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## **THE IMPACT OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING ON CONSUMER IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOR**

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### **Abstract**

In present Post-Modern Era, the competitive situation in the business is characterized by a cut throat competition, which subsequently results in companies and retailers to pay almost anything for undifferentiated merchandising. This merchandising tool is being used by today's retailer to distinguish him from other competitors, to be prominent in the market and become a source of attraction for the customers. A few researchers contribute in this field by exploring the reasons which causes the customers impulsive buying, but still there is more to be determined. Purpose of this study is to identify the relation between the consumer impulsive buying and visual merchandising on buying behavior of customers. This study was based on primary data in the form of a questioner. A total of 350 questioners were floated in different consumer outlets (super marts and self-service stores of Rawalpindi, Pakistan) out of which 344 questioners were completed and received. Defined four hypotheses were window display, forum display, floor merchandising and shop brand name. These hypotheses were tested for regression analysis by using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. It was found that window display, forum display, floor merchandising and shop brand name (independent variables) are significantly associated to consumer impulse buying behavior (dependent variable). Hence, forum display is negatively related to consumer impulse buying and window display; however, floor merchandising and shop brand name are positively related to consumer impulse buying behavior.

**Key Words:** <sup>1</sup>Visual Merchandising, <sup>2</sup>Impulse Buying, <sup>3</sup>Forum Display, <sup>4</sup>Floor Merchandising

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### **1. Introduction**

Visual merchandising can be best defined as "everything the customer sees both exterior and interior that creates a positive image of a business and result in attention, interest, desire and action on the part of the customer" (Bastow-Shoop *et al.* 1991, p.1). Visual merchandising

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<sup>1</sup> An activity of developing the floor plans and three-dimensional displays in order to maximise sales

<sup>2</sup> An unplanned decision to buy a product or service, made just before a purchase

<sup>3</sup> The products displayed on forum to attract the customers for impulse buying

<sup>4</sup> An activity to influence to customer for impulse buying

ranges from window display to include forum display and floor merchandising along with promotion signage (Mills *et al.* 1995). Presentation of goods is often the most crucial factor in decision making (Oakley, 1990). Four dimensions of store atmosphere i.e. visual (sight), aural (sound), olfactory (smell) and tactile (touch) are significant in customer's choice of products (McGoldrick, 2002). The visual merchandising is a marketing based terminology which represents the most important marketing tools and also represents the most direct mean of publicise a product. Means of promotional signatures like billboards, banners, posters, panaflexs, buntings, placards, pamphlets, shop boards, shelf markers and hand bills of any company, shop or brand which a buyer can see or come across are considered during his shopping. Visual merchandising is not only about what is stated earlier but it also includes the layout of stores which includes shelving styles, sections, atmosphere the store possess and the brands available. It is visual product identification, brand concept and the means of establishing relationship between a consumer and the product to generate sales. Among the many marketing strategies visual merchandising is the one which establishes a direct interaction and a closer communication with a consumer.

Impulse buying is a rapid convincing, hedonically compound purchase behaviour in which the quickness of the impulse purchase decision precludes any thoughtful, intentional contemplation of alternatives (Kacen, 2002). Findings of early researchers (Bellenger *et al.* 1978) have shown that impulse buying accounts for substantial sales across a broad range of product categories. Impulse buying is a pervasive aspect of consumers' behaviours and a focal point for strategic marketing plans (Rook, 1987). Impulse buying may be defined as a purchase decision made in-store with no explicit recognition of a need for such a purchase, prior to entry into the store (Kollet and Willet, 1967; Kollat, 1966; Bellenger *et al.* 1978). On the other hand these all factors of visual merchandising will lead the consumer towards impulse purchasing. Impulsive buying is generally considered as unexpected buying, it is best described as the shopping which shopper does not plan in advance. This impulse buying behaviour is recognized by the shopkeepers and they design their shop's layout, shelving, branding etc. to attract the consumer or customer in order to influence him to carry out impulse buying. This phenomenon has been tremendously increased during the last decade and the solitary reason behind this is a sturdy connection linking mass merchandising and the impulse purchase. Now marketers and retailers are working on how to attract the shoppers to upsurge impulse buying or unplanned purchases. For this the companies are working on the stores environment and collecting information and doing research on how to influence a consumer's purchasing behaviour for their brand.

