

## **The Impact of Visual Merchandising on Brand Equity within the Sri Lankan Premium Apparel Retail Sector**

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### **Abstract**

This study centres on the relationship between brand equity and visual merchandising in Sri Lankan high-end apparel stores, and a mixed-methods approach was used here for data collection. Structured questionnaires, interview techniques, and stratified random sampling were used to gather the data. Statistical techniques, including ANOVA, multiple correlation analysis and chi-square testing, measured the relationship between visual merchandising and brand equity. The results show that the more a product is described, the higher the consumer's purchase intention. Also, dealer satisfaction and customer perception are related, so visual merchandising will affect customer behaviour. Moreover, research shows that visual merchandising does not only influence purchasing behaviour. It affects product brand image and is a factor in consumer choice. Furthermore, the study focuses on the importance of product quality and aesthetic value in building brand equity. As such, it is a massive boost to brand sales for apparel that uses visual merchandising. The findings suggest that the luxury apparel retail sector should focus on visual marketing.

**Keywords:** Visual merchandising, Brand equity, Premium apparel, Retail sector, Consumer behaviour

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## 1 Introduction

Visual merchandising is crucial to influencing customer behaviour in the fast-moving, keenly competitive retail industry. Visual merchandising is the perfect balance of truth and pragmatism, the conscientious fusion of commerce and art. In this study, by examining the luxury clothing trade in Sri Lanka, the objective is to explore the relationship between image-making and brand value. Brand equity measures a product or service's value because of the name it gives to the marketplace. It is a composite of consumer affection, public opinion towards the brand, and the wealth and loyalty it commands. High-end fashion designers rely on brand equity to distinguish their wares from competitors, to build a loyal customer base, and to command high prices. As the name suggests, visual merchandising enhances the display of a retail establishment. To create an atmosphere that lures customers inside, thorough planning and implementation are needed. Visual merchandising sets the tone of the store and preserves the semblance of a welcoming home. Their visual marketing initiative aims to convince customers that the product is good quality and worth buying (Park et al., 2015). Visual merchandise can make up for these moments and endow an object with life by bringing it out of the showcase into a world of aspirations as well as functionality. Randhawa and Saluja (2017) suggest that visual merchandising may elicit solid customer feelings and demands by judiciously blending colour, layout, lighting, and product display. When attracting or persuading prospective customers, colour is one of the most critical factors. Used as a powerful magnet, it can be employed to guide prospective customers to become dedicated followers. In retail settings, visual merchandisers are the mastermind behind creating, representing, and putting into practice these different types of visual concepts and strategies. In-store services, product displays, and digital marketing campaigns they are responsible for are some examples of this phenomenon (Pillai et al., 2011). In traditional retail jobs, visual merchandisers are required to create displays, events and catalogue presentations. Their primary goal in retail settings is always to attract new customers and turn them into loyal fans. In various locales, headquarters, regional centres, or other strategic locations- they always must attract and keep new customers. From knowing approximately what the target customer looks for and seeking more creative means to engage and inform the customer, strategically positioned visual elements enchant and enthrall, as well as guide the customer in finding and choosing a product that fits the requirements of their taste and budget.

Despite its importance, research has yet to fully explore the relationship between visual merchandising and brand equity (Akhilendra & Aravendan, 2023). This is particularly evident among high-end clothing outlets in Sri Lanka. However, the available data mainly comes from Western markets, so more research is required in the island nation to know how visual merchandising affects brand equity. As for this present issue, environmental and cultural factors unique to Sri Lanka work in opposing directions, but how do aggressive visual merchandising and brand attachment relate? The evidence must be included because the research was not primarily created for Sri Lankan consumers (Jayathilaka, 2018). Consequently, this study represents a new attempt to answer the question.

Although more research has focused on the aspects of visual merchandising, such as storefront displays, floor retailing, and advertising signs, this fact can only make it more challenging to understand the impact of visual merchandise on the overall brand. This exploration in visual merchandising aims to review various tools now employed by high-fashion retailers and research their overall influence on corporate equity.

Furthermore, previous analyses have mainly utilised quantitative methodology to explore the relationship between all parts of visual merchandising and branding. For all its advantages, quantitative research often leaves out more intricate viewpoints and generality than qualitative research. This study aims to illuminate aspects of the relationship that have yet to be discussed, delving into the matter again using qualitative research methods.

Moreover, factors influencing brand loyalty, brand awareness and perceived quality have created significant interest for researchers interested in studying brand equity. Even though these critical ingredients are indispensable in developing brand equity, they are not the only elements contributing to its growth. This paper explores different dimensions of brand equity, focusing on visual merchandising strategies and their effects on those scores.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate whether visual merchandising has any influence on brand equity in high-end clothing shops in Sri Lanka. It also wants to know whether visual merchandising has an impact on brand loyalty. The objectives include understanding how visual merchandising channels and communication patterns can be branded and identifying various problems with visual display in franchising. Brand equity can be established across different modes, and Losses from setting up visual displays are also considered advantages and disadvantages of visual merchandising in terms of brand equity.

In order to accomplish these goals, this research puts forward the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Brand equity is positively and significantly impacted by visual merchandising.

