in the evolving scope of traditional and e-tailors' environments. The paper contributes as the first and most comprehensive review of research on visual merchandising with the closely substitutable domain- store atmospherics.

**Keywords**

Visual merchandising Store atmospherics Store atmosphere Structured literature review TCCM framework

**INTRODUCTION**

Visual merchandising has evolved as an important component of the retail store environment (Wu, Kim, & Koo, 2015). It is regarded as a critical manifestation of the retail brand (Bailey and Baker, 2014, Mills et al., 1995). Marketing historians suggest that visual merchandising gained prominence in the 18th century (Laermans, 1993, Parker, 2003). Attractive public displays of merchandise, from planning the store window schema with mannequins (Law, Wong, & Yip, 2012) to the internal arrangement of materials meant for sale (Law et al., 2012) were seen as useful cues to convert prospects into buyers and promote sales (Belland Ternus, 2006, Bitner, 1992, Davies and Ward, 2002, Kotler, 1974, Omar, 1999, Walter and White, 1987). Retailers' growing need to transition from the "verbal engagement" of the sales personnel to a more subtle form of a "sensory experience"-based selling environment prompted the practice of visual merchandising (Parker, 2003). It was established as a "silent selling technique" that focused on the strategic display of merchandise to promote retail sales (Park, Jeon, & Sullivan, 2015). To substantiate the impact of visual merchandising on retail performance in terms of the positive consumer as well as retail employee behaviors, researchers postulated the effects of proper placement (Skandrani, Mouelhi, & Malek, 2011), quality of materials, and the aesthetic appeal of retail merchandising with favorable results (Benjamin, 1999, Kerfoot et al., 2003, Parker, 2003).

In the last century, the rise of department stores further pushed the need to comprehend the effective role of visual merchandising across retail categories (Bide, 2018). Particularly, it was widely studied in the context of apparel and fashion retailing (Ha et al., 2007, Jang et al., 2018, Khakimdjanova and Park, 2005, Law et al., 2012, Lea-Greenwood, 1998, Park et al., 2015, Zibafar et al., 2019). Nevertheless, retailers in other categories recognized the vital role of visual merchandising for retail success (Ha et al., 2007, Lea-Greenwood, 1998). Positive effects of visual merchandising on store image (Ha et al., 2007, Hartman, 1995); customer service expectations, and evaluations were established (Stanforth & Lennon, 1997). Moreover, its role in influencing a shopper's decision to enter a store (Sen, Block, & Chandran, 2002) and explore (Cant & Hefer, 2012) made it an interesting study topic. Eventually, the scope of visual merchandising practice and research widened (Swanson & Everett, 2000). In the fast-evolving online retail space, visual merchandising continued to remain relevant with comparable objectives of attracting customers and converting sales (Eroglu et al., 2003, Ha and Lennon, 2010, Ha et al., 2007). Despite rising importance, the academic enquiry in visual merchandising remained

fragmented primarily owing to its lack of functional distinctiveness (Lea-Greenwood, 1998). Sporadic work on visual merchandising and other related areas within the wider domain of the retail environment adds to the confusion. Comparable aspects of store atmosphere or atmospherics as a critical component of the retail store environment (Berman and Evans, 2001, Zhou and Wong, 2004) and its similar effects on shopping behavior (Hoffman and Turley, 2002, Sirgy et al., 2000) visual merchandising is noted. However, despite overlaps- the development of visual merchandising as an independent branch of study became apparent in the post millennium phase of research (Bell and Ternus, 2006, Pegler and Bliss, 2006, Bhalla and Anuraag, 2010, Wu et al., 2015). Hence, in the absence of a systematic review of visual merchandising or that of store atmosphere, there was a felt need to carry out a literature-based enquiry to uncover the divergences in these seemingly converging domains to avoid further confusion among researchers. This framework-based review would not only serve as the first and comprehensive effort to detail the course of research in the domain of visual merchandising but also help in demarcating its scope relative to closely substitutable sub-domains of the retail environment such as the store atmosphere or atmospherics. We attempt to systematically summarize the literature published in the first twenty years of the current century, to identify issues, gaps, and convergences of ideas in the field of visual merchandising and its cross over domains. In congruence with highly cited framework-based review articles (Paul and Benito, 2018, Rialpetal., 2005, Paul and Rosado-Serrano, 2019), the authors considered set of 88 articles published in impactful journals to provide directions for research. The present article seeks to provide insights around the following four research questions:

RQ1. Does visual merchandising research by itself qualify as a legitimate field of independent study?

RQ2. What are the overlapping areas of research in visual merchandising with that in closely substitutable domains of store atmospherics and others?

RQ3. What are the research gaps in the area of visual merchandising relative to research in closely substitutable domains of store atmospherics and others?

