

Investigating the Relationship between Visual Merchandising and Impulse Buying of Apparel Products by Selected Retail Shoppers in Vadodara City of Gujarat

Parag Sunil Shukla★ Parimal H. Vyas★★ Madhusudan N. Pandya★★★

Abstract

India's overall retail sector is expected to increase at an unprecedented Compound annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10 per cent by the year 2025 from US\$ 672 billion in 2017. The lifestyle format of apparel segment in retail industry has been experiencing higher growth even though intensive competitive environment has been prevailing due to presence of a large number of marketers. The customers are constantly offered newer varieties of merchandise by the modern retailers for creating customers' interest. The retailers are adopting attractive store design as well as retail layout using visual practices of merchandising viz. attractive packaging, eye-catching displays, and appropriate place for promotional signages within the store. Visual merchandising now is considered important in strategic marketing decisions to increase the footfalls and sales of the stores. This empirical research study examines the influences of selected dimensions of visual merchandising in the city of Vadodara on impulse buying behavior. Influence of four dimensions of visual merchandising on impulse buying behavior viz. window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor merchandising and promotional signage have been considered in this research study due to their strategic importance in marketing decisions to increase the footfalls and sales of the stores in the Vadodara city of the Gujarat State.

Keywords: *Visual Merchandising, Impulse Buying Behaviour, Strategic Marketing, Retail layout.*

Introduction

Indian retail industry has been changing at an ever increasing speed and turning more complex due to shifting demographics, household downsizing and increase in educated consumers. New formats are being adopted in retail industry for quick and efficient way to satisfy the ever demanding customers. Retailing business has accepted the

fact that micro level customization for selected customers help business growth through fostering high customer loyalty (PWC and TNS Retail Report, 2015) as opposed to the mass market appeal approach of the 1980s. Rook (1987) in his research on impulse buying, finds that since impulsive buying is an omnipresent facet of shoppers' behaviour, marketers in a competitive environment, should strategize to capture the benefit out of this behaviour.

The apparel retailers are constantly striving to lure shoppers' impulse buying motives and decisions through monitoring and strategizing marketing efforts. Here, merchandising activities play a crucial role to survive and grow in the highly competitive retailing environment.

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Growth Potential of India's Apparel Market:

As per the Report 'Strong and Steady 2011 Outlook for the Retail and Consumer Products Sector in Asia', the apparel market in India is at an infancy stage in all categories of apparel. The sale of the clothing segment is rising with the support of untapped potential of the young Indian population interested in western style of dresses. The marketing strategies of the apparel segment are developed for multiple purpose viz. brand building and creating awareness about fashion and lifestyle oriented image among the targeted customers. The young consumers consider the appearance and image as the most important. While the youth associates fashionable apparels as the basic factor for the lifestyle image, their buying consideration depends on affordability and its relevance with the latest fashion trends. The aspirational Young Indians are focused upon designed apparels. Since Apparel Market is homogeneous in terms of style and design, the clothing manufacturer attempts to differentiate the product through various methods and visual merchandising practices is one such step that creates appeal of products thus enhancing the impulse buying behaviour of shoppers.

According to Myntra's market research (March, 2018), Indian fashion and lifestyle industry is witnessing a surge, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 8-10 per cent offline and gradually embracing online as the channel of the future. As per Myntra's projection, penetration in this segment will grow at 15-20 per cent over the next five years, from the current 4 per cent.

This paper in this background of changing retailing scenario, undertakes an empirical research to examine the influences of some dimensions of visual merchandising on impulse buying behaviour in the Vadodara city of the Gujarat State.

Defining concepts of Visual Merchandising.

Floor Merchandising:

Gilboa, (2003) pointed out how buyer's emotion could be aroused through "plan-o-gram or zone-o-gram" merchandising products to attract impulsive buying for those customer visiting stores. The Form/Mannequin display has been defined as the arrangement of commodities using various forms or in store mannequins used to stimulate the interest of shoppers as well as to strengthen their desire to buy more (Darden, 1983).

In-store display: a creative pursuit

In store display aims at providing merchandise information related to latest fashion trends and products in creative way to encourage customers' intention to buy (Colborne R. 1982).

