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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Enhancing Retail Success: A Comprehensive Analysis of Visual Merchandising Influence on Customer Engagement and Purchase Behavior in Philippine Local Retail Businesses**

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**| ABSTRACT**

This study employed a quantitative approach to investigate the influence of visual merchandising practices on customer engagement and purchase behavior in retail stores in Claver, Surigao del Norte. By utilizing a descriptive survey design with 385 customer respondents, the findings revealed that retailers inconsistently observed visual merchandising practices. Despite this, the study identified a significant and high positive influence of these practices on customer engagement and purchase behavior. Notably, through multiple regression analysis, it was found that only window displays significantly predicted both customer engagement and purchase behavior, although the collective influence of visual merchandising practices remained substantial. In essence, the research emphasized the integral role of visual merchandising in encouraging customer engagement and guiding their purchase behavior, highlighting the specific relevance of window displays in this retail context.

**| KEYWORDS**

Visual Merchandising, Customer Engagement, In-store Form Display, Floor Merchandising, Promotional Signage, Window Display, Purchase behaviour.

**| ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 15 December 2023

**PUBLISHED:** 06 January 2024

**DOI:** 10.32996/jbms.2024.6.1.1

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**1. Introduction**

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are major contributors to most economic activities globally and in developing nations like the Philippines. They are essential for generating employment, economic growth, reducing poverty, and advancing inclusive and sustainable development (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021). In order to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included in the Philippine Development Plan, local stores' assistance is crucial to create a positive upward push for a higher quality of life with greater equity (National Economic and Development Authority, 2022).

Visual merchandising is one of the vital factors in retail businesses that help grab customers' attention and engagement in today's highly competitive marketplace (Soomro et al., 2017). This includes everything a potential customer first sees in the store's window that entices them inside and ultimately prompts them to make a purchase. Visual merchandising is one of the best techniques for arranging visual showcases in stores so potential customers will discover it as eye-catching and satisfying (Shagal et al., 2016). Kouчекian and Gharibpoor (2012) assert a significant correlation between visual merchandising, customer engagement, and purchase behavior. They stated that visual merchandising as a strategy gains more attention from the customer and decides whether to buy the product or not.

As the Philippines faces a competitive market, creating a different advantage that boosts its sales is not easy. As businesses start to recover years after the pandemic, consumer demand for essentials remains strong. However, the pandemic taught consumers

new habits, such as digital transition and value seeking, and the homebody economy may stick (Canto & Romano, 2022). These put much pressure on local retailers operating only in physical stores in rural areas. That is why visual merchandising brings more opportunities for retail store owners to increase sales and engage and inspire customers. According to the Philippine Retailers Association (PRA), visual merchandising techniques are relevant to all retail formats and will be particularly relevant to those operating fashion stores with "shop windows."

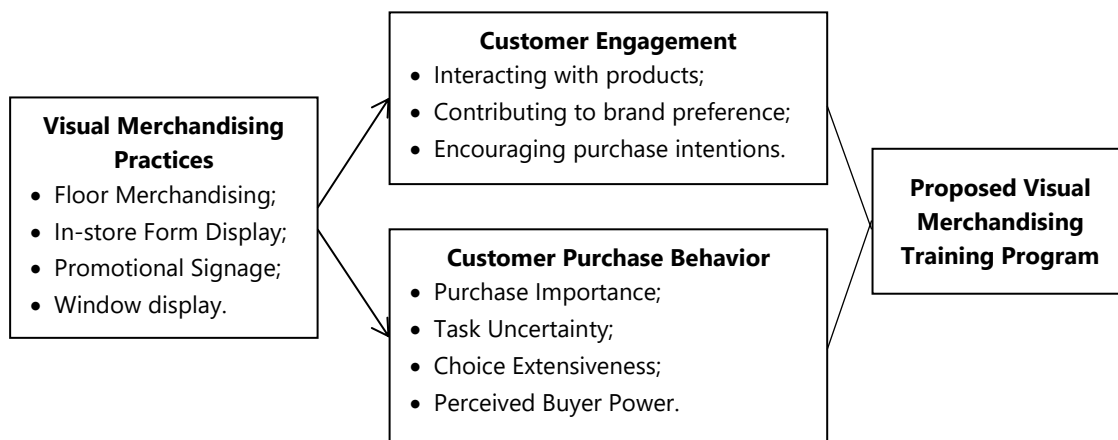
The progressing municipality of Claver in Surigao del Norte will serve as the research locale of the study. Today, retail businesses are rapidly being introduced in the municipality since the local government is taking steps to apply for cityhood. Retailers play an important role in reaching the minimum annual revenue as one of the municipality's requirements to be converted into a city. Retail stores offer merchandise differently to cope with competition and find ways to attract customers by implementing new visual merchandising techniques to showcase their products. According to a local store owner, how the store looks and merchandise is organized helps the customers see the products in her store, increasing her profit. Moreover, visual merchandising is a crucial retail strategy (Cant & Wiid, 2020). That is why the researcher is encouraged to conduct the study to learn the influence of visual merchandising practices on customer engagement and purchase behavior and to acquire more knowledge about visual merchandising to help establish a good business influence for retail store owners and potential consumers.

**1.1 Framework of the Study**

This study was based on the concepts of Juliana et al. (2017) and Cant et al. (2006), which state that the relevance of visual merchandising and its core concepts, which must be applied to leave an impression on customers' minds and perceptions, constitute a crucial component of retailing and a potential effect at the time of purchase.

Visual merchandising is generally acknowledged as a promoting strategy that utilizes visual components (Taskiran, 2012). The visual component alludes to lighting, hues, and signage. To put it plainly, they are the visual interchanges in the de-marking of a domain. The key components of visual promotion are the components of window shows. As a matter of first importance, the researchers will investigate the significance of windows show and other fundamental components. Visual merchandising elements affect the engagement of customers and the purchase behavior of the customer. Its elements, for example, mannequins, shading, lighting, and props, will typically elicit unfavorable, full-of-feeling emotions in buyers, influencing their purchase expectations (Law et al., 2012). In addition, recognizing the ability of item display features, particularly signs, to attract customers' engagement has practical implications (Huddleston et al., 2015).

These concepts are relevant to this study because they will be used to design a proposed visual merchandising program to help the local retail store owner comprehend stock coordination, advanced imaging, window establishment, and show strategies. Moreover, this will educate and empower them to strengthen marketing innovations with specialized learning to draw in clients and bolster retail deals.



**Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Study**

**1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The figure above shows how the visual merchandising practices in selected retail stores influence the customers' engagement and purchase behavior. This leads the researcher to aim for visual merchandising practices in retail stores. Specifically, it will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level to which visual merchandising is practiced in terms of in-store form display, floor Merchandising, promotional signage, and window display?
2. What is the degree of influence of visual merchandising practices in encouraging the customer's engagement in terms of interacting with products, contributing to brand preference, and encouraging purchase intentions?
3. What is the degree of influence of visual merchandising practices on the purchase behavior of the customers in terms of purchase importance, task uncertainty, choice extensiveness, and perceived buyer power?
4. Is there a significant relationship between visual merchandising practices, customer engagement, and purchase behavior?

### 1.3 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated to test the relationships between the specified visual merchandising practices and each dependent variable. The outcomes of this investigation aim to provide valuable insights for retailers aiming to optimize their visual merchandising strategies to enhance both customer engagement and purchase behavior.

$H_0$ : There is no statistically significant relationship between the visual merchandising practices: in-store display ( $x_1$ ), floor merchandising ( $x_2$ ), sales promotion ( $x_3$ ), window display ( $x_4$ ), customer engagement ( $Y_1$ ) and purchase behavior ( $Y_2$ ).

$H_1$ : There is a statistically significant relationship between the visual merchandising practices: in-store display ( $x_1$ ), floor merchandising ( $x_2$ ), sales promotion ( $x_3$ ), window display ( $x_4$ ), and customer engagement ( $Y_1$ ) and purchase behavior ( $Y_2$ ).