RQ4. What kind of theories, constructs, and methods should be used in future research studies in this area?

Hereafter, this review is structured as follows. In order to address RQ1 and RQ2, Section 2 presents the theoretical underpinnings of visual merchandising as a concept, and its overlapping dimensions with store atmosphere/ atmospherics are discussed. In Section 3, we elaborate on the review methodology used. Section 4 presents a comprehensive overview of research in the area of visual merchandising and its substitutable domains. Section 5 gives an integrated summary of the findings using the Theory, Context, Characteristics and Method (TCCM) framework propounded by Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019) framework to address RQ3. Section 6 focuses on RQ4 to provide directions for future research mapped with the findings discussed in the previous section following the TCCM framework. Finally, Section 7 is used to provide a summary of the paper highlighting the limitations.

### 1.1 Advantages of Visual Merchandising for Store Layout

Visual merchandising plays a crucial role in the overall success of a retail store layout by enhancing the customer experience, driving sales, and creating a strong brand identity. Some of the key advantages of visual merchandising for store layout include:

**1. Attracts Attention:** Well-designed visual displays and arrangements capture the attention of passersby, drawing them into the store. Eye-catching window displays and strategically placed signage can entice potential customers to explore further.

**2. Enhances Brand Image:** Visual merchandising allows retailers to show case their brand identity and personality through the store layout. Consistent branding elements such as color schemes, signage, and displays help reinforce

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brand image and create a memorable shopping experience.

**3. Encourages Exploration:** Thoughtfully arranged merchandise and displays encourage customers to explore different areas of the store. By strategically positioning products and creating visually appealing displays, retailers can increase dwell time and encourage impulse purchases.

**4. Facilitates Navigation:** An effective store layout with clear signage and well-defined pathways makes it easier for customers to navigate the store. Visual cues such as markers, directional signs, and floor graphics help shoppers find what they're looking for quickly and efficiently.

**5. Increases Sales:** Visual merchandising techniques such as product grouping, cross-selling, and up selling can help boost sales. By showcasing complementary products together or highlighting promotions, retailers can encourage customers to purchase more items.

**6. Creates Atmosphere:** The ambiance and atmosphere of a store play a significant role in shaping the shopping experience. Visual merchandising elements such as lighting, music, and decor contribute to creating a welcoming and immersive environment that resonates with customers.

**7. Differentiates from Competitors:** A well-executed visual merchandising strategy can set a store apart from its competitors. Unique displays, creative presentations, and innovative merchandising techniques help capture attention and leave a lasting impression on customers.

**8. Promotes Seasonal and Trendy Items:** Visual merchandising allows retailers to showcase seasonal products and capitalize on current trends. By regularly updating displays and decoration to reflect changing seasons and consumer preferences, retailers can stay relevant and drive sales.

**9. Improves Customer Engagement:** Interactive displays, product demonstrations, and experiential elements incorporated into the store layout can enhance customer engagement. Encouraging customers to interact with products or participate in activities creates a memorable shopping experience and fosters brand loyalty.

### 2.1 LITERATURE SURVEY

- Textbook of VISUAL MERCHANDISING–ROLE OF MERCHANTISERS [author Gibson G. Vedamani, Retail management functional principles and practices. Third edition, jaico publication.]

Retail management functional principles and practices had clearly laid down the important role of visual merchandiser. According to him today in retail scenario in India or anywhere in the world visual merchandisers play a major role in enhancing sales and the customer experience. Visual Merchandisers performs the major functions and duties for the retail format to be successful.

‘Retail Environment and Operation’ [author: Andrew.j.Newmen and peter Cullen (2007)]

‘Retail Environment and Operation’ defines merchandiser as one who targets the right people, with right merchandise at the right time in the right place. The right people are retail customer’s one wish to target. The right place means that the store must have a suitable quantity of floor space and appropriate merchandise for the area it is located in.

- **‘Managing merchandising** [author: Dalal, M. (2009), Apparel, Vol.20, Issue. 7, pp164-170.]

The merchandising process as a set of activities designed to provide the right goods at the right time through right medium at the right price in the right mix of the right quantity from the right source as per the requirement of the business.

- **“Inspired by passion”**[author: J3 Santosh Nair(2011), inspired by passion, Visual Merchandising and Retail design, Volume 6 (May 2011), issue 5, pp25.]

“Today as mass media takes central stage when budget are allotted, Visual Merchandising is always given an afterthought. Nonetheless, the scenario has drastically improved. However, it’s about time retailers understood that merchandise is sold as a result of in-store presentation rather than all other forms of marketing and advertising communications. Once this awareness and realization seeps in, Visual merchandising will explode like never before”.