Signage:

It is the display of wordings used alone or combined with in-store displays for conveying information about products to customers. Thus, these are promotional activities with desire to generate trial use of the products (ibid).

Impulse buying:

It is an unexpected and instant buying with no predetermined planning, buying intension, and desire to buy the specific category of product or to fulfil a particular buying need (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998).

Visual Merchandising:

Visual merchandising is an effective communication tool to facilitate an easy access of information by customers about fashionable products offered by the company to create its image as well as branding. Thus, this is a strategy to promote multiple categories of apparel through the display of apparel with its accessories together (Frings, 1999).

Review of Literature

This section reviews the literature in this field. Impulse buying, popularly known as “unplanned buying” is a term used for any purchase made by a shopper without advance planning. It is the purchase that is done with the least assessment of the features of the product as well as not much evaluation of the basic need of the product, its affordability & relevance. The researchers and modern theorists are observant of impulse buying behaviour of consumers and consider it as a unique and a continuous phenomenon in the lifestyle of the consumers living in this modern urban areas (Youn & Faber, 2000).

The excitement among the shoppers to buy the apparel can be created by the thoughtful use of the techniques related to Visual merchandising through alluring and captivating presentation of the merchandise.

Retailers try to build a store image and the concept of presentation through visual displays to motivate shoppers for patronizing the store. Thomson et al (1990) find that impulsive buying is an emotional reaction rather than the rational/ thoughtful buying behaviour characterised by high involvement and analysis of significant brand difference. In order to influence impulsive purchase, the retailers make use of techniques covered under the ‘in-store stimuli’ banners which include displays on-shelf and point of purchase as well as the demonstrations made within the store (Abnett & Goody, 1990).

Mills et al. (1995) focus on the fact that techniques related to visual merchandising involve a wide range of inner as well as exterior arrangements in the form of window displays, displays made on the floor of the shop and on the walls as well as promotional signages and materials used and applied at a most attractive locations of the store. Diamond & Diamond (2003) have identified that

the basic idea behind the visual merchandising is to generate customer pull by paying attention on potential customers and motivate customers to make impulse buying.

The fundamental concern of the visual merchandising technique is not only the way the apparel brands in the retail stores are displayed to communicate in an appealing manner but also messages are decoded to create positive buying behaviour (Wanninayake & Randiwela, 2007). Ebster and Garaus (2011) stress on using innovative imaginations and making an appealing presentation of merchandise reflecting that visual merchandising can be put in both the category of science and arts conveying the messages in the most thought provoking manner.

When consumers buy in the store, they tend to browse the internal as well as external cues of the store setting to decide the buying process and the resultant impulse buying. During the visit, the consumers also examine the stores merchandise simply for fun and recreational/leisure purposes without any purpose of buying a product immediately (Bloch et al, 1989).

Jarboe and McDaniel (1987) find that the customers who surf through the stores are more likely to make an unplanned purchase compared to the consumers who do not even visit the retail stores and can be categorized as serious and rational shoppers.

Sathyanarayana et al. (2017) investigated to find out the major determinants of visual merchandising in the Bangalore city and their impact on the impulse buying behaviour in the Shopper’s stop. The study found that Attractive product display, Ambiance inside the store, new product arrival in the store and Offers for the day were major determinants that influence impulsive buying behaviour. The influence of floor merchandise was not found significantly related to impulse buying behaviour (Sathyanarayana, et al.). Merugu, et al (2017)

conducted empirical study in Vishkhapatnam district to examine various elements of visual merchandising as a component of a strategic marketing plan and their influence on consumers' Buying Decisions. The study found four most important factors of visual merchandising i.e. attractiveness of window display, product display, promotional signage and lighting influence the impulse buying behaviour. Rathee et al. (2017) focused on the customer insights on visual merchandise and its effect on customer buying decision while shopping. The study concluded that Apparel retailers must consider various factors like store design, layout, store front, display themes, lighting, music, etc. while making visual presentation. Agdayemawer et al. (2017) studied the impact of various dimensions of merchandising display such as store appearance, lighting, music, window display, mannequins and price tags at reliance fresh stores in Jaipur city and found which dimensions have an impact on purchase behaviour of consumers, for example the store's front arrangements, lighting system, mild music and aesthetic appeal of the store were excellent and that augmented retail shopper's buying decision. Prasad et al. (2016) conducted a research study on Reliance Trends in Trichy to assess the impact of window display, mannequin display, fixtures, signage, colours and lighting on consumer impulse buying and found that window display, fixture, signage, mannequin, colours and lighting were significantly associated with consumer buying behavior.