The focal purpose of this paper is to study the influence of impulse buying on window display, on forum display, on floor merchandising and on shop brands name by the customers in store.

## **2. Literature Review**

Visual merchandising is a tool used by companies or shopkeepers to attract the customers for unplanned buying. In this the marketers and the shopkeepers arrange their shops or carryout promotional activities which attract the attention of shoppers by just having a look at the shop, their promotions, sign boards, atmosphere inside, shelf arrangements, section divisions, cleanliness and other factors which influence impulse or unplanned buying. Many researchers like Mehta and Chugan (2012) conduct their research on visual merchandising or impulse buying by their perspective and has studied the contact of visual merchandising on shopper impulse buying behaviour. They took sample size of 84 customers visiting the retail stores of India and find that window display has direct relation with impulse buying. However no significant relation is found between forum display and impulse buying but floor merchandising shows direct relation.

Bashar and Ahmed (2012) have considered impact of form display, window display, promotional signage and floor merchandising by taking sample size of 250 Indian respondents by applying Pearson correlation. Their findings are that window display and impulsive purchasing are positively correlated; however, impulse buying and store display are not

correlated. Floor merchandising is also correlated with impulse buying.

Sujata *et al.* (2012) have shown impulse buying as an antecedent to impulse buying. He has taken window display, form display, floor merchandising as independent variables. He has taken sample comprising of both male and females of age 18-45 and applied Pearson correlation. His concludes by accepting a strong correlation between window display, impulse buying and forum display. Low correlation is found between impulse buying and floor merchandising.

Vinamra *et al.* (2012) have studied impact of visual merchandising on consumer behaviour towards women's Apparel. His dependent variable is visual merchandising; independent variables are neutral role in influencing the purchase and significant role in influencing the purchase. He took sample size of 150 Indian women's who were visiting shopping malls. His findings are that visual merchandising has a very strong impact on customer purchasing behaviour. To some extant visual merchandising also leads to impulse buying.

Maria *et al.* (2010) have studied the impact of visual merchandising in shopping centre's fashion stores. His dependent variable was visual merchandising and independent variable was shopping store window according to gender. Factors valued by consumer on going into a store attribute that influence on purchase options according to gender. He took sample of 334 respondents and applied mean standard deviation as a statistical tool. His findings are that significant differences in the shopping centre window display influences over consumer buying behaviour according to gender and little significant differences in the factors valued by consumers on going into a shopping centre according to gender.

Maymand and Ahmedinejad (2011) have studied the role of store environmental stimulation and situational factors in impulse purchasing. They have taken impulse purchasing as dependent variable and environment of store, promotions, examination of goods, and availability of money as independent variables. They took sample of 329 customers visiting shopping malls of Iran and applied variance coefficient as statistical tool. Their findings are that environment of the store is significantly correlated and visual merchandising is related.

Ridmi *et al.* (2011) have studied the impact on patronage intentions in supermarkets using selected visual merchandising techniques. His dependent variable is visual merchandising an independent variable is store layout, colour, product display, music, lighting, cleanliness. He took sample of 384 customers visiting shopping malls of Srilanka and applied regression as a statistical tool. His findings are that no relationship between patronage intentions and store layout. There is bond among colour and patronage intentions. There is a relationship between patronage intentions and product display. There is relationship between patronage intentions and music. There is connection among cleanliness and patronage intentions.

Ahmed (2011) has determined the impulse buying of consumer for FMCG products. His dependent variable was impulse buying behaviour for FMCG product and independent variables were classification by gender, age, education and income. He has taken sample of 160 respondents of Jodhpur, a city in India. He used (SPSS Version 16) Factor analysis as a statistical tool. His findings were impulse purchasing and the customers of different age group were significantly different, impulse buying behaviour and the customers of different genders were significantly different, and significant difference in education.