This set of hypotheses reflects the idea of whether the specified visual merchandising practices (in-store display, floor merchandising, sales promotion, and window display) collectively have a significant influence on customer engagement and purchase behavior.

### 1.4 Scope and Delimitation

This study aims to investigate the influence of visual merchandising practices on customer engagement and purchase behavior within selected retail stores located in Claver, Surigao del Norte, Philippines. The scope of this research is confined to micro-enterprises operating in the locality, specifically those with physical stores offering general merchandise.

To ensure the relevance of the findings, the researcher focused on customers who are at least 18 years old, are currently engaged in purchasing activities, and have made multiple purchases at the store in the past year. These criteria were used to identify target respondents for the survey. The study seeks to provide valuable insights into the relationship between visual merchandising strategies and the behavior of customers in the context of micro-enterprises in the specified locality. The primary sources of the data were derived from the information provided by the respondents in Claver through the guided questionnaire. Moreover, the secondary sources were taken from books and internet sources.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Visual Merchandising

It is how the products are arranged appropriately so customers can quickly locate the desired items they want to buy (Underhill, 2009). In addition, it is an activity that connects efficient merchandising selection with successful merchandising presentation, ultimately leading to a sale (Walters & White, 1987). Furthermore, visual merchandising guides customers toward the products they seek and their decisions (Cant, M. C., & Hefer, M. Y., 2012).

#### 2.1.1 Elements of Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandising involves strategically leveraging four key elements: in-store form displays, floor merchandising, promotional signage, and window displays (Mehta et al., 2014; Newman and Cullen, 2007; Taskiran, 2012). *In-store form displays* play a crucial role in engagingly presenting merchandise and conveying information about new products and fashion trends to captivate buyers' interest (Widyastuti, 2018). Implementing creative displays, such as variable shelf organizers, can optimize product visibility and improve the overall shopping experience, making customers more comfortable and enhancing convenience (Bianchi-Aguiar et al., 2018; Cant, 2013). Next, *floor merchandising*, coupled with shop brand names, has been found to significantly influence customers' impulse buying decisions, thereby contributing to increased sales in retail establishments (Mubarak & Mufeeth, 2020; Mehta & Chugan, 2012). The creative dimensions of floor visual merchandising not only motivate customers to make purchases but also serve as reminders of shopping needs, influencing in-store stimuli and purchase behavior (Moayery et al., 2014).

Then, *promotional signage* emerges as a potent tool for stimulating consumer impulse buying behavior (Khachatryan et al., 2018). The effective use of promotional signage, including temporary strategic promotion tools, is recommended to convert window shoppers into actual buyers (Widyastuti, 2018; Dost et al., 2019). Marketers employ a diverse range of promotional signage and techniques to understand consumer preferences better and enhance sales, recognizing that consumers are easily enticed by sale promotions (Miao et al., 2019). Finally, *window displays*, positioned as the initial point of visual interaction, play a pivotal role in

attracting potential customers (Spiekermann, 2019). Eye-catching and attractive window displays can distinguish a store, drawing in passersby and converting them into browsers and buyers (Bista, 2018). These displays serve as the first impression for customers, offering an opportunity to not only showcase products but also promote unique sales or offers, thus differentiating a brand from competitors and appealing to foot traffic (Ibrahim et al., 2020; Velasco Vizcaíno, 2018). These four elements collectively contribute to creating an enticing retail environment, influencing consumer behavior, and ultimately optimizing sales for retailers.

### **2.1.2 Visual Merchandising in the Philippines**

Visual merchandising educates and allows retail store managers to use technical expertise and creativity to attract customers and support retail sales (Dingcong, 2019). Visual merchandising techniques are relevant to all retail formats, particularly those operating fashion stores with "shop windows." Visual merchandising has been widely used in the National Capital Region. They specifically need visual merchandising managers with the skills to deliver the best visual merchandise to the customers (Calingo, A. R., 2018). However, in most cases, visual merchandising is more evident in mall operations to orchestrate a distinct, pleasurable shopping experience and trigger impulses regarding whether to buy or not (Cuello, F. M., 2020).

### **2.1.3 Visual Merchandising and Business Success**

Soomro et al. (2017) affirmed that visual merchandising is critical to improving sales. Cuong, P. H. (2019), who supports it, claims that it is an essential element that enables prospective consumers to inspect the product and is also used to persuade the customers to make that crucial purchase that results in business success. Retailers can strategically use visual merchandising as a powerful marketing tool to achieve business success (Paranagama, P., 2021). Additionally, visual merchandising needs to interest customers through color, location of the goods and signage, feelings, diversity, and engagement (Antony, M. R., 2019). Customer engagement and purchase motivation are increased by effective visual merchandising (Mehta, D., & Chugan, P. K., 2018).

### **2.2 Encouraging Customer Engagement**

Attracting potential customers is a critical business activity (Law et al., 2012), and visual merchandising plays a vital role in the retail sector, including clothing stores and supermarkets (Jhavar & Kushwaha, 2017; Randhawa & Saluja, 2017; Mondol et al., 2021). Marketers focus on this aspect to draw customers, influence brand choice, and promote buying intentions (Park, 2014). Visual merchandising serves as a crucial point of contact between the store and customers, influencing buyers and enhancing brand image (Kaur & Babel, 2019; Ebster, 2011; Shukla et al., 2018).

*Interacting with products* should be organized engagingly, employing demonstrations, food samples, or personal care testers (Park, 2014). Interactive displays capture attention and encourage customer engagement (Smilansky, 2017). Physical retail environments enable customers to experience products firsthand, influencing purchasing decisions (Pizzi et al., 2019). This experiential approach enhances the likelihood of customers making a purchase. To *contribute to brand preference*, retailers should focus on the aesthetic attributes of visual merchandising (Yasri et al., 2020). The visual elements surrounding a product should enable customers to experience the brand, fostering loyalty and improving the likelihood of future purchases (Simmonds & Spence, 2017; Mostafa & Kasamani, 2020). Positive brand attitudes influenced by effective visual merchandising correlate with purchase intentions (Mukherjee & Banerjee, 2019). Visual merchandising, therefore, plays a crucial role in shaping customers' perceptions and brand preferences.

Furthermore, visual merchandising aids customers in finding products and *encourages purchase intentions* (Park et al., 2015). Studies on the relationship between purchase intentions and sales reveal insights into measurement, forecasting, and factors influencing the likelihood of a purchase (Kim et al., 2017; Sivaram et al., 2019; Eastman et al., 2019). While the display itself does not determine a purchase, it significantly increases the likelihood by four times, according to a study by Kerfoot and Davis (2003), as cited by Randhawa and Saluja (2017).

### **2.3 Customer Purchase Behavior**

The choice of buying behavior strategy is influenced by various factors, including the importance of the purchase, task uncertainty, choice breadth, and the perception of buyer power (Bunn, 1993; Sheth, 1997; Rensburg et al., 2010). Customers undergo mental processes during decision-making, incorporating previous purchasing history, marketing campaigns, and non-commercial information sources (Hanaysha, 2018). Visual merchandising in retail stores serves to showcase and promote items, enhancing sales by making shopping more engaging and enjoyable (Ebster, 2011).

*Purchase importance* stands as the primary basis for any buying decision, where affordability plays a crucial role, as people cannot buy what they cannot afford (Kim et al., 2022; Hamilton et al., 2018). Additionally, the need for a product, coupled with affordability, significantly contributes to buying decisions (Kumar et al., 2021). *Task uncertainty* regarding a product or service can lead customers to reverse their choice, particularly when uncertainty is resolved, influencing buying decisions (Shulman et al., 2015).