**‘Attractive displays’** [author: Waters.S. Attractive displays retrieved 25th August 2012]

Attractive window display by the use of tool box and the element of effective visual merchandising. According to her creating an attractive product display can draw the customer in, promote a slow moving item, announce a sale or welcome a season. She further explained how to create an attractive visual display with elements such as balance, color, focal point, size of objects, lighting and simplicity and signage. She concluded by stating that creating an attractive display takes a little skill and lots of trial and error.

- **Utilization of Trends in Visual Merchandising in India**[author: Chaudhary(2008) Trends in Visual merchandising in India, retrieved 25th August 2012]

According to them visual techniques in these markets are subtle, aesthetically appealing and yet economical. They further mentioned that display is a technique of showcasing merchandise by putting them in a fashion which is aesthetically appealing and at the same time is able to convey a story line. They also mentioned that Displays are done using mannequins and other props which make the displays attractive and effective. They further mentioned about the music played in most of the stores keep the atmosphere lively and relaxed. They concluded by stated that visual merchandising is a technique called ‘Silent Salesman’; and is widely used in market to increase footfalls and attract shoppers and make shopping a pleasant experience to one and all.

- **Retail and Distribution management**[author: Lea-Greenwood, Gaynor, International journal of Retail and Distribution management 1998]

Integrates visual merchandising with promotional management. According to him visual merchandising was reinforced with stills from the television, cinema and magazine advertising campaign within window and internal displays, thereby supporting the featured merchandise. Store personnel were fully briefed on the merchandise featured in the campaign and, for the company, the success was "measurable" by sales of the featured merchandise and a more "positive" view of the brand, according to the marketing manager. The buyer's role was to ensure that there was enough merchandise to support the demand that would be created. Layouts reflected the merchandise that was to be featured. All personnel at store level were informed not only of what was to be featured but also where, e.g. television and region, and when, e.g. in the break of a popular soap. This ensured a cohesive campaign with integrated effort and clear objectives.

- **“journal of fashion marketing and management”** [author: Young, Ha; Know, Wi-suk; Lennon, Sharron j. (2007)(Journal of Fashion marketing and Management

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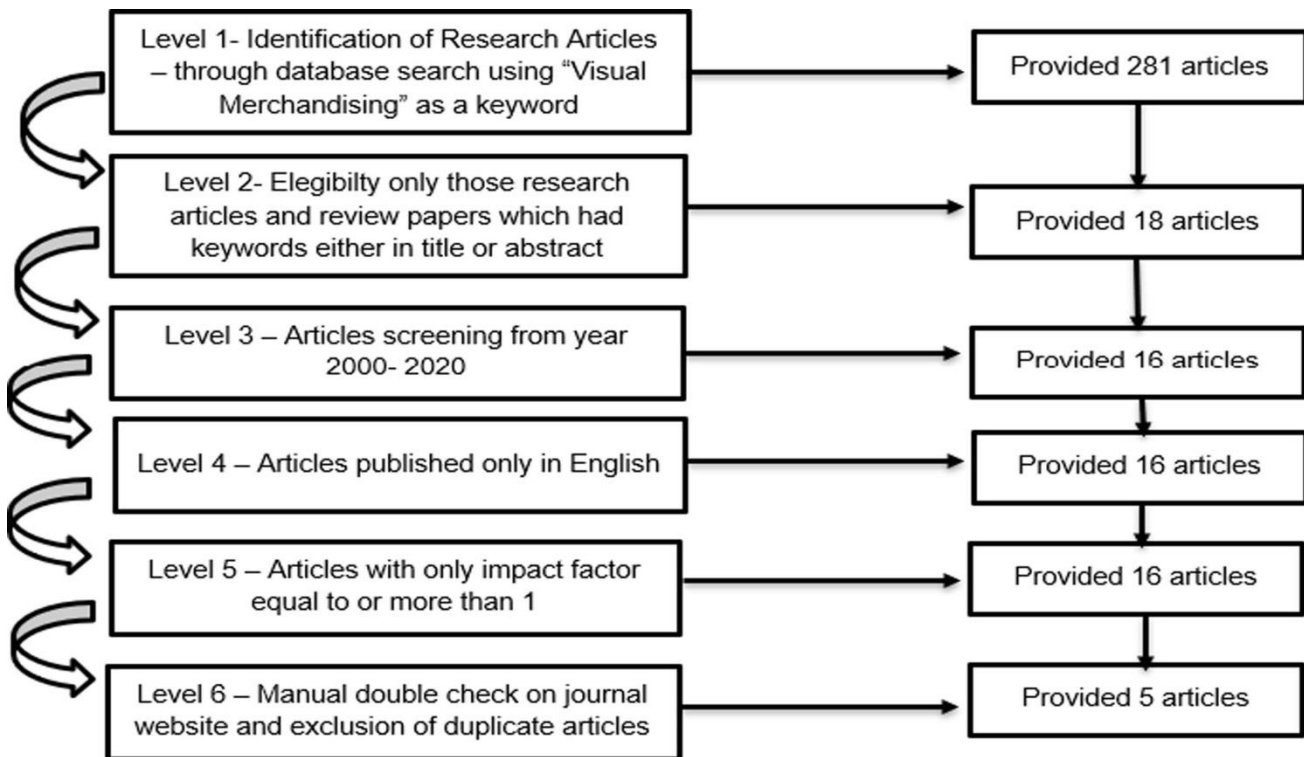
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*Online visual merchandising (VMD) of apparel]*