Sonali and Sunetra (2012) have studied the unplanned purchasing triggering the senses in retail stores. Their dependent variable was frequency of shopping and independent was gender of customers. They took sample of 100 customers visiting Indian shopping malls and used chi-square as a statistical too. Their findings are that no significantly associated with gender of customers and frequency of shopping.

### **3. Objectives**

- To find the impact of window display on consumer impulse buying.
- To investigate the role of forum display on consumer impulse buying.
- To study the relation between floor merchandising and consumer impulse buying.
- To study the impact of shop brand name on consumer impulse buying.

### **4. Research Hypothesis**

Consumer impulse buying is influenced by many factors but presently it is tested against the independent variables like window display, forum display, floor merchandising and shop brand name.

The significance of window display related to purchasers' buying behaviour has received least consideration in the literature. However, since the physical attractiveness of a store influenced consumer's choice of a store (Darden *et al.* 1983) and the first impressions of the store is created normally at the first level, it can be recommended that it is influenced by window display, to some degree at least, store of a customer's choice when they do not plan with a precise purpose of visiting a particular store and buying a particular item. The first step is to attract customers to purchase and pull them in the door. Today many retailers are concentrating on window display to pull passerby's concentration and eventually to convert buyers into customers (Diamond and Diamond, 2003).

- **H1.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are <sup>5</sup>significantly influenced by window display.
- **H0.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are not significantly influenced by window display.

Impulse buying takes place consequent to contact to in-store stimuli. In-store stimuli remind the customer of their shopping needs thus leading to an impulse purchase, (Kollat and Willet, 1969). To increase unplanned purchases of products retailers primarily use In-store stimuli as promotional techniques. In-store display, point of purchase displays, on-shelf positions and in-store demonstrations are promotional techniques used (Abnett and Goody, 1990). Cox (1970) found that there is a positive bond among the length of shelf space given to an impulse product brand and high customer acceptance. Impulse buying is also influenced by On-shelf position. Consumers have a natural trend to spotlight and observe at eye level. Therefore, unplanned purchase in retail stores can be increase by display, (Takeuchi and Quelch, 1983). The Pope/ Du Pont Consumer Buying focused on unplanned buying in supermarkets. As per the study, it appears that all supermarket purchase decisions were made approximately 65% in-store and the impulse buying was over 50%. Customers respond positively and quickly to buying stimuli such as products, salespeople and/or store environments. Increased experience to stimuli also enhances the chances of recognizing product needs and leads consumers to process new product information (Easwar, 1989). There are positively some factors which are significant in spurring impulse buying and these factors include mass distribution, low price, and marginal need for the product/brand, self-service, prominent store display, mass advertising, small size and ease of storage. This also implies that products that are more costly and require more time and effort are less in impulse buying. (Cobb and Hoyer) 1986 after an extensive research, concluded that unplanned buying do very

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<sup>5</sup> A result is considered significant not because it is important or meaningful, but because it has been predicted as un likely to have occurred by chance alone

little “in-store information processing” but importance quality almost as much as do shoppers who plan well in advance.

- **H2.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by forum display.
- **H0.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are not significantly influenced by forum display.

Impulse buying is related to ease of buying. This phenomenon has been progressively increased during the last decade for the reason attributed to the relationship exists between impulse buying and mass merchandising. Mass merchandising has given a favourable environment for impulse buying; and in return, unplanned buying has twisted the expansion of certain mass merchandising techniques. Impulse buying may be defined as a purchase decision made in-store with no explicit recognition of a need for such a purchase, prior to entry into the store (Kollat and Willett, 1967; Kollat, 1966; Bellenger *et al.* 1978). Occurrence of impulse buying could be attributed to exposure to in-store stimuli, the latter acting as reminders of shopping needs (Kollat and Willett, 1969) and, in part, to incomplete measure of purchase plans (Kollat and Willett, 1969). In India, retail sector is experiencing an unprecedented boom coupled with a rising discretionary income of vast Indian middle class. The brands at various retail outlets are jostling to grab maximum eyeballs so as to enter the shopping basket of the Indian shopper. The Indian shopper is as susceptible to impulse buying as shoppers’ world over. Question that arises here which attracts the interest of all marketers and retailers alike is how to influence Indian shopper to make more unplanned purchases. To this end, producers need information on the effectiveness of consumer purchasing behaviour for their brands up to extent which influence the in-store stimuli. On the other hand retailers also need similar information to calculate the effectiveness of resources designed to generate additional sales and perhaps to differentiate their stores from other competitors.