Visual merchandisers strategically utilize shop layouts to influence shoppers' purchasing choices, considering rates and the *extensiveness of product choices* (Amanah & Harahap, 2018). Various factors, including individual factors, end-users, price, and quality, shape consumer buying behavior (Ramya & Ali, 2016). An awareness of perceived buyer power is critical for strategic marketing, as it influences impulse purchasing desires and choices, which is essential for distributors to survive in competitive markets (Randhawa & Saluja, 2017). A customer's *purchasing power* plays a major role in affecting behavior, with buyers influencing price and the number of products sold (Kaur & Kochar, 2018; Boyd-Byrnes, 2022). Price awareness further influences the buyer-seller connection and customers' ultimate buying decisions (Saputra & Mahaputra, 2022). In essence, these factors collectively shape consumers' choices and behaviors in the dynamic marketplace.

## **2.4 Synthesis of the Review**

Visual merchandising is a marketing practice that helps draw customers' engagement using floor designs, lighting, displays, and other elements. Its main goal is to increase sales by using the retail area to make a store stand out and attract customers. Customers' shopping experiences can be improved by investing in visual merchandising, which can also serve as a powerful marketing tool for your retailers and foster greater client loyalty. However, effective visual marketing will require time, effort, and financial investment, so you must be prepared.

The literature and studies above provided ideas and valuable information that helped conceptualize the current study. As a result, this study has some similarities and differences with prior research and literature. For the resemblance, both the current study and the previous ones mostly covered the common visual merchandising elements such as in-store form display, floor merchandising, promotional signage, and window display. However, previous studies are primarily focused on the influence of visual merchandising on buying behavior. The present research differed in the locale, methodology, and variables comprising customer engagement and purchase behavior. Moreover, it also covers how these visual merchandising practices influence customer engagement and purchase behavior, which is not present in the previous studies.

## **3. Method**

### **3.1 Research Design**

A quantitative research design, a descriptive survey, was used to determine the influence of visual merchandising practices of selected retail stores on customer engagement and purchase behavior. According to Rathore (2019), a quantitative research strategy is a great technique to finalize results and prove or disprove a hypothesis; statistical analysis determines a conclusive result. A descriptive survey was used to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, correlations, and categories. It allows for gathering large volumes of data that can be analyzed for averages, frequencies, and patterns (Mishra, S. B., & Alok, S., 2022).

### **3.2 Sample and Participant Selection**

The study was conducted in the Municipality of Claver, a second-class municipality in the Province of Surigao del Norte, Philippines. Only customers at least 18 years old and currently purchasing at the store were considered respondents. The study selected five (5) retail stores based on the data of top retail stores offering general merchandise with high traffic from the Local Economic Enterprise Development and Management Office of Claver. The Cochran sample size formula was also used to get the total number of respondents (385) since it is difficult to determine the number of customers the selected retailers have. It is advised to utilize it for research with infinite populations since it can be used to calculate the suitable sample size for a specified degree of precision (Cochran, 1977). The researcher utilized ten (10) sample respondents for the pre-testing activity. These sample respondents did not form part of the actual study.

### **3.3 Sampling Technique**

The study used a non-probability, purposive sampling. It was purposive because only the customers of legal age (18 years old) currently buying from the 5 (five) chosen retail stores were considered the study's respondents. According to Crossman (2020), a non-probability purposive sample is selected based on population characteristics and the study's objective. A key feature of non-probability purposive sampling techniques is that samples are selected based on a researcher's subjective judgment rather than random selection.

### **3.4 Research Instrument**

The study used a researcher-made instrument based on Wanniachchi et al. (2016) and Kashyap, P. (2019) as guides for the survey of respondents. The first part determined the level of visual merchandising practices commonly manifested by the retail store, such as in-store form display, floor merchandising, promotional signages, and window display. The next part focused on how visual merchandising practices appeal to the customers' engagement by interacting with products, contributing to brand preference, and encouraging purchase intentions. Lastly, it covered how visual merchandising practices influence customers' purchase behavior regarding purchase importance, task uncertainty, choice extensiveness, and perceived buying power. The instrument was translated

into the local dialect to ensure respondents fully understood each question. Content experts validated the translated questionnaire before it was pre-tested.

**3.5 Validity and Reliability Test**

The data were analyzed using SPSS after the survey was done. Before the survey, a draft was submitted to the field experts and sample respondents for face and content validity. A reliability test was made to ensure the research would have a consistent and stable result. The study accepted a 0.928 Cronbach alpha result, indicating that the instrument was reliable. The simple test of Cronbach's alpha can be used to determine a composite score's internal consistency or reliability. According to the methodological literature mentioned in Taber's (2018) study, it is still a widespread practice to see alpha as an adequate indicator of an instrument's reliability or internal consistency when it reaches the relatively arbitrary number of 0.70.

**3.6 Data Gathering and Analysis**

The study provided an approval letter to the retail store owners to ask permission to conduct the study in their store. The researcher signed the letter and noted it by the adviser and the Local Economic Enterprise Management Office (LEEDMO). The survey was personally handed out and guided by the researcher with a letter of request to answer the questionnaire. To secure the survey's accomplishments, the researcher explained the questions thoroughly to the respondents. After distributing the questionnaire, the data was tallied using Excel and computed in SPSS.

The mean was applied to get the average of the indicators in determining the level of manifestation of visual merchandising practices, their degree of influence in stimulating the customer's engagement, and the customers' purchase behavior. Standard deviation was utilized to determine whether the respondents' answers were dispersed. Moreover, multiple linear regression was used to determine the significant relationship between visual merchandising practices in capturing customers' engagement and purchase behavior.

Finally, in-depth personal interviews were conducted with experts spanning various domains, including accountancy, business development, consumer protection, marketing, and social entrepreneurship. These interviews were strategically designed to provide valuable insights, enrich the analysis, and offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted aspects influencing visual merchandising practices in the context of retail stores in Claver. The diverse perspectives gathered from these interviews contribute not only to the depth of the research findings but also serve as a foundation for developing targeted recommendations and strategies aimed at enhancing the visual merchandising landscape for businesses in this locality.

**3.7 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the entirety of this research, guiding the procedures and designs to ensure the highest standards of integrity and respect for the rights of all involved participants. The researcher meticulously adhered to a robust set of ethical principles when collecting information, emphasizing the significance of maintaining academic and scientific integrity. These considerations not only safeguard the rights of research participants but also enhance the overall validity and reliability of the research outcomes. Additionally, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and providing avenues for participants to withdraw at any stage were integral aspects of the ethical framework employed in this study, fostering a commitment to responsible and transparent research practices.

**4. Results and Discussion**

**4.1 Problem 1. The level of visual merchandising is practiced.**

Table 1 - The level of visual merchandising is practiced in terms of in-store form display.

<b>Item Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Verbal Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. The store uses direction placards in the store layout	2.26	0.98	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
2. The store uses attractive designs and lighting to find products quickly.	3.14	0.89	Sometimes	Moderately Practiced
3. The store presents new products noticeably.	3.14	0.82	Sometimes	Moderately Practiced
4. The store uses a neat and organized way of presenting the products.	3.20	0.77	Sometimes	Moderately Practiced
5. The store presents merchandise creatively and uniquely.	3.22	0.70	Sometimes	Moderately Practiced
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.99</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Moderately Practiced</b>

Table 1 outlines the level of practice in visual merchandising, specifically focusing on in-store form displays in retail stores within Claver. The overall mean for in-store form display is 2.99, with a standard deviation of 0.83, suggesting varied responses and falling within the interpretation of "moderately practiced." This implies that visual merchandising practices are implemented to some extent among the diverse array of retail establishments in Claver, Surigao del Norte. The nuanced insight into the level of practice sheds light on the dynamics of visual merchandising in the local retail landscape. However, the prevalence of micro-businesses in the locality has resulted in a lack of emphasis on in-store form displays, highlighting a missed opportunity to recognize the significance of visual merchandising, as argued by Gudonavičienė and Alijošienė (2015) regarding its pivotal role in understanding customer behavior and optimizing the shopping experience.