**H2:** Visual merchandising influences the choices made by most customers.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 The Evolving Landscape of Visual Merchandising in Premium Apparel Retail**

Creative visual merchandising strategies built on technology are altering luxury clothing retail around the globe. Of these innovations, two examples are virtual fitting-room mirrors with AI capabilities and interactive displays that make highly customised product recommendations. They mix the real world with the virtual to create engaging, immersive shopping environments and use AR/VR mirrors to try on clothes (Prabuddha et al., 2024). At the same time, people shop in luxury stores or examine a carefully chosen array of products on interactive screens that adjust their content based on user interests (Tuten, 2022). Research shows increased customer participation in the broader market may significantly improve customer satisfaction and brand reputation (Thomas, 2018). As far as the online world is concerned, this digital transformation before action began in traditional flagship stores. Today, how healthy firms are able to combine online and physical touchpoints is a critical criterion for a consistent brand image and the same user convenience across platforms. Seturi (2020) suggests that a comprehensive, high-contact approach to brand building creates a feeling of familiarity and trust, which affects brand equity over time. However, even so, traversing this technical landscape and considering cultural sensibilities is essential. Following international trends might even backfire, but adopting them might have value. In contrast, inconspicuous links must be a company's priority, consistent with local values. Studies have indicated that people might feel more at one with a company if they used

digital displays to emphasise traditional themes or added culturally relevant music to in-store experiences (Loranger & Greene, 2020).

The possible impacts of these discoveries still need to be studied within the framework of Sri Lanka, something that should bring many research opportunities. In Sri Lanka, things like customised displays and lighting or digital recommendations to match individual preferences may impact brand equity more than traditional methods (Bakri, 2020). This argument is consistent with research showing that it is necessary to tailor the brand experience to the specific needs of target groups or cultural settings. Later, learning more about the relationship between the two in Sri Lanka will also be necessary. These new technologies could boost brand equity and emotional connections in Sri Lankan society, where web-user populations are growing, especially among younger people already accustomed to dealing with things digitally (Sampaio, 2021). Researchers need further study in this area to close a significant knowledge gap and establish how Sri Lankan luxury apparel companies could use these advances while being sensitive to cultural differences. In order to create best practices for technology-aided visual merchandising strategies that promote customer participation and brand attachment in the peculiar Sri Lankan market, researchers must also study local consumerist preferences and responses.

## **2.2 The Psychology of Visual Merchandising**

Visual merchandisers know that their power does not flow from machinery but from their ability to break through into the human mind and stir up feelings and brand associations that make people more likely to interact and buy things. Picture going into a beautiful store where the warm and inviting lighting surrounds and tells an eloquent tale of refined elegance through carefully selected displays. Underneath that tasteful facade, it is sculpting perception of the brand in ways people may not even realise are happening, making people automatically associate it with the feeling of assurance or communal trust. This is the deliberate embedding of psychological ideas in the visual realm, and it is no coincidence. (Batey, 2015). High-end fashion firms often use several psychological tricks to achieve their aims. Researchers realise that more excellent colours like blues and greens bring a sense of quiet and trust, while warmer ones like reds and oranges arouse spirited, enthusiastic feelings. From this standpoint, colour psychology is essential. Sensory factors, such as music, also contribute much to enhancing the senses; brands will get closer to their customers with this connection whilst repeatedly leaving a deep impression on people. According to Krishna (2012), it is evident that well-musically matched melodies bring about more favourable brand images, while Berčík et al. (2021) emphasised the importance of aroma for affecting consumer behaviour. When using these psychological triggers, one must be mindful of cultural differences. Someone else could seek help understanding something one culture hides from, which is critical in comprehending how local traditions and values affect consumer sentiment in the Sri Lankan context. According to research conducted by Kartop and Ekizoğlu (2022) they found that, adding pictures of cultural attributes or inserting traditional music into the atmosphere inside the store may create a feeling of closeness, someone familiar around.

One still needs to understand what visual marketing in Sri Lanka is doing to us. Are there specific colour schemes or sensory elements in displays being used there that will result in brands becoming associated with and emotionally connected to consumers more than conventional methods can achieve? This specific approach is in agreement with research findings regarding the extent of sensory signals that are appropriate for a

given culture and its effects on consumer behaviour. Suppose researchers investigate narrative techniques in visual merchandising, such as the exhibition of art by regional artists who originally come from an area or craft products with long traditional heritages. In that case, it also helps researchers to understand ways to develop emotional ties and loyalty with customers among the people of Sri Lanka.

Additional research is needed to see how Sri Lankan luxury clothing would do on the overseas market if it considered psychological principles and local cultural quirks in its visual marketing approach. By examining the emotions and reactions that certain things evoke in Sri Lanka, scientists can develop suitable methods for visually stimulating encounters that fascinate people and build up brand cachet in this most unusual of markets.