- **H3.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by floor merchandising.
- **H0.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are not significantly influenced by floor merchandising.

(Krutulyte *et al.* 2009) asserted that brand name is commonly more influential than packaging. Varela *et al.* (2010) agreed, stating that the liking and buying of a product depends on more than just the sensory details. Consumers’ decisions are influence by Non-physical details such as brand and price.

As a determiner of quality, price has been interpreted; according to Jacoby *et al.* (1971), price is “concrete and measurable,” so the consumer trusts it more than most cues concerned with quality. However, Ares *et al.* (2009) suggested that higher price could have one of two effects on consumer preference: it could cause the product to seem higher in quality, or it could make the product less desirable because of the extra expense. A study by (Krutulyte *et al.* 2009) showed that price’s reliance as an indicator of quality varies by culture. Whatever effects price may have on quality perception are overshadowed by the effects of brand name. Brand has been cited among the “most important non-sensory factors affecting consumers’ choice decisions of food products” Varela *et al.* (2010, pp.873-880). According to Keller (1998), brand is seen as a “promise, a guarantee or contract with the manufacturer and a symbolic mean and sign of quality” as cited in Varela *et al.* (2010, pp.873-880). Brand is communicated to the public through advertising.

To familiarize the public with their brand images, advertisers spend millions of dollars each year defined by Jacoby *et al.* (1971, p.571) as the “subjective, emotional cluster of meaning and symbols that the consumer attributes to a particular brand”. Fichter and Jonas (2008, p.226) further define brand image as “the stereotype held toward a brand”. The familiarity

garnered from exposure to brand image leads to increased liking and increased quality perception (Wardle and Solomons, 1994, p.180; Ares *et al.* 2009). According to Peters-Teixeira and Badrie (2005, p. 508-514), “advertising is the most important factor that influences the purchase of a new product”. Numerous studies have established the extraordinary effects of brand name.

- **H4.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by shop brands name.
- **H0.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are not significantly influenced by shop brands name.

## 5. Problem Statement

*How Visual Merchandising Influence’s the Consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour*

## 6. Theoretical Framework

Researches have already been conducted on the discussed topic previously, but the sole purpose of the present study is to further evaluate and draw conclusions regarding the relation between independent variables (window display, forum display, floor merchandising and shop brand name) and dependent variable (impulse buying) (Figure 1).

- Effects of window display on consumer impulse buying.
- Role of forum display on consumer impulse buying.
- Relation between floor merchandising and consumer impulse buying.
- Impact of shop brand name on consumer impulse buying.