Notably, the importance of what is displayed on the walls is emphasized as much as what is on the racks in the context of retail. This underscores the need for businesses, even in smaller localities, to appreciate and invest in the visual appeal of their displays to enhance overall customer engagement and satisfaction. The experts' insights regarding challenges in local businesses (Industry Experts, 2023) reinforce the importance of addressing these issues to enhance the effectiveness of visual merchandising practices. Among the data gathered, presenting merchandise creatively and uniquely has the highest mean of 3.22 with a standard deviation of 0.70, interpreted as "moderately practiced." Respondents sometimes find ways to ensure that merchandise is creatively displayed to engage customers. However, the use of direction placards in the store layout has the lowest mean of 2.26 with a standard deviation of 0.98, verbally described as "rarely" and interpreted as "slightly practiced." This indicates varied responses, possibly influenced by the predominantly microbusiness nature of retail stores in Claver, which may not necessitate extensive signage due to limited floor space. Roggeveen et al. (2021) assert that presenting products creatively and uniquely involves advertising, marketing, and store displays, providing a chance for products to convey information, choices, added value, and alternative uses through signage, interaction, choice, and innovation.

Table 2 - The level of visual merchandising is practiced in terms of floor merchandising.

Item Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. The store uses cleanliness and neatness to make a positive impression of the products.	3.42	0.71	Always	Highly Practiced
2. The store uses open and free aisles in the store.	3.11	0.83	Sometimes	Moderately Practiced
3. The store uses a clear and organized arrangement of products on shelves.	3.25	0.78	Always	Highly Practiced
4. The store uses a good and empty space wisely to attract customers.	3.15	0.83	Sometimes	Moderately Practiced
5. The store uses a clean, organized, well-stocked, and high-quality arrangement of products.	3.25	0.84	Always	Highly Practiced
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Moderately Practiced</b>

Table 2 illustrates the level of floor merchandising practiced by selected retail stores in Claver as a visual merchandising approach. The overall mean for floor merchandising is 3.24, with a standard deviation of 0.88, indicating a "moderately practiced" level. This suggests that floor merchandising is observed intermittently in local retail stores, likely influenced by the limited floor area in these establishments. Delving deeper into this information, it becomes evident that the local retail landscape grapples with the challenges of optimizing floor merchandising practices within the confines of spatial limitations.

Experts endorse this observation, highlighting a notable lack of awareness among local retailers regarding the importance of maintaining clean aisles for efficient customer flow. Even with available free aisles, many local retailers tend to place all merchandise for visibility without considering its impact on customers' buying psychology (Industry Experts, 2023). This underscores a prevalent knowledge gap among local retailers, emphasizing the need for greater awareness about the strategic implications of maintaining clean and free aisles beyond mere visibility. The expert perspective contributes to a nuanced understanding of the challenges local retailers face in optimizing their merchandising strategies. Notably, the cleanliness and neatness of the store emerge as the most observed and utilized practices of floor merchandising, with the highest mean of 3.42, interpreted as "highly practiced." Conversely, having open and free aisles in the store, with a mean of 3.11, is interpreted as "moderately practiced," revealing varied responses among respondents, possibly due to spatial constraints that lead some stores to utilize aisles for product displays. This highlights the ongoing need for retail floor merchandising to ensure that products are presented optimally and that the facility is perceived as clean, structured, well-stocked, and of high quality (Gauri et al., 2021).

Table 3 outlines the prevalence of promotional signages as a visual merchandising practice in Claver, Surigao del Norte retail stores. The results reveal an overall mean of 1.98, characterized as "rarely," with a standard deviation of 1.00, suggesting a "slightly practiced" level. This indicates that promotional signages are scarcely observed in the stores, with retailers attributing this rarity to

increased merchandise costs and stagnant buying power, leading to the infrequent utilization of promotions as an additional expense. Insights from experts highlight that promotional signage is more common among businesses selling pre-loved items, while local retailers, in general, rarely employ promotional signage, and discounts are infrequently offered (Industry Experts, 2023). Despite its infrequent usage, it is crucial to recognize that promotional signage can be a potent tool for increasing store visibility and promoting events such as sales or special offers. Effective promotional signage, as emphasized by Melewar and Saunders (2000), provides a competitive advantage, attracting potential customers and fostering engagement. Therefore, within the local context and the challenges faced by retailers, optimizing the strategic use of promotional signage may offer a valuable opportunity for enhancing visibility and driving customer interest.

Table 3 - The level of visual merchandising practiced in terms of promotional signage.

Item Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. The store uses special promotion signs like sales discounts.	2.16	0.99	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
2. The store offers interesting promotional signs in the store.	2.03	0.94	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
3. The store uses attractive signage designs to attract customers depending on trends.	1.94	1.03	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
4. The store uses signage to create awareness of the business and to attract customers.	1.95	1.09	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
5. The store uses promotional offerings at the entrance as a driving force to enter a store.	1.79	0.97	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Slightly Practiced</b>

Among the various items, the usage of promotional signages like sales discounts has the highest mean of 2.16, with a standard deviation of 0.99, described as "rarely" and interpreted as "slightly practiced." This signifies that special promotions like sales discounts, although the highest indicator, are still seldom utilized in the promotional signages of retail stores, according to customer perceptions. On the other hand, offering promotional signage at the entrance has the lowest mean of 1.79, with a standard deviation of 0.97, indicating scattered answers from respondents and described as "rarely," with an interpretation of "slightly practiced." This implies that retail stores usually do not inform customers about any promotional offerings, and customers may remain unaware unless they proactively inquire with the store. Promotion signages, especially those featuring sales discounts, are integral components of a retailer's sales and marketing mix, driving sales, moving inventory, and encouraging shoppers to explore more products beyond clearance items (Deepak & Jeyakumar, 2019).

Table 4 - The level of visual merchandising is practiced in terms of window display.

Item Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. The store uses mannequins to attract customers to visit.	1.68	0.94	Never	Not Practiced
2. The store offers seasonal window displays depending on trends.	1.78	0.99	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
3. The store creatively arranges the products.	2.43	1.06	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
4. The store offers eye-catching window displays.	1.84	1.02	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
5. The store offers a variety of merchandise in the window display.	1.82	1.03	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>1.91</b>	<b>1.01</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Slightly Practiced</b>

Table 4 shows that the visual merchandising practices in Claver, Surigao del Norte, reveal a predominant rarity in the utilization of window display elements among local retail establishments, as reflected in an overall mean of 1.91 and a standard deviation of 1.01. The dispersed responses from respondents underscore the varying degrees of usage and the absence of a unanimous consensus on the application of these practices. According to experts in the field, the prevailing sentiment among local retailers suggests a lack of understanding regarding the visual impact on customers' minds, with concerns raised about inadequacies in in-store layouts hindering the adoption of window display practices by many retailers (Industry Experts, 2023). This insight aligns with existing research emphasizing the pivotal role of window displays in capturing consumer attention and fostering engagement, ultimately contributing to consumer consciousness and understanding (Saricam et al., 2018).

Examining specific window display elements, creatively arranging products emerges with the highest mean of 2.43 and a standard deviation of 1.06, indicating a "slightly practiced" extent. Despite some retail stores engaging in creative product arrangements, the practice is not widespread among surveyed establishments in Claver. Conversely, the use of mannequins, considered a



statement in visual merchandising, records the lowest mean of 1.78 with a standard deviation of 0.99, signalling that this practice is predominantly "not practiced" among the surveyed retailers. The possible explanation for this disparity lies in the observation that the selected retailers may not specialize in clothing but rather in general merchandise. Effectively establishing seasonal window displays, as highlighted by Othman (2021), becomes crucial in capturing the passing eye and aligning with the store's aesthetics, emphasizing the need for precise depictions of the merchandise shoppers can expect to find inside.

Table 5 – Summary Table on the level of visual merchandising practices.