### **2.3 Building Brand Equity Through Storytelling and Narrative**

Visual merchandising can create strong connections between companies and their customers by imparting enchanting stories beyond mere psychology and aesthetics. Storytelling is responsible for more than just persuading customers to make a purchase; it enables viewers to empathise with the company, infusing products with meaning and value that earns brand loyalty (Landa & Braun, 2024). The quilting in the symbol evokes country living and reflects a no-frills aesthetic, indicating that Laura Ashley still adheres to its earlier design principles. High fashion firms often use graphic elements to tell stories. Eye is a brand's signature motif. Exhibiting dynamic positions hints at brave lifestyles, while carefully chosen product groups can call forth various emotions or ideas. In-store signage and graphics give a peek into the history or guiding philosophies behind the firm's operations, while interactive displays encourage people to engage directly with the brand narrative. Green (2021) shows that narrative transportation is fantastic and persuasive in influencing consumer behaviour.

On the other hand, Roggeveen et al. (2021) provides scientific proof of the effectiveness of narrative marketing in increasing brand feelings. Visual merchandising tells stories and is an excellent opportunity to showcase local skills and culture in Sri Lanka. Suppose Sri Lankan customers feel especially valuable by learning about the background of local artists. Particularly touching are the stories of local artists, hand-making techniques, and traditional motifs. The results of this study are consistent with Elliott (2020) finding that culturally relevant stories in advertising effectively influence people's actions.

The potential of visual merchandising in Sri Lankan markets to tell a story and create brand value leads the world. Can this explain the reason for countries to have so many stories? Do exhibits that showcase traditional craftsmanship and tell local artisans' stories benefit the recognition of one's brand? Compare this to an exhibit that does not include narratives of this kind. In other words, this concept parallels research showing that culturally relevant stories can seriously affect consumers' actions (Elliott, 2020). Furthermore, studying the results of interactive storytelling elements like digital displays showing crafts people's stories or virtual reality experiences bringing traditional arts to life can provide valuable insights into how to attract Sri Lankan consumers and sustain their interest in brands.

High-end clothing brands in Sri Lanka can include narrative into their visual merchandising strategies to build brand equity, connect with regional cultural values, and foster an emotional connection with customers. However, further research is still required to understand this. Studies may provide lessons about creating more valuable visual narratives in the Sri Lankan market based on people's responses to different

storytelling strategies and how successful they are in altering purchasing intentions and brand perceptions.

## **2.4 Cross-cultural Considerations in Visual Merchandising**

Some cultural settings can only be crossed with success in the fast-moving global sale of luxury garments. If new styles shared worldwide can make a company more modern and promote brand importance, repeating these sets of forms verbatim has deleterious consequences. This means that promoted transnational marketing should balance drawing from worldwide origins and respecting local tastes to work optimally. Culture-specific symbols, meanings of colours in the mind's eye, and strategies for conveying meaning must be carefully thought out. In a different culture, a colour considered luxurious might have negative connotations instead.

However, mannequin displays may inadvertently cause the viewer to travel in the opposite direction. According to the research conducted by Moon and Song (2015), the importance of knowledge of culture in design and marketing must be addressed, and the risks associated with failing to take into account cultural contexts are significant. On the other hand, the same cross-cultural characteristics can provide brilliant opportunities to connect deep, global brands and build global brand equity. Visual elements need to be changed to better connect with the tastes and preferences of local consumers in order to win their respect and recognition. Another way expert recommends shaping a brand experience that truly resonates with the cultural customs and mores in a particular country is to use models from different nationalities, feature local artwork, or make clever references to local traditions. This is consistent with a study from Wang et al. (2012), whose findings return to help inform the demonstration of cultural adaptation in the apparel industry at one time or another.

Regarding Sri Lankan luxury clothing sales, testing specific hypotheses and seeing whether there are any research gaps is essential. Can traditional musical instruments or Kandyan-style dances inlays enhance brand trust and purchase intentions, or do displays with such figures offer no advantage relative to showcases containing no one's culture at all? According to research, cultural adaptation enhances customers' perceptions of brands (Liu et al., 2020), which is consistent with this idea. More interesting, in terms of local celebrities, the potential for collaboration with well-known Sri Lankan designers in designing retail storefronts provides new insights that might be helpful in making Sri Lankan consumers feel closer to us.

To better understand how luxury clothing manufacturers in this country should function in the labyrinthine world of displays, which walk several paths at once between cultures—research must continue. By looking at consumer reactions to different visual elements and their influence on brand recognition and consumer decision-making, as well as through working with local cultural experts and industry players from the side or behind the scenes, research can devise guidelines recommended for creating intense and culturally sensitive visual sensations conveying a sense of life such as reaching out in touch with their fellow citizens and on brand equity among that particular clientele.

## **2.5 The Impact of Visual Merchandising**

Shopping for luxury clothing is an exciting world, and it is well-known that visual merchandising is not only about appearance. Instead, it has a significant impact on consumer behaviour and brand value. Although its impact is clear, precisely stating the effects it has thrusts forward is an exciting challenge. Empirical methods must be

refined and complemented by conventional measures and innovative approaches if enterprises are to exploit (Nguyen, 2022). As Davis (2012) noted, Traditional metrics such as average order value, conversion rates, and sales figures give architectural examples of the immediate impact on the sales performance of visual merchandising. However, these numbers are frequently misleading because they must reflect the sharpening distinction between brand image and long-term loyalty. Customer engagement, which is essential to the process of building lasting brand value, is something that they leave out (Oswald & Oswald, 2012). More and more companies are now using modern techniques for measuring brand awareness so that people worldwide will know how well-known their company is. Eye-tracking technology helps uncover the subtle choreography of customer attention, telling researchers where people move their eyes on displays and what catches their attention (Knight, 2021). Neuromarketing studies aimed at revealing more than what is known about unconsciously aroused brand associations. They also identify how brands work subconsciously through emotional and graphic signs (Lindstrom, 2010). Also, social media analytics provide insights like online conversations and brand references about interactions in physical stores, which help assess the reach and impact of screens (Garg, 2020).