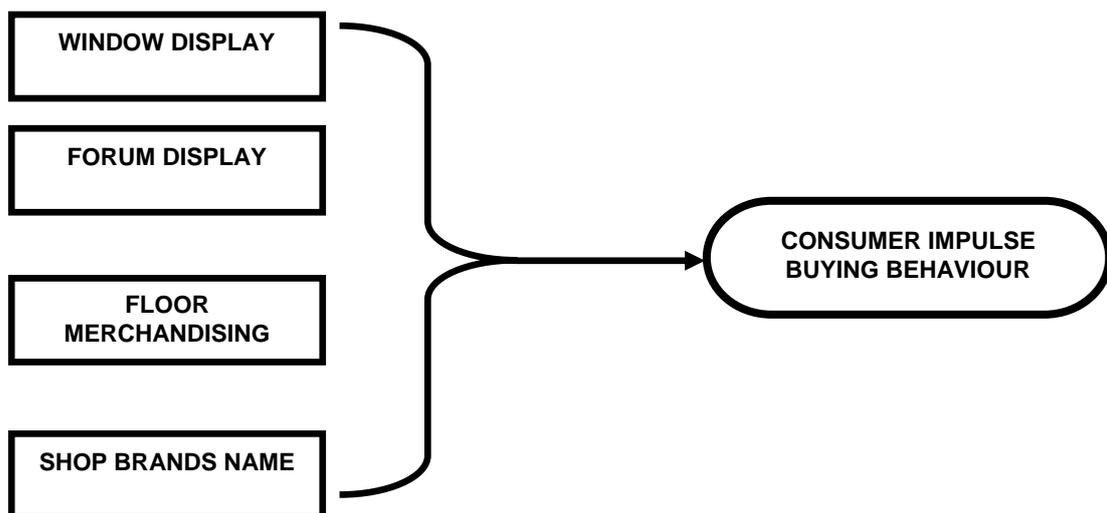


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

## **7. Variables**

### **7.1. Dependent Variable**

Consumer Impulse Buying Behavior

### **7.2. Independent Variables**

- Window displays
- Forum displays
- Floor merchandising
- Shop brands name

## **8. Units of Analysis**

Large self-service stores and marts in the city of Rawalpindi, Pakistan were selected and questioners were distributed related to identified variables to the customers irrespective of their gender randomly entering these marts or self-service stores for shopping.

## **9. Cross Sectional Data Collection**

Cross sectional data collection method will be used in this research for the reason that data will be collected for once from the primary source.

## **10. Data Collection and Sampling**

Data was collected from the selected super marts and large retail shops from the customers by using questioners. A total of 350 questioners were distributed but only 344 were completed. Hence results and sample size was altered accordingly. A five point Likert scale was used to compute each variable. A separate questioner for every variable was developed and each questioner had 12 questions to measure the impact of visual merchandising on customer's unplanned purchasing attitude.

## **11. Analysis and Discussion of Hypothesis**

The regression analysis was used to assess the potency of relationship between dependent and independent variables. It was conducted for the hypothesis testing in which consumer impulse buying behaviour was dependent variable and each visual merchandising variable window display, forum display, floor merchandising and shop brand name used as forecaster in array to test whether hypothesis are significant or not. It further explains how visual merchandising tools controls the consumer unplanned purchase behaviour.

Following hypothesis was developed in order to test the affiliation among consumer unplanned purchase and window display:

**H0:** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are not significantly influenced by window display.

**H1:** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by window display.

**Table 1. Model Summary for Window Display**

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.903 <sup>a</sup>	.816	.779	.008065
<b>a. Predictors: (Constant), Window Display</b>				

**Table 2. Coefficients for Window Display**

Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.670	.035		75.458	.000
	Windows Display	.062	.013	.903	4.703	.005
<b>b. Dependent Variable: Consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour</b>						

The adjusted R-square (coefficient of determination) value is 0.816 as shown in the (Table 1) is close to 1 (its maximum value). This validates the model that 81% of the time, data fits very well to the model. The variable windows display is positively contributing towards consumer impulse buying behaviour and is significant at 5% and 10% level of significance ( $P\text{-value} = 0.005 < \alpha = 0.05, 0.10$ ) as shown in the (Table 2).

So according to the data, hypothesis H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted because those consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by window display.

**H0.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are not significantly influenced by forum display.

**H2.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by forum display.

**Table 3. Model Summary for Forum Display**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.865 <sup>a</sup>	.749	.699	.009413
<b>a. Predictors: (Constant), Forum Display</b>				

**Table 4. Coefficients for Forum Display**

Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.006	.044		67.817	.000
	Forum Display	-.065	.017	-.865	-3.861	.012
<b>b. Dependent Variable: Consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour</b>						

The adjusted R-square (coefficient of determination) value is 0.749 as shown in the (Table 3) is close to 1 (its maximum value). This validates the model that 74% of the time, data fits very well to the model. The variable forum display is negatively related to consumer impulse buying behaviour but it is significant at 5% and 10% level of significance ( $P\text{-value} = 0.012 < \alpha = 0.05, 0.10$ ) as shown in the (Table 4).