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
In-store Form Display	2.99	0.83	Sometimes	Moderately Practiced
Floor Merchandising	3.24	0.80	Sometimes	Moderately Practiced
Promotional Signage	1.98	1.00	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
Window Display	1.91	1.01	Rarely	Slightly Practiced
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.53</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Moderately Practiced</b>

Table 5 provides a comprehensive overview of the visual merchandising practices in Claver, revealing a grand mean of 2.53, interpreted as a "large extent." This suggests that in-store form display, floor merchandising, promotional signage, and window display are sporadically observed among the retail establishments in the area. While the overall presence is substantial, the classification of "sometimes observed" indicates a nuanced landscape where these practices are not uniformly applied across all retail stores. Floor merchandising stands out with the highest mean of 3.24, categorized as "moderately practiced," highlighting its intermittent but notable presence in retail stores. The creative arrangement of products on the store floor seems to play a crucial role in encouraging customer engagement and influencing their purchase behavior. On the other hand, window display records the lowest mean of 1.91, denoting a "slightly practiced" extent, indicating a rare implementation of window display elements despite their potential to captivate customers and drive store engagement.

The disparity in mean values underscores that respondents more readily observed floor merchandising compared to other elements. Expert insights emphasize the importance of prioritizing window displays and promotional signage. According to industry experts, the window display serves as the initial attraction point for customers, influencing their decision-making even before entering the store. Additionally, promotional signage, particularly in the context of price sensitivity, is seen as an effective strategy, especially for newly opened businesses (Industry Experts, 2023). Scholarly research by Thomas et al. (2018) further supports the significance of various visual merchandising elements, such as window displays, fixtures, signage, mannequins, colors, and lighting, in influencing customer purchase behavior, highlighting the potential impact of a well-executed visual merchandising strategy on customer engagement and buying decisions.

**4.2 Problem 2. Influence of visual merchandising practices on customer engagement**

Table 6 – Degree of the influence of visual merchandising practices in stimulating customer engagement in terms of interacting with products.

Item Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. I prefer to enter a store with plenty of product samples.	3.36	0.68	Strongly Agree	Very High Impact
2. Stores with trained sales representatives attract me and create good experiences with the products.	3.35	0.67	Strongly Agree	Very High Impact
3. The stores that assist me whenever I require assistance provide a better shopping experience with the products.	3.25	0.65	Strongly Agree	Very High Impact
4. The way the products are presented would increase my attention towards them.	3.28	0.68	Strongly Agree	Very High Impact
5. A good space and an exciting way of arranging the items would give me comfortable interaction with the products.	3.33	0.64	Strongly Agree	Very High Impact
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Very High Impact</b>

Table 6 unveils the substantial influence of visual merchandising in stimulating customer engagement with products, with a mean of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 0.66, classified as a "strong positive influence." This indicates that in-store displays significantly contribute to capturing customer attention and actively encouraging interaction with showcased products. The consistent agreement among respondents underscores the reliability of this influence, highlighting the potency of visual merchandising in enhancing the overall shopping experience as customers actively engage with strategically presented visual elements. Expert

opinions further support this, emphasizing that increased exposure to displays and signage provides direct information for customers, prompting active engagement with the products offered by stores. The visually-oriented nature of the contemporary buyer, easily captivated by vibrant colors and appealing designs, positions visual merchandising as a crucial driver of customer interaction with products, aligning with the perspective that customers engage not only with products but also with the overall brand, product, and service (Industry Experts, 2023; Rather and Camilleri, 2019).

Among the item indicators, stores providing plenty of product samples emerge with the highest mean of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 0.68, denoted as a "strong positive influence." This suggests that stores offering abundant product samples are more likely to attract customer engagement. Conversely, the assistance provided by the store to enhance the product experience records the lowest mean of 3.25 but is still interpreted as a "strong positive influence" with a standard deviation of 0.65. The scattered responses indicate that while the assistance provided by the store influences customer attention and encourages engagement, there may be varying degrees of impact. As emphasized by Ali and Anwar (2021), the effectiveness of product sampling lies not only in the number of samples offered but in their ability to translate into sales, requiring careful preparation and strategic execution to maximize their impact on customer engagement.

Table 7 – Degree of the influence of visual merchandising practices in stimulating customer engagement in terms of contributing to brand preference.

Item Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. Product items are placed according to their brands, allowing me to find them easily.	3.36	0.67	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
2. I always pay attention to the brands I prefer when looking into a store.	3.26	0.71	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
3. The brand offers that are clearly presented through display in the store attract me.	3.27	0.70	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
4. The brand offers in a store capture my attention and increase my chances of loyalty.	3.22	0.68	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
5. I tend to look into stores that offer my preferred brands.	3.29	0.72	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Strong Positive Influence</b>

Table 7 provides insights into the impact of visual merchandising on customer engagement concerning brand preference, revealing a substantial overall mean of 3.28, categorized as "strongly agree," with a standard deviation of 0.69. This classification indicates a "strong positive influence," emphasizing that the presentation of merchandise brands within retail stores significantly shapes customer engagement, fostering a heightened connection between customers and brands. The robust agreement among respondents underscores the pivotal role of visual merchandising in not only showcasing products but also cultivating a favorable perception of associated brands. This finding aligns with the broader concept that effective visual merchandising plays a crucial role in creating a strong association between customers and brands, contributing to elevated levels of customer engagement.

Expert insights enrich the analysis by noting that expanding the variety of offered brands could enhance customer engagement, yet it may pose challenges for local businesses with limited capital. While organizing merchandise by brand is considered a best practice, it is not widely adopted in the local business setting due to resource constraints and prevailing business norms (Industry Experts, 2023). Saric's (2017) research further emphasizes the substantial influence of brands, revealing that brands impact 75% of customer engagement. The emphasis on personal identification and recommendations based on past purchases underscores the critical role of visual merchandising in shaping brand perception and, consequently, influencing customer engagement. Among the indicators, products placed according to their brands to facilitate easy finding garnered the highest mean of 3.36, interpreted as a "strong positive influence." This signifies that arranging products by their brands impacts customer engagement significantly. Even though brand offers received the lowest mean of 3.22 among the rating statements, it is still interpreted as a "moderate positive influence," highlighting its significant impact on customer engagement. As noted by Khansabbakh et al. (2018), a well-defined and implemented brand strategy directly influences consumer needs, emotions, and competitive environments, contributing to brand preference, customer loyalty, and increased profitability for businesses.

Table 8 presents a comprehensive analysis of the impact of visual merchandising on customer engagement, specifically focusing on purchase intention. The mean score of 3.24, accompanied by a low standard deviation of 0.68, implies a "moderately agree" response, indicating a moderate positive influence and underscoring the strategic importance of visual elements like displays and

signage. This finding aligns with the broader understanding that effective visual merchandising plays a pivotal role not only in attracting customers but also in actively shaping their decision-making processes (Jain et al., 2014). The consistency in responses, as reflected by the low standard deviation, reinforces the robust nature of this influence, highlighting the need for transparent communication to optimize the impact of visual merchandising strategies on customer engagement and purchase behavior.

Table 8 – Degree of the influence of visual merchandising practices in stimulating customer engagement in terms of encouraging purchase intention.

Item Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. I tend to enter stores with signages encouraging me to purchase.	3.29	0.68	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
2. I usually choose the stores that offer lots of information to purchase the product.	3.21	0.68	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
3. It encourages me to purchase when sales representatives provide a high level of service.	3.27	0.69	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
4. Marketing campaign helps attract and encourage my purchase intention.	3.23	0.70	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
5. When a store has a choice overload and lots of options encourages me to purchase.	3.22	0.66	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>0.68</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Moderate Positive Influence</b>

Table 8 further delves into specific aspects of customer engagement, revealing that the presence of signage encouraging purchases receives the highest mean response of 3.29, indicating a "strong positive influence" (Gupta, 2019). This underscores the significant impact of strategically placed signage in driving customer purchase intentions. Interestingly, stores offering extensive product information receive a lower mean response of 3.21, categorized as a "moderate positive influence," emphasizing the potential for improvement in information-rich displays. Gupta's insights, along with those of industry experts (Industry Experts, 2023), support the notion that store signage effectively communicates with customers and captures their attention, highlighting the critical role of both effective visual displays and transparent communication in optimizing the influence of visual merchandising strategies on customer engagement and purchase behavior.