Studying the luxury clothing market in Sri Lanka can help scholars explore patterns and fill in essential information about how visual marketing has a say in people's lives. The significant question immediately arises: Can interactive elements, based on their research of focus groups who have influenced promotions and selling behaviour for years as they know nothing about importance more than money? Eye-tracking technology and social media mentions are instrumental means of testing it while broad. Indeed, according to prior findings by Moon & Song (2015) on how cultural sensitivity is essential in visual merchandising, as well as Varga et al. (2016) work, cultural factors such as dancing boys and local symbols can increase engagement rates. However, only a deep understanding implies a connection between classic truths and fresh insights. So, what is the relationship between innovative methods like social media analytics and eye tracking and older, tangible metrics such as conversion rates and sales statistics? As Chaffey and Smith (2022) point out, this merger may require a holistic understanding of retail in the Sri Lankan context. By completing these research gaps and developing a culturally relevant measuring tapestry, brands in Sri Lanka can unlock the latent potential of visual merchandising and tailor their displays to encourage deeper interaction, inspire brand loyalty, and flourish in this dynamic market.

## **2.6 Evolving Trends and Implications for Sri Lanka**

The Sri Lankan luxury apparel business flows smoothly through the sometimes-turbulent rapids of the retail river. With the onset of fashion's new technological revolution, the business is riding the crest. AI-driven personalisation adapts merchandising style and visuals to local preferences, raising perceived value and fostering brand loyalty. (Brooks, 2021) In virtual reality (AR) experiences, virtual clothes that dance over customers' bodies get customers to spend and interact with a brand (Kang, 2014). Interactive displays bristle with touch-sensitive magic. Gamified experiences pulse out at browsing customers (Gomez & Campos, 2010), drawing viewers in and strengthening brand recall.

However, evaluating the effectiveness of these technologies in the context of Ceylon makes one worry about the need for more study on many things. Multichannel experiences have been, over the past few years, a further trend that is gaining traction.

Digital and physical environments have now become a single river joining into a gigantic, company-wide sales ecosystem as opposed to being two separate oceans. Mangold and Faulds (2009) remind researchers that Sri Lankan businesses should cultivate the art of seamless integration and exploit the ability of social media to be an integral part of their physical store. Furthermore, they must create more cohesive visual narratives across touchpoints. Future research will continue to gauge the impact of multichannel digital marketing strategies on brand equity by measuring the behaviour of consumers in this rapidly changing environment (Ozuem & Ranfagni, 2021). With sustainability and ethics, a strong undercurrent of consumer values is sweeping through. In a world of good and clean, companies require power strategies. Therefore, transparency and narrative are crucial because they allow companies to display their commitment to ethically sourcing materials, using eco-friendly local resources and practices. (Oswald & Oswald, 2012). Upcycled versions of existing materials and energy-efficient displays can subtly help more people become environmentally friendly. However, the study of how these activities affect consumer choices and perceptions toward brands constitutes another gap in research that must be filled (Gottfried, 2014). Ultimately, Sri Lanka's rivers of cultural importance and regional links have their rhythm. Displays adorned with vivid local symbols and artworks and given an authentic touch by the local culture appeal to customers in great numbers and enhance the image of the brand (Moon & Song, 2015). When visual merchandising matches the holidays and seasonal themes, it deepens a company's connection with its clients. Shopping becomes a shared cultural experience (Akhilendra & Aravendan, 2023). For the reader to completely appreciate the subtle ramifications of cultural sensitivity on brand equity and customer involvement, a thorough inquiry should be conducted here. "Researchers, therefore, are urged to examine this neglected field" (Ozuem & Ranfagni, 2021).

In light of the current trends, premium garment-makers in Sri Lanka could use the essence of visual merchandising practices to fill these research gaps in the brand equity effect of such ideas on buying and lasting satisfaction. This paper will serve as a pilot for companies trying to break into a new market where creativity and cultural sensitivity combine to make for a fantastic retail success story.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

In order to recognise that the nature of brand value for luxury clothing shopping is complex, this research takes a pragmatic mixed-methods perspective (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Karell & Niinimäki, 2020). In large-scale quantitative surveys that use incredibly robust statistical techniques, correlations and ANOVAs can reveal generally applicable trends in consumer perception and behaviour concerning visual marketing (Bryman, 2016; Bravo & Sanz, 2021). The subjective experiences, as well as what motivates this upsurge in visual marketing demand, will be gleaned by research with both customers and sellers in in-depth qualitative interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2023); also, new fresh perspectives at a variety of levels, but it provides an answer to why there are those quantitative findings. In today's competitive climate, visual marketing significantly impacts how consumers view brands. Furthermore, Flick (2014) and Amin et al. (2020) provides an exhaustive account of the phenomenon by employing a triangulation dispensation of quantitative and qualitative elements.