In-store visual merchandising includes floor layout, interior design, signage, in- store promotion and product mix that attracts customers

**OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

As supported by extant literature, the four primary search terms used were “visual merchandising,” “store atmospheric,” “store atmosphere,” and “atmospheric/ atmospherics.” Considering the frequency of other words (as elaborated in the previous section), such as “design,” “store environment,” “store layout”, “store ambience,” “store image,” “merchandise,” and “display” as elements of visual merchandising and atmospherics, a word association test with three independent subject experts was carried out. Independent coding (1 used for association and 0 used for no association) by the three experts was compiled for the final scores. The cumulative scores and qualitative remarks by the independent subject experts included three additional terms ,namely “store layout,” “store ambience” ,and “merchandise display”, which were also considered to be included for the article search..



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### 3.1 Problem identification:

While visual merchandising presents numerous challenges, such as space limitations, budget constraints, and evolving consumer trends, strategic planning, creativity, and collaboration can help retailers overcome these obstacles..

#### 3.1.1 Solution identification:

To focus on create the virtual store's layout utilizing a physical store. to encourage the cycle of Create immersive virtual retail experiences (VR) or allow customers to see products in their real-world surroundings (AR) with AR and VR applications. Customers will feel more confident and have fewer returns if they can trial before they buy. Make use of beacons to deliver consumers' smart phones customized notifications or offers based on where they are in the store. Promote pertinent products, make the shopping experience more unique, and foster in-store interaction. Attach RFID tags to goods to allow for real-time inventory control and tracking. Reduce out-of-stock situations, increase inventory accuracy, and improve the supply chain as a whole.

### 3.2 Market trend analysis

Consumers increasingly seek personalized shopping experiences. Retailers are using data analytics and customer segmentation to tailor visual merchandising strategies, offering personalized product recommendations and targeted promotions based on individual preferences and behavior. The rise of Omnichannel retailing, visual merchandising is being integrated across multiple channels, including brick-and-mortar stores, e-commerce websites, mobile apps, and social media platforms. Consistent branding and messaging across these channels create a seamless shopping experience for customers. Interactive displays and digital signage are becoming more prevalent in retail stores. Touch screen kiosks, augmented reality (AR) mirrors, and interactive product demos engage customers and provide them with immersive shopping experiences, driving both foot traffic and sales..

#### 3.5.1 Market feasibility

Understand the demographics, preferences, and shopping behaviors of your target market. Determine if



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there is demand for visually appealing displays and if your target customers are likely to respond positively to visual merchandising efforts. Analyze the visual merchandising strategies of competitors in your industry.

### 3.5.2 Financial feasibility

Determine the upfront costs of designing visual merchandising displays, including the services of designers or visual merchandising experts, as well as the materials and props needed for the displays.

### 3.5.3 Scalable Feasibility

Technology Integration: Leverage technology solutions such as digital asset management systems, collaboration tools, and communication platforms to streamline the implementation and management of visual merchandising initiatives across multiple locations. Use cloud-based software to centralize data, resources, and communication channels for efficient collaboration.

### 3.6 Objective of the proposed work

- Interior design for the store layout, together with as how case of new applications for consumers.
- Configurations of VM in design AR, VR and smart mirror.

### 3.7 Raw materials and method

Visual merchandising in a retail store involves creating attractive displays and arranging products in a way that captures customers' attention and encourages them to make purchases. Raw materials and methods for visual merchandising canary depending on the store's theme, target audience, and the products being sold. The raw materials required for the VM in our project are

- Props
- Product Inventory
- Visual Elements
- Theme Development
- Colour Coordination
- Lighting
- Storytelling
- Grouping and Layering