Table 9 – Summary Table on the influence of visual merchandising practices on customer engagement

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
Interacting with products	3.31	0.66	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
Brand Preference	3.28	0.69	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
Encouraging Purchase Intention	3.24	0.68	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>0.68</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Strong Positive Influence</b>

The results from Table 9 highlight the influence of visual merchandising in capturing customer engagement, as indicated by the mean of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 0.68, interpreted as "strong positive influence." This emphasizes the pivotal role visual merchandising plays in shaping the contemporary shopping experience. Retailers, recognizing the growing significance of creating appealing and convenient shopping spaces, are increasingly prioritizing effective visual merchandising strategies. The findings align with the observations of Soomro et al. (2017), underscoring that consumers are naturally drawn to visually enticing establishments, emphasizing the crucial role visual appeal plays in influencing customer engagement. Consequently, retailers strategically employ visual merchandising not only to meet but surpass customer expectations and gain a competitive edge in the dynamic retail landscape.

The results reveal that interacting with products has emerged as the most influential factor, with a mean of 3.31, denoting a "strong positive influence" on customer engagement. This underscores the significance of providing avenues for customers to actively engage with merchandise, fostering a more immersive shopping experience. Conversely, encouraging purchase intention, though slightly lower with a mean of 3.24, still signifies a "moderate positive influence" in capturing customer engagement. The researcher posits that many stores facilitate product interaction through various means, such as informative display racks and offering product samples for testing. Expert insights further emphasize the importance of furnishing basic information on merchandise within display racks to enhance customer convenience and reduce the need for constant inquiries (Industry Experts, 2023). These findings contribute valuable insights for marketing and advertising managers, providing them with a nuanced understanding of consumer

behavior and offering strategic considerations for enhancing the customer shopping experience in the dynamic retail market (Park et al., 2015).

**4.3 Problem 3. Influence of visual merchandising practices on purchase decision**

Table 10 illustrates the influence of visual merchandising on customer buying decisions, revealing an overall mean response of 3.22 and a standard deviation of 0.70. Respondents collectively agree on a "moderate positive impact" of visual merchandising, suggesting its relevance in shaping purchasing decisions. However, experts challenge this consensus, emphasizing the evolving post-pandemic consumer landscape. A prevalent perspective underscores practical considerations as a dominant influence, with customers driven by financial prudence and leaning towards affordable options (Industry Experts, 2023).

Table 10 – Degree of the influence of visual merchandising practices on the customers' purchase behavior in terms of purchase importance.

Item Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. I carefully plan most of my purchases and choose a store that attracts me.	3.23	0.70	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
2. I buy things according to what I need and what is important.	3.36	0.66	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
3. I always choose what is important to buy from the displays.	3.22	0.69	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
4. When I see an important product on the display that I need, I tend to buy it.	3.19	0.73	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
5. Shop displays influence purchasing decisions.	3.12	0.74	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Moderate Positive Influence</b>

On the contrary, an alternative viewpoint introduces the role of impulse buying, indicating that consumer decisions often deviate from premeditated plans. Factors such as the allure of in-store displays or the unavailability of desired products contribute to spontaneous purchases, aligning with Laja's (2019) observation of the pivotal role of the first purchase in shaping subsequent buying behaviors. This highlights the complexity of consumer decision-making, incorporating both rational and impulsive elements. Examining specific rating statements, the data reveals that buying based on needs and importance holds the highest mean of 3.36 (interpreted as "strong positive influence") with a standard deviation of 0.66. This implies that customers predominantly prioritize purchasing items according to their needs, limiting their choices. In contrast, the influence of shop displays on purchasing decisions records the lowest mean of 3.12, interpreted as a "moderate positive influence," with a standard deviation of 0.74. This dispersion suggests varied responses among respondents, indicating that not all consider store displays to be a significant factor in their purchase decisions.

Table 11 – Degree of the influence of visual merchandising practices on the customers' purchase behavior in terms of task uncertainty.

Item Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. I often buy things without thinking.	2.78	0.86	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
2. Sometimes, I am reckless about what I buy.	2.58	0.95	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
3. I tend to buy a lot when unsure what to buy.	2.49	0.98	Agree	Weak Positive Influence
4. Task uncertainty makes your buying decision more complex.	2.29	0.84	Agree	Weak Positive Influence
5. I tend to rely on store displays when deciding to purchase a product.	2.91	0.73	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.61</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Moderate Positive Influence</b>

Table 11 presents the influence of visual merchandising on customers' purchase behavior, specifically regarding task uncertainty. The overall mean for task uncertainty is 2.61, with a standard deviation of 0.87, described as "agree" and interpreted as having a "moderate positive influence." This implies that visual merchandising influences customers when they are uncertain about what to buy. Notably, the purchasing process involves decisions on what to purchase, where, and when, highlighting the complexity of these choices. However, expert opinions differ, with some suggesting that people tend to stick to their needs, minimizing the influence of visual merchandising, while others emphasize that customers often prioritize price over brand considerations in the local context (Industry Experts, 2023). This divergence in expert perspectives adds nuance to the understanding of how task uncertainty interacts with visual merchandising, contributing valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of customer decision-

making in retail settings. The study acknowledges the role of uncertainty as a potent force shaping consumer behavior and influencing purchasing decisions (Reddy, A. S., & Soni, B., 2021), emphasizing its significance in the context of visual merchandising.

Among the rating statements, there are tendencies to rely on store displays when customers decide to purchase the product has the highest mean of 2.91 with a standard deviation of 0.73; this means that the respondents agreed that their purchase behavior is affected by store displays with an interpretation of "moderate positive influence." This means that most customers depend on store displays when deciding to purchase a product. However, task uncertainty making purchase behavior complex has the lowest mean of 2.29 and is interpreted as "weak positive influence," with a standard deviation of 0.84. This finding sheds light suggesting that respondents perceive external factors contributing to task uncertainty as having a limited influence on the intricacy of their purchase behavior. The standard deviation of 0.84 reflects a moderate level of agreement among respondents, indicating a certain degree of consistency in their views. According to Cant and Wiid (2020), several customers believe they buy products only when shopping but also repeatedly buy the shopping experience. Visual merchandising displays in shops strongly influence the shopping experience, and customers rely on the display when purchasing a product.

Table 12 – Degree of the influence of visual merchandising practices on the customers' purchase behavior in terms of choice extensiveness.

Item Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. I find it difficult to decide when many choices are displayed.	1.86	0.77	Agree	Weak Positive Influence
2. Many choices affect my purchase decision.	3.07	0.69	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
3. I tend to choose a store that has lots of product choices.	3.16	0.75	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
4. It is important to have many choices in deciding what to buy.	3.19	0.73	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
5. Displayed choices help me choose the best product to buy.	3.26	0.72	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Moderate Positive Influence</b>

Table 12 furnishes a comprehensive analysis of the impact of visual merchandising on customers' purchase behavior, with a specific focus on the extent of choice available to them. The respondents' evaluations resulted in an overall mean response of 2.91 and a standard deviation of 0.73, indicating a statistically significant "moderate positive influence" of choice extensiveness on purchase behavior. This finding underscores the pivotal role of varied product offerings in shaping consumer behavior, aligning with the common trend of preferring one-stop shopping experiences. As one expert highlighted, retail stores that provide a diverse range of merchandise not only enhance customer convenience but also play a crucial role in influencing comprehensive purchasing decisions (Industry Experts, 2023). This resonates with the insights of Amelia et al. (2015), emphasizing the transformative impact of an abundance of choices on consumer decision-making. The ability of diverse choices to sway customers towards one brand or encourage indulgent shopping underscores the intricate relationship between choice extensiveness and market dynamics. By strategically offering a broad spectrum of options, retailers not only enhance convenience but also shape consumer preferences, potentially influencing market trends and brand loyalty profoundly.