### **3.2 Research Design**

In order to understand the intricate relationship between visual merchandising and brand equity in luxury clothes businesses, this study used a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Phase 1 takes a quantitative perspective and requires structured surveys to gather individual customers' self-reported perceptions as the unit of analysis (Bryman, 2016). ANOVA and correlations are employed by statistical techniques to determine generalisable patterns in visual merchandising aspects and consumer brand perception. In Phase 2, a qualitative methodology is utilised, and in-depth interviews are conducted with a more focused and limited group of customers and business specialists to get a deeper understanding of the "how" and "why" (Bryman, 2016). These talks bring researchers closer to a proper understanding of things than lists or charts can. They delve into the dove in commerce strategies and strategies people develop or use. Johnson and Walsh (2019) argue that Quantitative and Qualitative Integration is crucial for achieving greater credibility and reliability in research data. Under this view, capture a comprehensive, sophisticated representative of the object or process being studied.

### **3.3 Sampling and Participants**

To provide a stratified random sample, 1500 members of the general public from strategic cities around Sri Lanka who shop at upscale luxury clothing stores are chosen. The actual sample for this study is guaranteed to be representative and generalisable (Bryman, 2016). This approach has been specifically selected for its capacity to gather a comprehensive range of perspectives more quickly (Nguyen et al., 2021). The population is segmented into homogenous subgroups based on relevant characteristics such as demographics, brand loyalty, and frequency of shopping (Bryman, 2016). From each subgroup, the final sample is then randomly chosen in proportional ways to ensure that it accurately reflects the composition of the whole customer base. By reducing potential biases and enhancing the reliability of the data, a stratified technique makes it feasible to draw robust conclusions about the luxury goods business as a whole within the chosen geographic location.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedures**

This study employed a triangulated approach that combined primary data from structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with secondary data from other sources to provide a thorough understanding of the impact of visual merchandising on brand equity in high-end clothing. (Bryman, 2016). Surveys may offer quantitative information on consumers' values, behaviour patterns, or both, but in-depth interviews with consumers and suppliers provide valuable qualitative data describing their behaviours (Dörnyei, 2003). Qualitative methods of study include analysing texts and face-to-face interviews; others involve more anthropological, psychological (e.g., cognitive) behaviours as well as general trends in society (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Other data sources are opinion polls and case studies; these help researchers understand people's attitudes better than hard-established facts (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Researchers can increase data reliability from various angles and find problems at different nodes by combining triangulation and cognitive interview techniques. Finally, to conclusively study the complex relationship between brand equity in luxury clothes and visual merchandising.

### **3.5 Data Analysis Method**

To explore the complex relationship between visual merchandising and brand equity in high-end apparel, researchers need an in-depth data analysis using both quantitative and qualitative methods (Bryman, 2016). When doing a quantitative survey, the key factors and demographic data were identified, and income was insulated using a stratified random sample and descriptive statistics that made the quantitative phase possible. Then, statistical techniques such as Chi-Square, Multiple Regression, and ANOVA are used to test the hypotheses. Since these are fitted for category data comparison, taking potential confounding factors into account and accurately identifying group differences, they offer profound insights into quantifying the impact of visual marketing on people (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2020). In addition, these techniques are fitted to deal with categorical data, consider confounding factors, and identify group variations to provide deep insights into the quantitative effects of visual marketing (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2020). In order to dig deeper into the "why" behind the "how" and develop researchers' understanding, the qualitative stage of the study entails a Thematic Analysis from in-depth interviews with industry participants and consumers by recognising repetitive themes and patterns in this plentiful qualitative data, and researchers can hone and reinforce the quantitative results. For instance, they offer invaluable inputs to the idiosyncratic reactions of individuals, as well as the most critical points pulling consumers in different directions on visual marketing (Waters & Deterding, 2021). It is a comprehensive understanding of luxury apparel through a mix of valuable graphs and pictures at one level, deep and broad-based.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

Researchers, then, can deal exclusively with moral problems by putting great emphasis on voluntary participation and imposing complete anonymity. They explained the purpose of the study to participants. In this way, they obtained informed consent from the following academic standards. To minimise suffering, the questionnaires were all designed carefully, and strict control of data storage ensured that they were used only for research. A total commitment to ethics and doing what is right can be seen in the fact that researchers obliterated every single item after handing in their data and kept the identity of the participants strictly confidential until then (Petrova et al. 2016).

### **3.7 Limitations The study**

All research projects are subject to constraints, and this is no exception. One of the most significant is that the research relies on self-reported data from surveys, which could be distorted by social desirability or poor memory (Bryman, 2016). Given that this research paid particular attention to a specific client segment in the luxury clothing area, the results may need to be generalised better to other demographics or retail conditions, even though they did prove highly useful (Yin, 2018). Qualitative interviews are also limited in scope and can only capture a part of the client experience if they provide insight (Denzin, 2017). Scholars and practical people can address these shortcomings in the future, combining such methodologies as observational studies and mixed methods approaches to amplify further and deepen findings. In addition, varying consumer demographic information to any retail environment would enhance the

results' general applicability. This study hopes to provide a rich yet nuanced depiction of the influence visual merchandising has on brand equity in luxury apparel.