### 3.8 Equipment/process/methods/standard used for project development

#### 3.8.1 Subject of Window Display

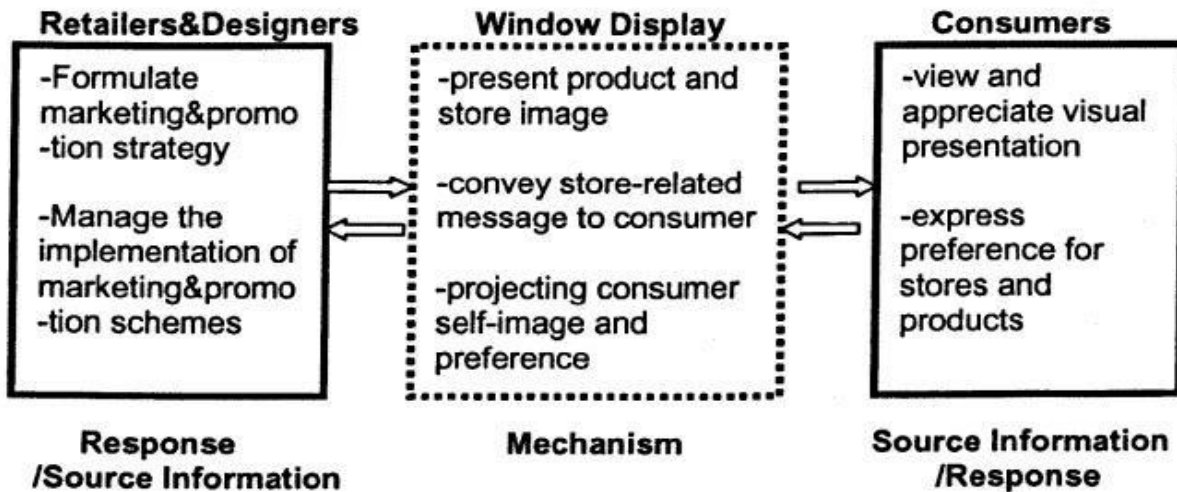
It fills the interstices between visual images, consumer psychological attributes and commercial standards and requirements. Understanding the connection between these three attributes, certainly will enhance our ability to further understand how window display 'works as a representational system and signifying practice' (Schroeder, 2002 p 33). As the consumer's 'point of view' growing more prominent in affecting commercial design outcome, window display can be regarded as a media that filters consumer perception into design

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### 3.6.1 The Role of Window Display



According to this framework and the above description, window display can be defined as a form of communication media between retailers and consumers. An effective window display works in two aspects. Firstly, it presents the consumer with information they feel suits their preference and needs. Secondly, it can be used as a media to detect consumers' cognition about the brand and products, and then the retailer can use this information to improve the structure and contents of their marketing scheme. Not only may this improvement occur in store windows but also in the overall marketing strategy.