Among the rating statements, displayed choices to choose the best product to buy got the highest mean response of 3.26 with a deviation of 0.72, interpreted as "strong positive influence." Having many product choices is important to the customer as it influences their purchase behavior. They can have many options when purchasing a product. Despite that, finding it difficult when many choices are displayed has the lowest mean of 1.86 with a standard deviation of 0.77. This suggests that respondents generally do not find it challenging when confronted with a multitude of choices. The low mean underscores the consensus that the abundance of options does not significantly bother or complicate the decision-making process for the participants. From a retail perspective, understanding that customers do not find it challenging to navigate through an array of choices is crucial. It emphasizes the importance of offering a diverse range of products and ensuring effective presentation in the store. This strategy not only caters to varying consumer preferences but also contributes to a positive and enriching shopping experience. The variety of products directly influences consumer decision-making (Amanah, D., & Harahap, D. A., 2018).

Table 13 shows how visual merchandising influences customers' purchase behavior, specifically in terms of perceived buyer power. The overall result indicated a mean of 2.92 and a standard deviation of 0.71, revealing "moderately agree," reflecting the "moderate positive influence" expressed by most respondents. This underscores the crucial role of visually appealing displays in shaping

customers' perceptions of their purchasing ability. Industry experts (2023) assert that the visually-oriented generation of today not only demonstrates a heightened willingness to spend on aesthetically pleasing products but also exhibits a notable inclination towards impulse purchasing when visually stimulated. Echoing the insights of Kaur and Kochar (2018), the findings emphasize the interconnectedness of visual appeal and consumer purchase behavior, highlighting the strategic importance of effective visual merchandising in influencing buyer power and shaping contemporary retail dynamics.

Table 13 – Degree of the influence of visual merchandising practices on the customers' purchase behavior in terms of perceived buying power.

Item Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. I tend to buy more products when I see a good deal in the displays.	3.14	0.71	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
2. I have difficulty controlling my urge to buy when I see a good offer in the displays.	2.00	0.75	Agree	Weak Positive Influence
3. I feel a sense of excitement when I make an impulse purchase.	3.03	0.72	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
4. I only buy products that I can afford.	3.41	0.66	Strongly Agree	Strong Positive Influence
5. I will likely buy it when I see a product on an in-store display.	3.01	0.73	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.92</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Moderate Positive Influence</b>

Among the statements, buying products they can only afford has the highest mean of 3.41 with a deviation of 0.66, which is interpreted as a "strong positive influence" on perceived buyer power in purchase behavior. However, difficulty controlling the urge when a good offer is available has the lowest mean of 2.00 with a standard deviation of 0.75. This signifies a "weak positive influence" among the respondents, indicating that, on average, they do not find it challenging to resist the urge when presented with a tempting offer. However, the elevated standard deviation suggests a noteworthy level of dispersion in the respondents' answers, indicating a diversity of opinions or experiences on this matter. While the mean underscores a general trend toward minimal influence, the wide standard deviation suggests a degree of variability in how participants respond to the difficulty of controlling impulses in the presence of enticing offers. This variability could stem from individual differences, varying levels of susceptibility to promotional incentives, or diverse attitudes toward impulsive buying behavior. Buying products that we can only afford leads us to savings, and you can purchase items when they are on sale and take the time to make better spending choices (Lim, 2018).

Table 14 – Summary Table on the impact of visual merchandising practices on purchase behavior

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
Purchase Importance	3.22	0.70	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
Task Uncertainty	2.61	0.87	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
Choice Extensiveness	2.91	0.73	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
Perceived Buying Power	2.92	0.71	Moderately Agree	Moderate Positive Influence
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.92</b>	<b>0.75</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Moderate Positive Influence</b>

Table 14 shows the results summary of the degree of influence of visual merchandising on customers' purchase behavior has a grand mean of 2.92, which is described as a "moderate positive influence." This suggests that visual merchandising influences various dimensions, such as purchase importance, task uncertainty, choice extensiveness, and perceived buyer power. Contrasting this, Han (2017) posits that customers generally prioritize the best brand when making purchases; however, insights from experts reveal a shift towards considerations of price and practicality in local settings (Industry Experts, 2023). Interestingly, external influences, including others' attitudes and situational factors, add layers of complexity to customers' decision-making processes. This intricate interplay emphasizes the need for businesses to recognize the nuanced dynamics shaping customer choices and underscores the vital role of effective visual merchandising in influencing diverse facets of the buying journey.

Among the factors, purchase importance has the highest mean of 3.22 and is described as a "moderate positive influence," which means most customers rely on the importance of purchasing the products offered. Task uncertainty has the lowest mean of 2.61, which is described as a "moderate positive influence," which means that uncertainty of the given task also affects customers' purchasing decisions. This means that practices may have been properly observed influencing the customers' purchase decision as most consider its importance before buying it. Most business buying decisions are non-static; theorists and researchers were hard-pressed to effectively capture the dynamic nature of the decision-making of business buyers (Ghingold & Wilson, 2017).

**4.4 Problem 4. Regression Analysis**

**4.4.1 Customer Engagement**

Multiple regression was utilized to determine whether visual merchandising practices such as in-store form display, floor merchandising, promotional signage, and window display could significantly predict customer engagement ( $Y_1$ ). The regression results indicated that the model explained 11.2% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor,  $F(4, 380) = 13.073$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ . While in-store form display ( $x_1$ ) ( $B=.056$ ,  $p=.222$ ), floor merchandising ( $x_2$ ) ( $B=.064$ ,  $p=.125$ ), and promotional signage ( $x_3$ ) ( $B=.001$ ,  $p=.980$ ) did not contribute significantly, window display ( $x_4$ ) ( $B= 0.092$ ) significantly contributed to the model,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ . The final predictive model was:  $Y_1 = 2.737 + (.056 * x_1) + (.064 * x_2) + (.001 * x_3) + (.092 * x_4) + E$

Table 15. Influence of Visual Merchandising Practices on Customer Engagement

	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
(Constant)	2.727	.101		26.991	.000
In-store Form Display	.056	.046	.093	1.224	.222
Floor Merchandising	.064	.041	.105	1.538	.125
Promotional Signage	.001	.040	.002	.025	.980
Window Display	.092	.041	.223	2.260	.024*

R<sup>2</sup> = .112  
 F-ratio = 13.073  
 n = 385

\*p < .05

**4.4.2 Purchase Behavior**

Multiple regression determined whether visual merchandising practices such as in-store form display, floor merchandising, promotional signage, and window display could significantly predict purchase behavior ( $Y_2$ ). The regression results indicated that the model explained 8.10% of the variance and was a significant predictor,  $F(4, 380) = 9.464$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ . While in-store form display ( $x_1$ ) ( $B=.012$ ,  $p=.628$ ), floor merchandising ( $x_2$ ) ( $B=-.012$ ,  $p=.667$ ), and promotional signage ( $x_3$ ) ( $B=.010$ ,  $p=.708$ ) did not contribute significantly, window display ( $x_4$ ) ( $B= 0.068$ ) significantly contributed to the model,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ . The final predictive model was:  $Y_2 = 2.817 + (.012 * x_1) + (-.012 * x_2) + (.010 * x_3) + (.068 * x_4) + E$

Table 16. Influence of Visual Merchandising Practices on Purchase behavior

	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
(Constant)	2.817	.066		49.952	.000
In-store Form Display	.012	.030	.032	.409	.682
Floor Merchandising	-.012	.027	-.030	-.431	.667
Promotional Signage	.010	.026	.038	.375	.708
Window Display	.068	.026	.259	2.575	.010*