## **4 Results and discussion**

### **4.1 Demographic Analysis**

Those taking part in the research must be at least 18 years old. Out of the sample population, 31% or 473 were between 18 and 25, and 35% of people, or 524 respondents, were between 25 and 35; in summary, 34% of the respondents (or 503 individuals) were older than 35. Most survey participants fall between the ages of 25 and 35. Moreover, 1,183 men and 312 women, or 21% of the population and 79% altogether, took the survey along with the population. The gender makeup indicates that the surveyed textile manufacturers are mainly concerned with slope-to-male merchandise markets. In addition, different sectors were represented by the people who responded to the survey. The private sector had 751 people or 50% of the total. The public sector attracted 19% or 282 people. Other professions numbered 31% or 467 people. Those in the private sector mainly were employers. Of the 1,500 participants' shopping preferences, 75%, or 1,118, said they would like to shop, while 382 people, or 25%, said they would not. When it comes to purchasing behaviour, six hundred ninety-four (46%) participants made two purchases twice a month, six hundred thirty-nine (43%) participants made two to five purchases, and one hundred sixty-seven (11%) participants made more than five purchases. Doing it every month or twice a month seems normal for most shoppers. Favourite place to shop: 35% of 1,500 respondents said they like it, or 524 people. 34% of the population prefers to go to branded stores, 518 people, while 31% of the sample prefers to shop elsewhere 458.

### **4.2 Thematic Analysis**

Visual merchandising (VM) is a complex tactic that has a big impact on customer behaviour. The next section delineates the thematic framework that will be employed to analyse the effects of VM on customer loyalty, buying choices, and brand perception (Law et al., 2012). Therefore, Chapter 4.2.1 is concerned with whether a carefully laid out approach to lighting, fixtures and music will call forth emotions and bring people together. An ill-timed move can also lead to irritation and exclusion, which are the opposite of what people want to do (Jin et al., 2012). Chapter 4.2.2 explores the boundary between overstimulation and enhancement of the senses. Music, smells, and tactile displays make an experience more powerful. However, too much stimulation can also have unpleasant effects (Krishna, 2011). In summary, Chapter 4.2.3 examines the potential problems of VM such as how overloaded stimulation or components implemented poorly could cause agony and undermine the origin of satisfaction. In subsequent chapters, researchers will explore how this plays out in brand perception, consumer behaviour, and customer loyalty. Understanding this delicate balance on the spectrum between attraction and repulsion is also crucial, at the very least, because it will allow brands to produce marketing campaigns that can reverberate widely and deliver.

#### **4.2.1 Impact of Visual Merchandising on the Brand**

The current study investigates how the perception and attitudes towards visual marketing shape brand perception and buying behaviour in a group of 1500 individuals. Overwhelmingly (55 %) thought technology aside, the displays influenced their purchases; 28% agreed, and 27% strongly agreed with the statement. Even more surprising is that only 17% could dismiss them as insignificant. This is true for individual elements in modern sales channels, too. Tinonetsana (2017) explained in detail how nearly 30% found displays naturally appealing. At the same time, another 23% succumbed to the lure of external graphics or signs. Object-like promotions are no less influential (15%) than the company name or brand symbol, which attracted only 14%. These figures indicate that aesthetically pleasing displays and a simple brand message resonate more effectively with consumers. According to the research, there is also a solid client base, with 72% using this brand for one year and 36% for more than two years. These consumers already know the brand and are open to other choices, so the impact of these methods is undoubtedly similar because people have relations with them. Another 75% (1,126) of these responsive 1501 expressed visually merchandised impulsion to buy, while 46% found that compelling to purchase by the sight. This effect can be made stronger still by-product explanations—63% of employees say they are influenced when purchasing. Finally, 32% acknowledge that brilliantly lighted may heighten the product presentation and make shopping more comfortable. Together, these results show how visual merchandising significantly impacts how consumers perceive brands, choose what to buy, and develop brand loyalty in the luxury clothing industry (Roggeveen et al., 2021).

#### **4.2.2 Customer Brand Awareness**

Section 4.3 revealed the immediate elements that indirectly affect purchase choices. However, this section further details the factors causing consumer brand awareness and why consumers make recommendations. 65% or 669 people in the study describe fabric quality as essential when purchasing. Many were not, however. A total of 35% were struck by affordability, indicating that quality and access must be coordinated. Things such as suggestions, the arrival of new models 4% and 9%, less than 10% had any impact on participants. This surprising result shows that existing clients respect and attribute more weight to traditional properties than new things or outside influences. Some people believe that brand loyalty is putting out its family members being killed by convenience. Eighty-four percent are active in selling for us; the number of those who are unsure is only sixteen percent.

Nevertheless, what is behind this so apparent contradiction? Of those who buy by themselves, researchers may analyse accordingly. The main obstacles to buying are inadequate product descriptions (24 %) and lousy presentation (24 %), as well as disinterest due to poor quality (29 %).