#### PROPOSED WORK MODULES

##### 4.1 VISUAL MERCHANDISING IN A RETAIL STORE FEASIBILITY TO ATTAIN THE REQUIRED RESULT

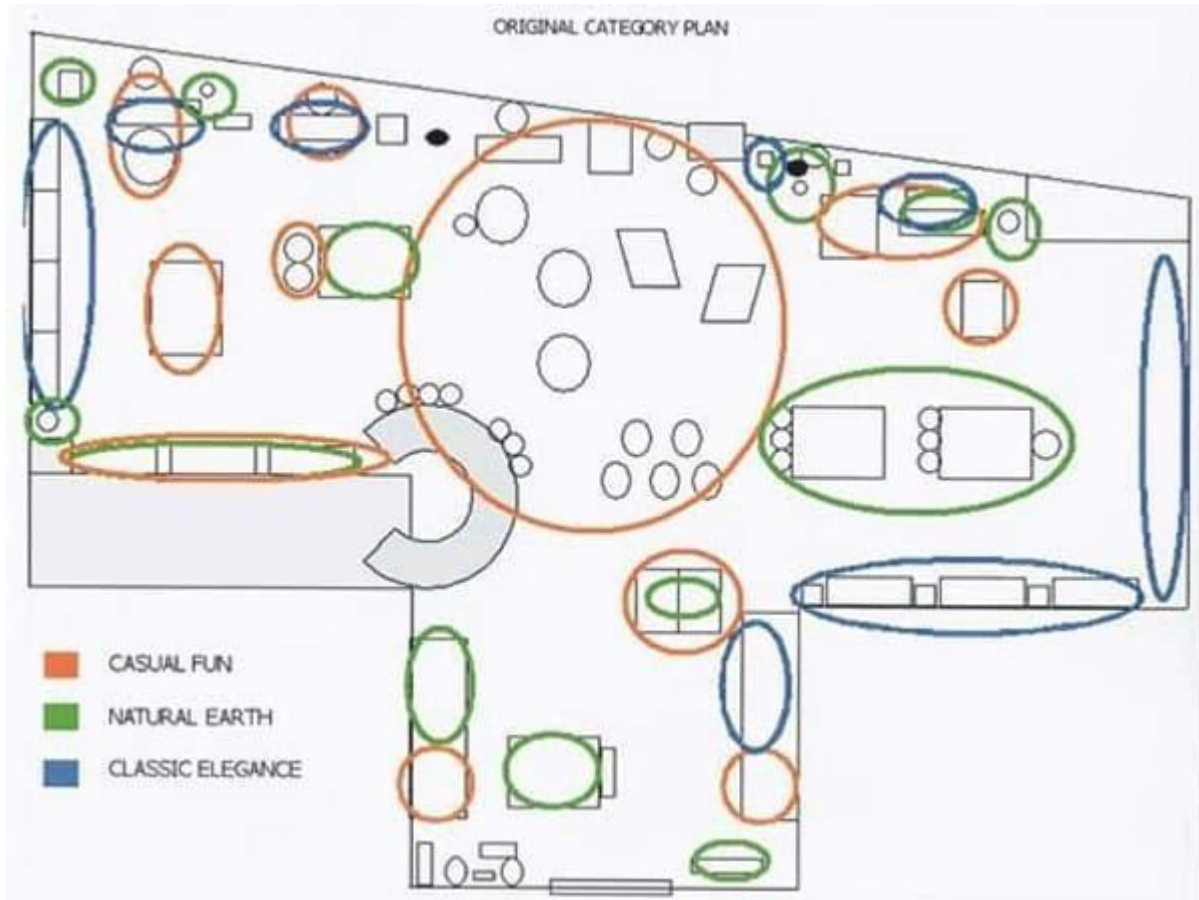
1. Understand the behavior and preferences of your target customers to tailor visual merchandising strategies to their needs.
2. Conduct market research and analyze customer data to gain insights into shopping habits and preferences.
3. Assess the feasibility of integrating technology into visual merchandising efforts.
4. Explore cost-effective and user-friendly technologies such as digital displays, interactive kiosks, or augmented reality, if applicable to your target audience and budget.
5. Build flexibility into visual merchandising plans, allowing for adjustments based on evolving trends and market dynamics.
6. Use feedback and data insights to evaluate the effectiveness of visual merchandising strategies and make informed adjustments.



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### Technology and tools to be used

1. Usedigitaldisplaystoshowcasedynamiccontent,promotions,andproduct information. Easily update content, promote real-time offers, and capture customer attention.
2. Use AR or VR applications to enable customers to visualize products in their real-world environment (AR) or create immersive virtual shopping experiences (VR).Allowcustomerstotrybeforetheybuy, increasingconfidenceandreducing returns.
3. Utilize beacons to send targeted notifications or promotions to customers' smartphonesbasedontheirlocationwithinthestore.Personalizetheshopping experience, promote relevant products, and encourage in-store engagement.
4. ImplementRFIDtagsonproductstoenablereal-timeinventorytrackingand management.Improveinventoryaccuracy, reduceout-of-stocksituations,and enhance the overall supply chain.
5. Installsmartmirrorsthatoffervirtualtry-onexperiences, allowingcustomers to see how clothing or accessories look without physically trying them on. Increase customer satisfaction, reduce physical try-on time, and provide personalized recommendations.