Saini et al. (2015) analyzed the key elements of Visual Merchandising contributing the most for impulse buying; results showed that most strongly linked items to purchase intention are merchandise colours, presentation style, awareness of fixtures, path finding, sensory qualities of materials and lighting. Randhawa et al. (2017) investigated some external factors that influence impulse buying behaviour in Punjab and found that there were

significant relationships between respondents' impulse buying behaviour and window display and in-store/mannequin display.

Identification of Research Gap:

While the impulsive buying behaviour in the segment of fashion clothes buying has been prevailing in India, until now only few research studies are undertaken in India as reviewed in the literature. The current study has been taken up to understand the demographic factors especially age and its impact of selected dimensions of visual merchandising such as visual display, window display, floor merchandising and promotional signage on impulse buying behaviour, especially for the apparel segment in the Vadodara City.

In the Figure 1(in Appendix), the impulse buying behaviour is distinguished from other unplanned behaviour. The unplanned buying can be categorized as purchases with high information processing and in some cases as Low cognitive information processing which is recognized as impulsive buying Beatty and Ferrell,(1998). In impulsive buying, external stimuli in the store plays a greater role in purchase decision. The shoppers having such an impulse to buy the products start by just visiting and browsing few product categories in a retail store.

In this research paper, the selected areas of visual merchandising such as window displays and in-store display in the form of mannequin display, floor/aisle merchandising and promotional signage are examined for the analysis of impulsive buying behavior.

Research Methodology

Primary data were collected on the basis of survey method using structured non-disguised questionnaire on the sample size of 150. Data are analyzed using SPSS 15.0. Statistical methods of

reliability test, descriptive statistics, correlation and linear regression are used to process data. Pearson correlation between the Shoppers impulse buying tendency and each of the four types of visual merchandising practices chosen in this study. The regression analysis is carried out between respondents' impulse buying tendency (dependent variable) and selected four types of visual merchandising (independent variables).

Hypothesis of the Research study:

The hypotheses tested in this empirical study are listed out as follows.

H1: Relationship exists between shoppers' impulse buying behaviour and window display.

H2: Relationship exists between shoppers' impulse buying behaviour and in store/mannequin display.

H3: Relationship exists between shoppers' impulse buying behaviour and floor merchandising.

H4: Relationship exists between shoppers' impulse buying behaviour and any type of in-store promotional signage.

Data Analysis and Interpretation: Reliability Test

The reliability test was applied to determine how strongly the opinion of selected respondents was related to each other and also to compare its composite score. The Cronbach's Alpha score range from 0.767 to 0.891 which showed the internal reliability of the scale and reflected the degree of cohesiveness among the selected items (Naresh K. Malhotra, 2007 and Jum C. Nunnally, 1981). [Please Refer Appendix- Table 1].

Profile of the Respondents:

Of total number 155 respondents, 68 per cent of the respondents are male and 32 per cent are female; 32 per cent of them were found to be in the age-group of

up to age of years, and 37 per cent are in between 31 to 45 years whereas 31 per belong to the age-group of more than 45 Years. In the case of educational qualifications, 17 per cent have qualified up to 12th Standard, 65 per cent of them are Graduates whereas 18 per cent are Post Graduates.

The occupational profile of the sample is 24 per cent in the service; 09 per cent are businessmen, and 67 per cent are students. In case of selected buyers' annual household income, 44 per cent report annual of less than RS. 3,00,000 and 39 per cent of them are having an income of Rs.3 Lakhs to 5 Lakhs whereas 17 per cent of consumers are in the bracket of Rs. 5 Lakh to 10 Lakh [Table. 2 in Appendix].