So according to data, hypothesis H0 is rejected and H2 is accepted because those consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by forum display.

**H0.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are not significantly influenced by floor merchandising.

**H3.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by floor merchandising.

**Table 5. Model Summary for Floor Merchandising**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimates
1	.863 <sup>a</sup>	.745	.694	.009482
<b>a. Predictors: (Constant), Floor Merchandising</b>				

**Table 6. Coefficients for Floor Merchandising**

Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.424	.108		22.511	.000
	Floor Merchandising	.171	.045	.863	3.823	.012
<b>b. Dependent Variable: Consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour</b>						

The adjusted R-square (coefficient of determination) value is 0.745 as shown in the (Table 5) is close to 1 (its maximum value). This validates the model that 74% of the time, data fits very well to the model. The variable floor merchandising is positively contributing towards consumer impulse buying behaviour but it is significant at 5% and 10% level of significance ( $P\text{-value} = 0.012 < \alpha = 0.05, 0.10$ ) as shown in the (Table 6).

So according to data, hypothesis H0 is rejected and H3 is accepted because those consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by floor merchandising.

**H0.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are not significantly influenced by shop brands name.

**H4.** Consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by shop brands name.

**Table 7. Model Summary for Shop Brand Name**

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimates
1	.802 <sup>a</sup>	.644	.572	.011210
<b>a. Predictors: (Constant), Shop Brand Name</b>				

**Table 8. Coefficients for Shop Brand Name**

Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.688	.049		54.619	.000
	Shop Brand Name	.060	.020	.802	3.006	.030
<b>b. Dependent Variable: Consumer Impulse Buying Behaviour</b>						

The adjusted R-square (coefficient of determination) value is 0.644 as shown in the (Table 7) is near to 1 (its maximum value). This validates the model that 64% of the time, data fits very well to the model. The variable shop brand name is positively contributing towards consumer impulse buying behaviour but it is significant at 5% and 10% level of significance ( $P\text{-value} = 0.030 < \alpha = 0.05, 0.10$ ) as shown in the (Table 8).

So according to data, hypothesis H0 is rejected and H4 is accepted because those consumers carrying out impulse buying are significantly influenced by shop brand name.

## 12. Findings and Conclusion

Research was conducted to examine the exterior factors effecting or influencing the consumer unplanned purchase behaviour. To investigate the relation further, the study attempted to elucidate the affiliation between the customer's unplanned purchase behaviour and different types of visual merchandising. The key discovery of this learning was that the visual merchandising positively manipulates or influence consumer impulse buying behaviour.

Results proved that the consumer impulse buying behaviour is significantly influenced by the window display, forum display, floor merchandising or even with shop brand name. Study denotes that the consumer impulse buying behaviour has a strong relationship with the window display because when the consumer pictures the displayed products it not only attracts the customer's attention but also arouses their urge to do impulse buying. The forum display also has a very strong impact on customers because when a customer enters a shop and sees the variety of products displayed on the shelves innovatively it forces the customer to purchase something which he has not planned for. Similarly floor merchandising also has a relationship with consumer impulse buying but comparatively less. During the research when floor merchandising was performed on customers they either avoid listening or feel disturbed. After analysis it was found that customers feel offended when interrupted during their shopping because this disturbance causes their concentration and interest to loose in shopping. The consumer impulse buying behaviour and the shop brand name has a very strong relationship. If a shop or a brand succeeds in developing a relationship with its customers then whenever a customer come across its trusted shop or brand it forces him to unplanned purchase.

Complete data effectively suggests that visual merchandising like window display, forum display, floor merchandising and shop brand name serve as strong stimulus, influencing and

inspiring the customer to carryout impulse buying. Efficiently this study shows value of visual merchandising in considerate impulse buying.

### 13. Limitations of Study

Research suffered from the following limitations:

- The data was collected from Rawalpindi and the sample was geographically limited. Possibility of different result exists if data from other cities was collected.
- The mechanism was limited to the quantitative method. The survey asked respondents to answer the questions from their unplanned buying experience as they were well aware of their manners and influences.
- The qualitative research for this may differ in outcome.

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