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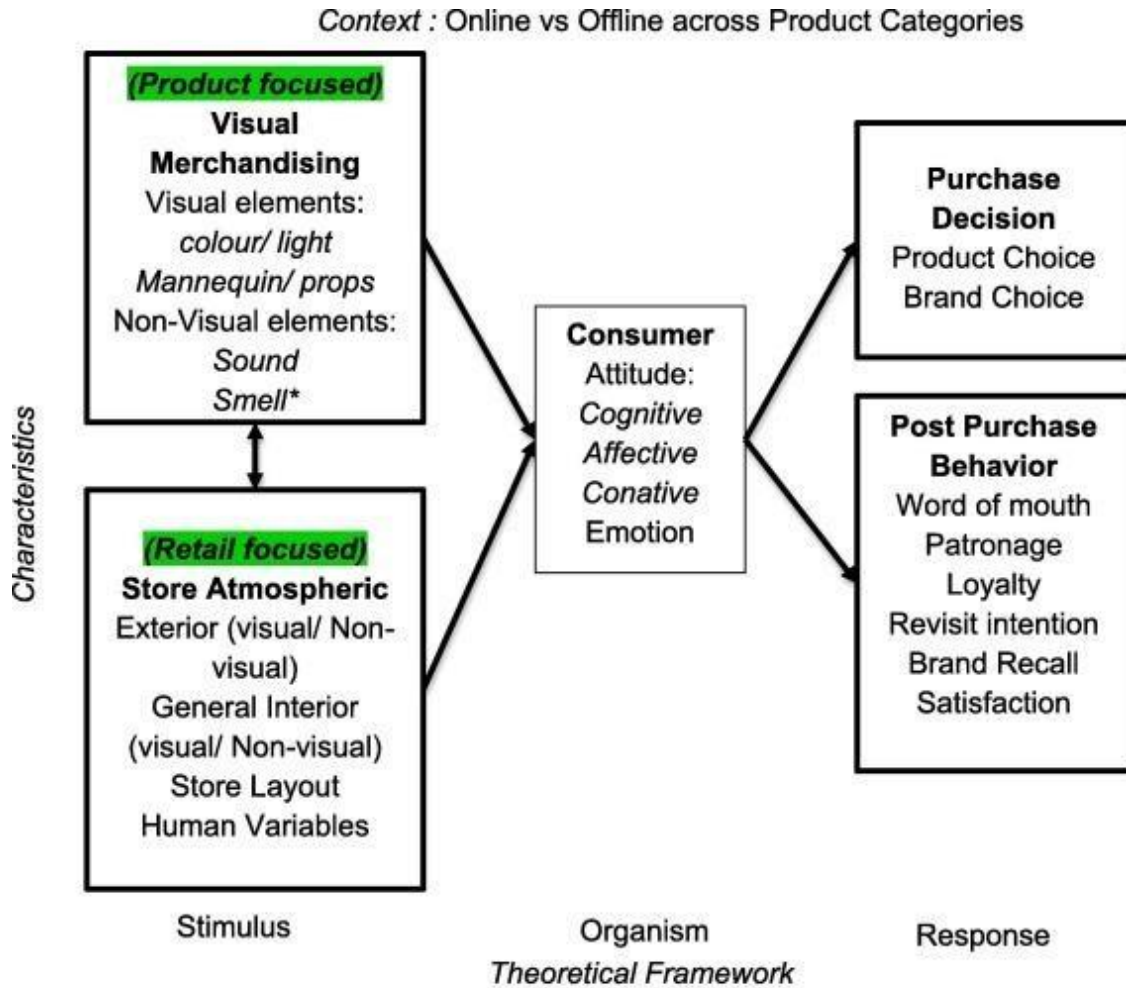
#### 4.2.1 Research on store ambience, store layout, and merchandise display

Research on store ambience, layout, and merchandise displays not only cross paths among themselves but has also been considered interchangeably within the larger store atmospheric or atmospheric dimensions. Especially over the last decade, these topics have been studied extensively by retail researchers as 85.7% of the qualifying articles in this integrated domain were published during 2011–2024. In contemporary literature, store layout has been studied in both online and offline contexts.

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\*would not apply to online retail

### RESULTS

The goal behind the project is to create a 3D design for store layout which helps 3D design for store layout in Smart mirrors, AR Applications and RFID tags. The results are given below

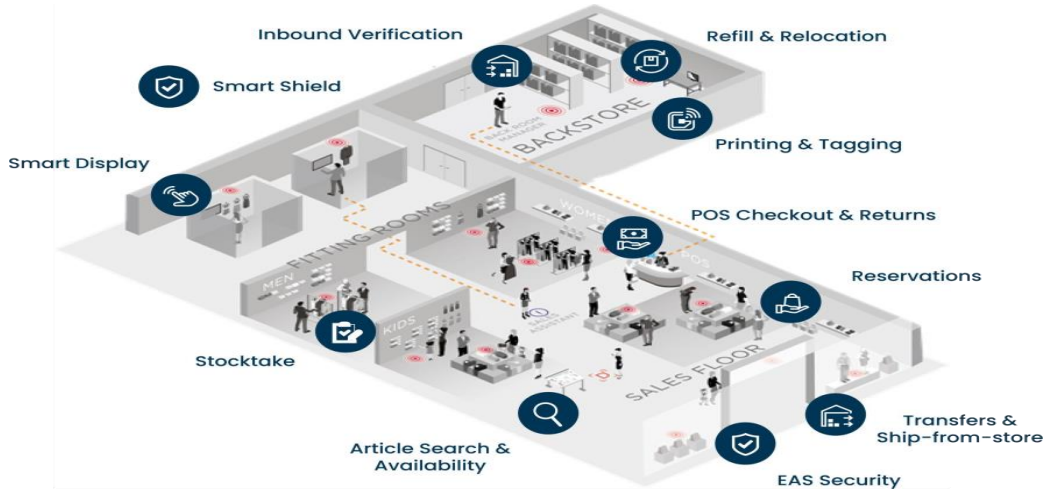
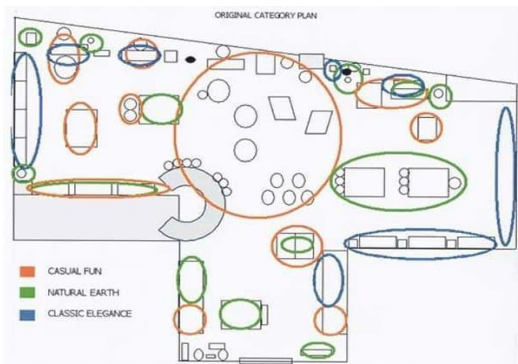