Key Results & Findings of the Research Study:

Frequency of Purchase of Apparel by Selected Respondents:

Out of the total 155 buyers, 45 per cent of them were found to have purchased apparel once in 3 months, followed by 26 per cent as once in 6 months, whereas 21 per cent had purchased apparel once in a year and 8 percent had bought as per their need whenever required [Table 3 in Appendix].

Results of the Correlation, Regression: The table 4 in appendix shows a positive correlation between impulse buying behaviour and selected criteria for visual merchandising. The correlation coefficient was 0.763 in case of Mannequin and Floor Merchandising Display followed by 0.735, for Window Display 0.686, for Promotional Signage and 0.548 for Visual Display respectively. It can be concluded that the selected criteria of visual merchandising such as window display and in-store display of form/mannequin display, floor merchandising and promotional signage are good predictors and they influence the impulse buying behaviour.

The Pearson Correlations imply that floor

merchandising display, window display and promotional signage in the store are likely to influence the impulse buying behaviour of the selected buyers.

Regression analysis has been undertaken on the relationship between buyers' impulse buying tendency (dependent variable) vis-a-vis selected four types of visual merchandising (independent variable) which revealed 68 per cent of the variance (R Square) in determining influence on impulse buying of selected variables. This is supported with the significant F-value of 81.15. 't' values of three variables i.e. influence of window display, floor merchandising, and in-store promotional signage are significant and hence contribute in the prediction of impulse buying behaviour in case of apparel [Table 4 to 7 in Appendix]. 't' value of variable 'Store Mannequin Display' is not significant and hence result does not support the influence of this variable in impulsive buying behaviour.

Impulse Buying Vis-A-Vis Selected Buyers' Age Group:

As in the Figure 2 to 6, the median score of window display, visual display (Store Mannequin Display), floor merchandising, and in-store promotional signage are found to contribute in the prediction of impulse buying behaviour which was higher in case of age group up to 30 years and it was found as less in the age group of 31 to 45 years, and it was very low in the age group above 45 years of age.

The findings based on the median score responses on window display, visual display (Store Mannequin Display), floor merchandising, and in-store promotional signage on impulse buying suggest that the most important target market segment for apparel marketer is buyers up to 30 years of age and the second important segment is the age group of 31 to 45 years respectively.

The marketing mix strategies adopted by apparel the

marketers need to consider the changing customer behaviour while designing the clothes of latest fashion, the price affordable, especially to the teen and adult age group, their frequency and timing of visits to retail stores and continuous monitoring of influence of window display, visual display (Store Mannequin Display), floor merchandising, and in-store promotional signage on them [Figure 2 to 6 in Appendix].

Overall Satisfaction of Selected Buyers of Apparel Segment:

The table 8 shows the overall satisfaction experienced by the selected buyers for their buying decision of apparel and it was found that 57 per cent of buyers belonging up to 30 years of age group followed by 63 per cent of the age group of 31 to 45 and 53 per cent of above 45 years were found as satisfied with their buying decisions. It makes it clear that on an average 40 per cent of buyers were found as not satisfied with their buying decision. In order to make them satisfied and happy, the marketers need to offer and launch frequent revisions in apparel considering fashions, designs, colour combinations supported by different kinds of structured fabrics and yarns used in apparel [Table 8 in Appendix].

Key Discussions and Managerial Implications of the Research Study:

The sample buyers in the apparel market are having the urge to make impulse buying decisions. This is evident from the fact that the observed frequency of impulsive purchase is high for those visiting store once in 3 months. Thus, the apparel marketers need to bring out new fashions in different categories of apparel with a variety of colours, patterns, designs, unique stitching in the time period of at least 3 months for the Apparels in the market. The study also implies that the buyers in the age group up to 30 years are more likely to expect more varieties in apparel as compared to the other age group

respondents between 31 to 45 years of age group. The group more than 45 years of age group, and the same is reported to have less expectation of variety. It is important to create pleasing store ambience for more impulse buying. The results of this research study provided adequate evidence that apparel marketers can apply visual merchandising techniques to raise the desirability and the appeal of products.