Another 26% need more distribution outlets for these findings on purchasing are bottom-line. What can researchers take away from this? A good design, transparent and complete communication, and reliable products are all essential if researchers increase brand loyalty and answer the needs of consumers to boot. The study shows, in addition to the initial reasons for buying, that quality is greatly valued, as 876 individuals, a complete 85% of this sample group, agreed or strongly agreed that it greatly influences their brand choice. Moreover, 69% (1,010) of participants felt they could learn about the product from merchandise descriptions. This reflects the message that trust depends on clear communication and affects sales.

Nevertheless, 74% of respondents were relatively indifferent to the brand's presence in the market, despite some fears held by participants on this point. It is easy to understand the power of visually appealing concepts to attract and engage clients by the fact that 33% of consumers have an affinity for these brands. These data together constitute a brand that consumers need for reliability, honesty, and beauty, yet solely recommending factors of consumer costs, ease of access, and informing everything will determine their satisfaction level much more than just converting them (Ashby & Johnson, 2013).

### **4.2.3 Limitations of Visual Merchandising**

Visual marketing was shown to impact researchers substantially in the preceding section, but it also has drawbacks. This emphasises that researchers need to strike a proper balance. According to 1,500 respondents, 24% claimed showroom lighting was the most annoying feature. The percentage saying that music irritated them was 21%, and programming attracted the scorn of the same proportion. It is worth noting that 19% regarded visual marketing as irritating. The survey results suggested that visual components attract consumers' attention, but what people experience may be more painful than beneficial when there is too much. Continuing this discussion, 34% of them heartily agreed, and 29% disagreed regarding "Does lighting have a significant impact on the visibility of the textile colour." This emphasises how crucial thoughtful lighting design is to guarantee correct product depiction and maintain client confidence.

Moreover, one in five respondents felt that some product images and descriptions needed to be more transparent and helpful. This meeting reiterated the importance of eye-catching displays and meticulous communication. It will be unpopular; however, nearly one-third of people who found it irritating at the very least said visual marketing bothered them the most. Whether firms play or select music, however, retailers must be careful not to isolate customers.

In the final analysis, the study's most significant contribution is an issue concerning emotional manipulation. Thirty-three percent of the respondents highly agreed and sixty-seven agreed or strongly agreed with this statement: visual marketing renders people irrational and leads them to make emotional purchases, but customers need to feel like they have made informed decisions about what they want without coercion. Instilling trust and building brand loyalty depends on striking a balance between keeping things open for customers and creating an atmosphere of engagement. These insights revealed the need to give visual merchandising some serious thought and to apply it strategically. In increasingly popular physical stores, Gucci-Gucci experienced a positive shopping experience - giving, in turn, both belief and brand loyalty - aside from this, even more attentive people felt less happy than happy overall (Cant & Kiwi, 2020).

### **4.3 Hypotheses testing**

The scholars studied how visual merchandising should proceed in conjunction with the market-oriented strategy, which serves as the basis for a company's brand equity; on the other hand, visual merchandising and aesthetics affect consumers' quality attitudes. Two ideas have been proposed to investigate the impact of visual merchandising. The impact of visual merchandising on brand equity is examined through a data analysis of the proposed hypotheses. ANOVA, chi-square, and correlation were the three tests used to determine the influence of visual merchandising on brand equity.

#### 4.4 Correlation analysis

The correlation coefficient results from correlation analysis, which measures the relationship between two components (Weir, 2005). It demonstrates how changes made to one thing affect changes made to other things. This research analyses regulatory compliance as technology improves and participates in more regulated markets with permitted ethical behaviour to enhance market efficiency and vast commerce via fair market conduct.

**Table 1:** Correlation Analysis for hypothesis H1

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Proper Merchandise Explanation	31.90	14.217	1500
Encourage to buy	24.78	18.241	1500

**Table 2:** Correlation Analysis for hypothesis H1

Particulars		Variable X	Variable Y
Proper Merchandise Explanation	Pearson Correlation	1	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.8147	0.8147
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	9741.321	8147.147
	N	1500	1500
Encourage to buy	Pearson Correlation	1.000	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.9741	0.9741
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	8147.147	9741.321
	N	1500	1500

A correlation study was conducted to see how visual merchandise affected brand equity. Tables 1 and 2 demonstrated that hypothesis H1 was met, confirming that a well-written item description encourages customers to purchase the goods.

**Table 3:** Correlation Analysis for hypothesis H2

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Visual Merchandises as impressive factor	34.29	13.17	1500
Makes customer urge to buy product	26.8	18.24	1500

**Table 4:** Correlation Analysis for hypothesis H2

Particulars	Variable X	Variable Y
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Visual Merchandises as impressive factor	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) Sum of Squares and Cross-products N	1 9871.13 1500	1.000 0.8624 8624.32 1500
Makes customer urge to buy product	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) Sum of Squares and Cross-products N	1.000 0.9871 8624.32 1500	1 9871.13 1500

Dealer satisfaction and views about the dealer showed a substantial correlation, as seen in Tables 3 and 4. The R-value of 0.882 suggests that even with a positive correlation, consumers are more likely to buy a product when they see it (the more robust the association, the closer the value is to zero). The coefficient of determination, or R<sup>2</sup>, was found to be 1. They are considering that customer purchase behaviour is directly influenced by visual merchandising.