Fig6.,3Ddesign for store layout in Smart mirrors, Arapplications and RFID tags



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### 5.4 Significance, Strengths, and Limitations of the proposed work

#### 5.4.1 Significance

- **Attracts Attention:** Eye-catching displays and well-arranged products draw customers' attention and encourage them to explore the store further. Effective visual merchandising can differentiate a store from competitors and increase foot traffic.
- **Enhances Brand Image:** Thoughtfully designed displays reflect the brand's identity, values, and aesthetic. Consistent branding across visual elements helps reinforce brand recognition and build trust with customers.
- **Increases Sales:** By strategically showcasing products and promotions, visual merchandising can influence purchasing decisions and drive sales. Appealing displays highlight product features and benefits, enticing customers to make purchases.
- **Improves Customer Experience:** A well-organized and visually stimulating store layout creates a positive shopping environment. Clear signage and intuitive product placement make it easier for customers to find what they need, leading to a more enjoyable shopping experience.
- **Promotes Product Awareness:** Visual merchandising can educate customers about new products, seasonal offerings, or special promotions. Creative displays and signage effectively communicate product features, benefits, and pricing information.

#### 5.4.2 Strength

- **Increased Sales:** Effective visual merchandising techniques can significantly boost sales by attracting customers' attention to products, encouraging them to browse, and ultimately making purchases.
- **Enhanced Brand Image:** Visual merchandising helps retailers convey their brand identity and values through creative displays and cohesive themes. Consistent branding across all visual elements reinforces brand recognition and fosters customer loyalty.
- **Improved Customer Experience:** Well-designed store layouts, attractive displays, and clear signage contribute to a positive shopping experience for customers. Easy navigation, engaging displays, and informative product presentations make shopping more enjoyable and efficient.
- **Differentiation from Competitors:** Unique and innovative visual merchandising sets retailers apart from competitors. Creative displays and memorable experiences leave a lasting impression on customers, increasing brand visibility and attracting new customers.
- **Enhanced Product Visibility:** By highlighting key products and promotional offers through strategic placement and attention-grabbing displays, visual merchandising increases the visibility of products within the store. This ensures that customers are more likely to notice and consider purchasing these items.



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### 5.4.3 Difficulties faced during the process s Converting 3d design into web

- During the opening of the design there is One of the primary challenges is working within the constraints of the physical space available. Balancing the need for ample product display areas, customer flow, and designated service zones while maximizing space utilization can be complex.
- Designing a layout that is accessible to all customers, including those with disabilities or mobility challenges, requires careful planning. Ensuring sufficient aisle width, appropriate placement of fixtures, and accessible entrances and exits are essential but can be difficult to achieve within the space limitations.

### CONCLUSIONS & SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

Visual merchandising plays a critical role in the success of retail stores by enhancing the shopping experience, increasing sales, and strengthening brand identity. Through creative displays, strategic product placement, and cohesive branding, retailers can effectively engage customers, drive purchases, and differentiate themselves from competitors. However, the implementation of visual merchandising strategies comes with various challenges, including budget constraints, space limitations, and the need for ongoing maintenance and training. Despite these challenges, the benefits of visual merchandising outweigh the costs for many retailers, as evidenced by the positive impact on sales, customer satisfaction, and brand perception. **Technology Integration:** Future research could explore the integration of emerging technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), into visual merchandising strategies to create immersive and interactive shopping experiences. **Data Analytics:** Leveraging data analytics and machine learning techniques to analyze customer behavior, preferences, and purchasing patterns can provide valuable insights for optimizing visual merchandising strategies and personalizing the shopping experience. **Sustainability Initiatives:** With growing consumer awareness of environmental sustainability, future research could focus on integrating sustainable materials and practices into visual merchandising displays to align with eco-conscious consumer preferences. **Cross-Channel Integration:** Examining how visual merchandising strategies can be integrated across online and offline channels to create a seamless omni-channel shopping experience and drive customer engagement and loyalty. **Cultural and Regional Considerations:** Considering cultural and regional differences in consumer preferences and shopping habits, future research could explore how visual merchandising strategies can be tailored to specific markets to maximize effectiveness and relevance. **Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** Encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing among retailers, designers, and researchers can facilitate the development of best practices and innovative approaches in visual merchandising.

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