The motive for impulse buying takes place when a shopper suddenly experiences a strong, intensive, overriding urge to buy something right at the spur of the moment. It is a very complex process (Rook 1987). It is a pleasure-seeking instinct in which the shoppers continuously keep on surfing the stores for continuously inspiring and motivating consumers by influencing their beliefs and converting in to positive emotions. The setting created in terms of visual merchandising by the retailers was considered as capable to trigger impulse buying of consumers as such visual merchandising fulfil information needs of consumers and will act as reminder to satisfy their unfulfilled desires as well as create positive feelings towards products displayed through visual merchandising.

The retailers need to use the concept of integrated marketing communication in the most effective way by seamlessly assimilating the use of appealing window display/decor and mannequins. This should constitute a major part of the overall marketing plan. The modern retailers should efficiently and aptly use the window dressing and in-store arrangements so as to create pleasing and everlasting impressions in the mind of the shoppers. Doing this would lead to proactively influencing and reinforcing the shoppers buying intentions before they change their mind. As reported in this research paper though the impact of Floor Merchandising and the signages is very less, the retailers cannot be ignorant about them. The mantra of success for the apparel retailers

is to subtly differentiate and promote so as to get the maximum possible attention of the shoppers by in-store promotional signage and floor merchandising. The key is to first acquire the mindshare and then to capture the market share. In this research paper there is a sufficient evidence of this fact. Use of proper visually appealing techniques can lead to positive influences that in turn would be leading to store loyalty intentions.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to investigate the influence of selected factors of visual merchandising such as visual display, window display, floor merchandising and promotional signage used in the retail store on impulse buying behaviour. The two tools of visual merchandising that is a visual display (floor merchandising) and promotional signage along with window display are the most dominant tools for influencing the consumer behaviour.

Results of the study support that there are significant associations between buyers' impulse buying behaviour and visual display (floor merchandising) as well as influence of promotional signage.

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Appendix

Table 1: The Cronbach's Alpha Score of the Selected Criteria

S.No.	Selected Criteria	Cronbach's Alpha Score
1	Impulse Buying Behaviour	0.871
2	Influence of Window Display	0.891
3	Influence of Visual Display	0.767
4	Influence of Display	0.853
5	Influence of Promotion Signage & offers	0.875

Table 2: Profile of Selected Consumers

Demographic Variables	No. & percentages of the respondents		Demographic Variables	No. & percentages of the respondents	
	No.	%		No.	%
Gender			Occupation		
Male	105	67.7	Service	37	23.9
Female	50	32.3	Business	14	9.0
Age Group			Student	104	67.1
Up to 30 Years	49	31.6	Annual Household Income		
31 to 45 Years	57	36.8	Less than Rs. 3 Lakhs	68	43.9
More than 45 Years	49	31.6	Rs. 3 Lakhs to 5 Lakhs	60	38.7
Education			Rs. 5 Lakhs to 10 Lakhs	27	17.4
Up to 12 th Standard	26	16.8			
Graduate	101	65.2			
Postgraduate and above	28	18.1			

Table 3: Frequency of Purchase of Apparel by Selected Respondents

Frequency of Purchase	Once in 3 Months	Once in 6 Months	Once in a Year	Whenever Required	Total
Frequency	70	40	32	13	155
Percent	45.2	25.8	20.6	8.4	100

Table 4: Correlation of Selected Criteria Related to the Apparel Impulse Behaviour

Selected Criteria	Test of Correlation	Impulse Buying Behaviour	Window Display	Visual Display	Mannequin & Floor Merchandising Display	Promotional Signages
Impulse Buying Behaviour	Pearson Correlation	1	.735(**)	.548(**)	.763(**)	.686(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	155	155	155	155	155

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5: Model Summary of the Results of the Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.827(a)	.684	.676	.47590

Predictors: (Constant), PROMAVG, VDAVG, DISAVG, WDAVG

B Dependent Variable: IMBAVG

Table 6: Results of the ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	73.518	4	18.380	81.152	.000(a)
	Residual	33.972	150	.226		
	Total	107.490	154			