#### 4.5 CHI –Square Test

**Table 5:** Chi-Square Analysis H1

		Asymp. Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4	0.214		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	4	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	4	.081		
Fisher's Exact Test			1.000	.500
Linear-by-Linear Association	4	49.1		
N of Valid Cases <sup>b</sup>	4	0.214		

Brand equity is directly impacted by visual merchandising, as Table 5 demonstrates. A significant value of 1.000 was found by chi-square analysis, suggesting that visual merchandising directly impacts the product's brand equity. This proved that visual merchandising is the primary basis for most customers' decisions.

**Table 6:** Chi-Square Analysis H2

		Asymp. Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4	0.186		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	4	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	4	.074		
Fisher's Exact Test			1.000	.500
Linear-by-Linear Association	4	52.1		

N of Valid Cases <sup>b</sup>	4	0.196		
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As Table 6 shows, customers make decisions based on the impact of visual items. The chi-square test results showed a significant value of 1.000, showing that visual marketing substantially impacts consumers' willingness to buy a product. The study's result was that visual merchandising and consumers' desire to buy a product are strongly correlated.

#### 4.6 ANOVA Test

The analysis of variance is a statistical method used to investigate differences between groups and within them (Kucuk et al., 2016). In other words, this test provides a statistical test to see if two or more mean groups are all equivalent in addition to expanding the t-test for bigger groups. It is perfect for comparing three or more means for statistical significance. In an ANOVA analysis, the means for three or more values are compared numerically by the F distribution. This method is limited to numerical data. Only numerical data could be used to apply this again. In this research, the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is employed to determine the efficiency of markets. It measures such aspects as technology, online trading and public information.

**Table 7:** ANOVA Test H1

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Strongly Agree	708	2.14	2.992
Agree	623	3.21	0.21
Neutral	76	6.75	9.214
Disagree	52	12.4	6.247
Strongly Disagree	41	24.5	18.663
Total	1500	49	37.326

**Table 8:** ANOVA Test H1

	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Groups	5	192.142	21.246	.009
Within Groups	9	9.300		
Total	14			

**Table 9:** ANOVA Test H2

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Strongly Agree	708	2.14	2.992
Agree	623	3.21	0.21
Neutral	76	6.75	9.214
Disagree	52	12.4	6.247
Strongly Disagree	41	24.5	18.663
Total	1500	49	37.326

**Table 10:** ANOVA Test H2

	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Groups	5	192.142	21.246	.009
Within Groups	9	9.300		
Total	14			

Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10 provide the results of an ANOVA research that found a significant ( $p < 0.009$ ) relationship between the impact of visual merchandise and customer purchase behaviour. As a result, the study shows that visual marketing directly impacts customers' purchase choices.

The results of this study highlight how important visual marketing is in influencing consumer behaviour in the high-end apparel market. According to the thematic analysis, visual merchandising's overall aesthetic and sensory experience has a big impact on customers (Adhanom & Alvaro, 2023). In contrast, badly done elements caused annoyance and alienation. The well-planned interaction of lighting, fixtures, and music elicited emotions and encouraged a sense of belonging (Green, 2024).

Quantitative studies confirmed the effectiveness of visual merchandising even more. Proper merchandise explanations and customers' inclination to purchase were found to have a substantial positive correlation, according to correlation study (Menidjel et al., 2020). In a similar vein, purchase intent was strongly connected with visually striking displays. Additionally, the results of the ANOVA and chi-square tests demonstrated strong evidence that visual merchandising has a significant impact on consumer decisions (Cordova et al., 2020).

These results are consistent with other studies emphasising the role that visual signals have in consumers' decision-making. It is essential to recognise, nevertheless, that visual merchandising is not an independent component. The general level of customer happiness is also influenced by other marketing factors, product quality, and brand reputation.

## **5 Conclusion**

This research explored the glossy discipline of visual merchandising and its impact on consumer purchasing options and brand equity within the garment sector. These results are consistent with the hypothesis that a clear link exists between positively perceived brands and visually vivid showrooms. People are attracted to displays with powerful visual impact because these are taken to be better indicators of quality, increasing the brand's value. A study has shown that good window displays, carefully arranged product presentations, and evenly balanced lighting are all crucial determinants of online buying. They deleted some sentences. So, visual marketing has its uses, but its possibilities should be addressed. Controlling behaviour by peddling their wares or using poorly designed advertisements might sicken audiences. This engagement-attraction trade-off must be negotiated carefully because it can go too far and has a risk of inducing sensory overload. In addition, this study focused on the luxury clothing industry. Researchers must conduct more research to determine how visual merchandising influences other customer groups and sales price levels. Opportunities for future research are tantalizing. Investigating the psychological mechanisms that link visual merchandising with brand loyalty is interesting. Besides that, there are tremendous opportunities to assess the effectiveness of alternative visual marketing

techniques in various product categories and different cultural contexts. In their understanding of such subtleties as visual storytelling and its impact on purchase decisions, garment manufacturers can build in-store experiences that increase earnings and consolidate long-term customer relationships. This will guarantee their place within an ever-changing retail landscape.

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