R<sup>2</sup> = .081  
 F-ratio = 9.464  
 n = 385

\*p < .05

Based on the results, the following decisions were made:

Hypothesis	Customer Engagement		Purchase Behavior	
	p-value	Decision	p-value	Decision
$H_0: x_1$ has no significant relationship with $Y_2$	.222	Accept $H_0$	.682	Accept $H_0$
$H_0: x_2$ has no significant relationship with $Y_2$	.125	Accept $H_0$	.667	Accept $H_0$
$H_0: x_3$ has no significant relationship with $Y_2$	.980	Accept $H_0$	.708	Accept $H_0$
$H_0: x_4$ has no significant relationship with $Y_2$	.024	Reject $H_0$	.010	Reject $H_0$
$H_1: x_4$ has a significant relationship with $Y_2$		Accept $H_1$		Accept $H_1$

The utilization of multiple regression to examine the predictive potential of visual merchandising practices, including in-store form display, floor merchandising, promotional signage, and window display, on customer engagement and purchase behavior yielded noteworthy insights. A closer examination of the individual predictors reveals that in-store form display, floor merchandising, and promotional signage did not emerge as statistically significant contributors to the prediction of customer engagement and purchase behavior. Conversely, window display exhibited a statistically significant underscoring its unique influence.

These findings underscore the intricate influence of some of the visual merchandising elements on customer engagement and purchase behavior. As revealed in personal interviews with industry experts in 2023, the consensus is that customer loyalty establishes a robust connection between customers and stores, potentially reducing susceptibility to the influence of specific visual merchandising strategies from competitors or within the store itself. Notably, experts also emphasize the added layer of complexity brought by the price sensitivity of local customers, where the allure of lower prices can sway even loyal patrons. In the current landscape of economic uncertainty and heightened prices, consumers are exercising greater financial caution, tightening budgets in response to inflation and rising costs of essential goods and services (Coibion O. et al., 2020). In this context, the relationship between visual merchandising elements and purchase behavior becomes less straightforward, prompting retailers to delicately balance pricing strategies with other factors to navigate consumer preferences and economic challenges.

While certain elements may not individually sway purchasing engagement and decisions, the pronounced influence of window display underscores its significance as a substantial driver. Retailers can strategically leverage this understanding to enhance their window display approaches, recognizing their outsized influence in encouraging favorable engagement and purchase behavior. This nuanced comprehension provides practical guidance for retailers aiming to optimize visual merchandising strategies and enhance their ability to predict and shape customer purchasing decisions.

**5. Conclusion**

Visual merchandising influences customer engagement and purchase behavior. It plays a pivotal role in developing brand preferences and stimulating purchase intentions, highlighting its strategic significance in the retail industry. The research findings underscore the critical importance of tailoring visual merchandising elements to enhance customer engagement and purchase behavior, with a key focus on the influential role of window displays. These insights offer valuable guidance for retailers seeking to optimize in-store layouts and promotional efforts, emphasizing specific visual elements that profoundly impact customer interactions and overall engagement.

However, the effectiveness of visual merchandising elements such as floor displays, sales promotions, and in-store form displays in predicting customer engagement can be influenced by various factors, including the local context, customer loyalty, and price sensitivity. In smaller towns with fewer retailers, customers may indeed have established loyalty to a particular store, but their preference for cheaper prices becomes a significant consideration. In such cases, the impact of visual merchandising elements on predicting customer engagement may be mitigated by the existing loyalty and the price-conscious nature of customers.

It is essential to consider the local dynamics, customer behaviors, and the unique characteristics of the market when evaluating the influence of visual merchandising strategies. In situations where customer loyalty is high, the emphasis may shift towards maintaining that loyalty through personalized services, product availability, and a consistent and positive customer experience. While specific articles or studies may provide insights into the influence of visual merchandising in different contexts, the local



dynamics and customer loyalty factors are plausible explanations for why these elements might not significantly predict customer engagement in certain scenarios.

Consequently, the positive relationship identified between the utilization of visual elements and their influence on customers' purchase behavior underscores the strategic importance of visual merchandising in the business industry. As businesses continue to evolve, the imperative for continuous improvement in visual merchandising practices becomes evident. This research contributes valuable insights into understanding how visual merchandising not only influences customer engagement but also significantly shapes purchase behavior. These findings pave the way for the introduction of enhanced techniques for product presentation, aiming to capture attention effectively and bolster customer engagement and purchase behavior in the ever-evolving market landscape.

In essence, the research not only provides practical guidance for optimizing visual merchandising practices but also offers a nuanced understanding of the dynamic interplay between these elements and customer engagement. It emphasizes the adaptability of strategies based on budget considerations, ensuring that retailers can make informed decisions to enhance their overall shopping experience and business outcomes.

## 6. Recommendations

In today's business environment, this suggestion emphasizes the crucial need for businesses, especially in the retail sector, to utilize visual merchandising strategically, advocating for proactive government backing, hands-on skill enhancement, and a keen understanding of the ever-changing market landscape to elevate capturing customer engagement and purchase behavior. The subsequent recommendations aim to elevate visual merchandising strategies and foster business development.

1. Optimizing Limited Budgets:
  - a. *For local retail businesses with ample budgets:* Leverage all available visual merchandising elements to create a captivating shopping environment.
  - b. *For local retail businesses with budget constraints:* Prioritize window displays for cost-effective yet impactful engagement and customer purchase behavior.
2. Government Support and Skill Development Initiatives:
  - a. *Hands-on skill development:* Encourage retailers and entrepreneurs to learn decorating and exhibition booth design techniques.
  - b. *Practical implementation:* Propose programs and workshops, including a detailed visual merchandising training program, in collaboration with government bodies (e.g., Department of Trade and Industry, local government units), educational institutions, and industry stakeholders.
  - c. *Proactive involvement:* Advocate for government agencies to facilitate the implementation of diverse visual merchandising techniques actively. Create an environment that encourages creativity and innovation in the retail sector.
3. Strategic Uniqueness for Local Businesses:
  - a. *Key tool for competitiveness:* Highlight the pivotal role of visual merchandising for local businesses aiming to stand out in a competitive market.
  - b. *Refining techniques:* Encourage retail store owners to refine and improve visual merchandising techniques based on empirical evidence from the study.
4. Transition to Online Platforms:
  - a. *Guiding the transition:* Emphasize the need for retailers to develop effective online visual merchandising strategies to mirror traditional retail settings.
5. Guidance for Aspiring Entrepreneurs:
  - a. *Proactive steps:* Encourage aspiring entrepreneurs to actively seek effective visual merchandising strategies through participation in dedicated programs and workshops, such as the proposed visual merchandising training program outlined in Appendix E.
6. Research Scope Expansion:
  - a. *Broadening research focus:* Acknowledge the regional focus of the study and encourage future researchers to explore broader titles and populations, including the online setting.

These consolidated recommendations aim to provide a more streamlined and actionable set of strategies for enhancing visual merchandising and promoting business development in the retail sector.

## 7. Study Limitation and Future Research

This study, focusing on micro-enterprises within a specific locality offering general merchandise, acknowledges certain limitations. Given the scale of small local businesses, consumer behaviors toward visual merchandising may differ from those observed in larger retail establishments. The study's temporal constraints may only partially capture seasonal variations and evolving consumer trends over time. Moreover, the financial constraints inherent in microenterprises may impact the availability and execution of visual merchandising strategies. These may limit the generalizability of findings to larger enterprises and different geographic locations. To address these limitations, future research could explore cross-regional variations in consumer behaviors and examine the influence of business capital on the effectiveness of visual merchandising in micro-enterprises. Additionally, longitudinal studies could give insights into the evolving dynamics between consumer behaviors, business capital, and visual merchandising strategies over time, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of these relationships in the context of small local businesses.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations or those of the publisher, the editors, and the reviewers.

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