Predictors: (Constant), PROMAVG, VDAVG, DISAVG, WDAVG

B Dependent Variable: IMBAVG

Table 7: t value Coefficients

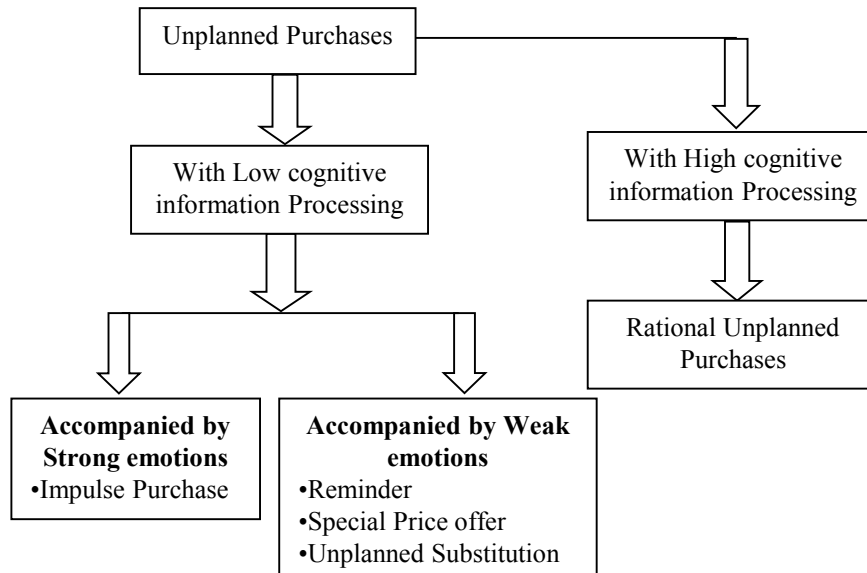
S. No.	Hypotheses	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Conclusions
		B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error	
1	(Constant)	0.599	0.157		3.811	0.000	
2	Influence of Window Display	0.205	0.069	0.240	2.996	0.003	Significant
3	Influence of Visual display (Store Mannequin Display)	-0.025	0.048	-0.033	-5.25	0.600	Non-Significant
4	Influence of Floor Merchandising	0.346	0.063	0.417	5.463	0.000	Significant
5	Influence of In-Store Promotional Signage	0.264	0.054	0.302	4.870	0.000	Significant

A Dependent Variable: IMBAVG

Table 8: Overall Satisfaction Experienced by Respondents for Buying Decision for Apparel versus Age Group

Overall satisfaction experienced by Selected respondents for buying decision for apparel	Age Group			Total
	Up to 30 Years	31-45	More than 45 years	
	Number & Percentages			
Dissatisfied	2 (4.1)	6 (10.5)	2 (4.1)	10 (6.5)
Cannot Say	19 (38.8)	15 (26.3)	21 (42.9)	55 (35.5)
Satisfied	23 (46.9)	35 (61.4)	23 (46.9)	81 (52.3)
Highly Satisfied	5 (10.2)	1 (1.8)	3 (6.1)	9 (5.8)
TOTAL	49 (100)	57 (100)	49 (100)	155 (100)

Figure 1: The Model of Distinguishing Impulse Buying Behaviour from other Unplanned Types of Purchases



Source: Model of Beatty, S.E. and Ferrell, M.E. (1998)

Figure 2: Box Plot showing Impulse Buying Behaviour and Age Group

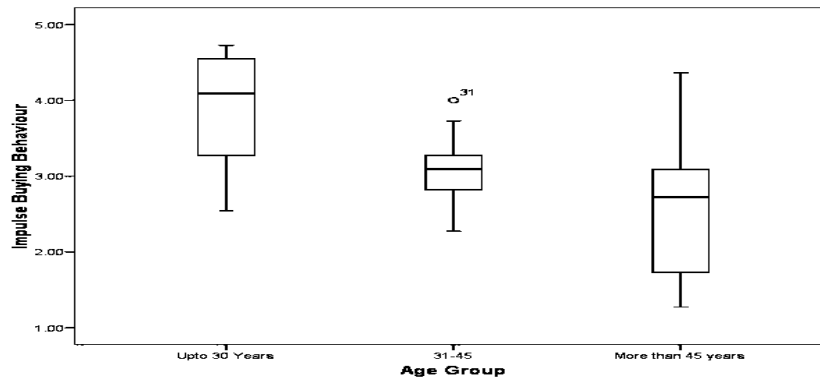


Figure 3: Box Plot showing Influence of Window Display and Age Group

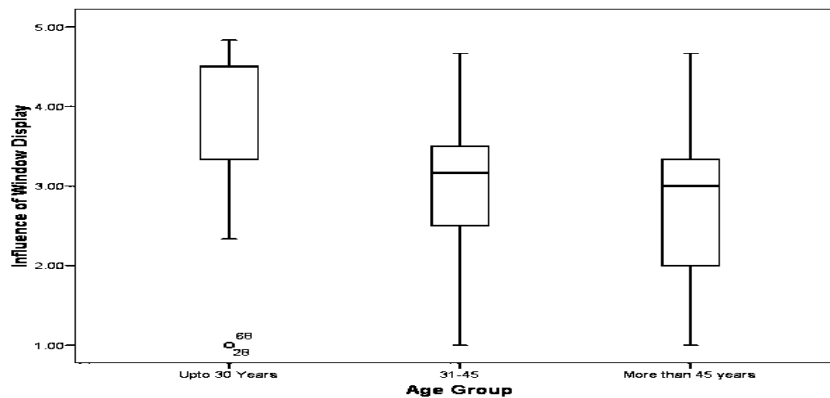


Figure 4: Box Plot showing Influence of Visual Display and Age Group

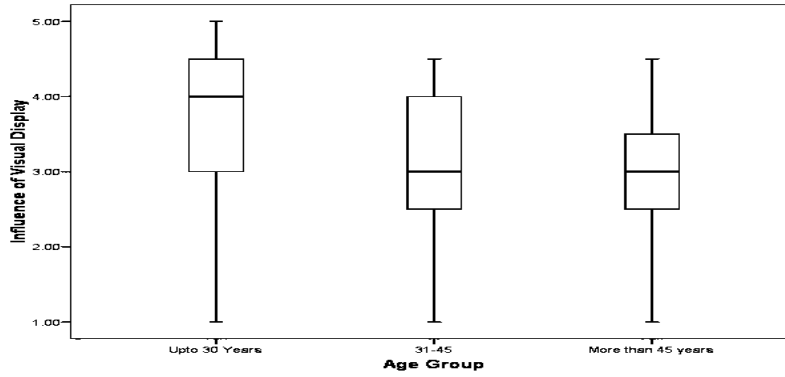


Figure 5: Box Plot showing Influence of Display (Floor Merchandise) and Age Group

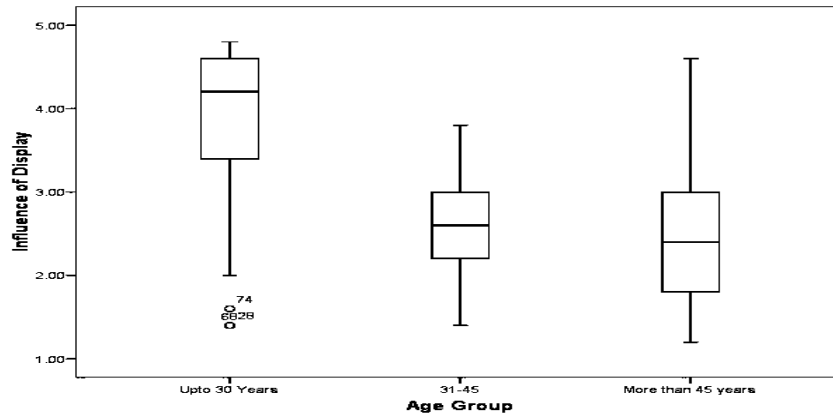


Figure 6: Box Plot showing Influence of Promotional Signage/ Offers and Age Group

