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Developing customer inspiration in XYZ retail stores

Abstract

Many retailers have low sales due to the difficulty in the purchase decision of their customers. Previous research shows the lack of studies on the impact of store interiors on purchase decisions. This study aims to find out various visual merchandising factors that affect purchase intentions at XYZ retail stores and focuses on visual merchandising itself, as well as store environment and customer inspiration factors that affect customer behaviour. The non-probability sampling technique with analysing 140 respondents using an online questionnaire with SMART PLS was used to conduct this research. The results show that customer inspirations directly influence customers' purchase intentions. Visual merchandising and store environment indirectly affect purchase intention as well, mediated by customer inspirations. The customer inspiration variable is in the good category in the XYZ store. It is recommended to use quick response in visual merchandising and develop a store environment virtually that can be connected to a customer's device.

Keywords: customer inspiration, store environment, purchase intention, retail store, visual merchandising

JEL Classification: M310

Introduction

Indonesia's retail sales fell by 6.2% YoY in July 2021 [Ceicdata, 2021]. The company's net profit in 2019–2020 decreased and opening of XYZ retail stores was postponed by the company. When shopping centres reopened and the pandemic could be controlled by the government, sales directly in stores would increase because the online shopping experience does not provide an experience for customers so it cannot replace direct shopping [Timorria, 2021]. The main reason why customers do not shop online is because of the opportunity to see the product before buying (69%) and the support of the store staff (19%). This is a form of customer experience [Happ et al., 2021].

According to Bustamente and Rubio [2017], when customers decide to shop offline, they expect to enjoy their visit by gaining cognitive, affective, social, and physical experience, responses generated by stimuli [Happ et al., 2021]. Window display, colour and lighting, and store interiors affect attractiveness positively and improve consumer behaviour [Ali Soomro et al., 2017]. Visual merchandising is a strategy to communicate with customers and a stimulus for customers to enter the store [Bottger et al., 2017].

Many retailers have low sales due to the difficulty with the purchase decisions of their customers. Previous research shows the lack of studies on the impact of store interiors on the purchase decisions at a household retail store [Cordova et al., 2020; Happ et al., 2021; Kemp et al., 2019; Marinelli et al., 2020; Mehta, Chugan, 2016; Watanabe et al., 2019].

This study aims to find answers to the influence of visual merchandising and store environment on consumers' purchase intentions with *customer inspirations* mediation on XYZ's retail. This research uses a quantitative approach and the experience technology indicator as a development of the visual merchandising and store environment variables. This study recommends strategies to improve customer inspiration, which directly affects the increase in purchase intentions in XYZ retail stores.

Literature review

The decline in retail sales causes the number of transactions not to be able to grow as targeted. In 2020–2021 retail sales in Indonesia were negative so the XYZ company postponed the opening of outlets (Ajmal et al., 2021).. Based on the above situation, the company's management needs and already plans to increase the factors of offline store appearance based on visual merchandising to be able to increase consumers' buying interest, which in turn will increase sales and business performance. This study analyses the effect of visual merchandising and store environment on customers' purchase intentions at XYZ retail stores.

When the product is displayed through effective presentation techniques that influence consumers to buy the product, the presentation technique is called *visual merchandising* [Mehta,

Chugan, 2014]. Visual merchandising affects the psychological behaviour of consumers by visually communicating the product to customers. Products and messages that can be conveyed well to customers are an important visual merchandising factor, which has a positive effect and is a differentiator from other stores [Cordova et al., 2020]. When entering the store there are stimuli from visual merchandising, so the customer is motivated to buy products [Cuong, 2019]. The strategy of visual merchandising is to communicate with customers and make customers visit their stores [Ali Soomro et al., 2017]. This can influence consumers' purchasing decisions, ultimately determining the long-term success or failure of the retail store [Cant, Wiid, 2020].

Terblanche [2018] revealed that store conditions represent the importance of psychological feelings felt by customers [Happ et al., 2021]. This illustrates the positive influence of the offline shopping experience on customer satisfaction. Music can improve mood, revealing a better evaluation of the service and product quality [Kemp et al., 2019]. The writing, colorus, images, and visual elements used are interrelated and affect a person's capacity to process and understand the information in the form of words, images, and videos in advertisements, which stimulate the imagination and attract the attention of customers [Sheng et al., 2020]. Customer inspirations have a direct and positive influence on the conditions of the surrounding environment [Jassem et al., 2022] and are also one of the new forms of marketing activities that can improve customer behaviour, strengthen customer loyalty, and most importantly, are one of the innovation factors related to increased purchases, customer satisfaction, and loyalty [Khan, Ghouri, 2018].

Based on research and information from various journals and experiences that the authors have gained, a conceptual framework is formed that becomes a picture of the variables that will be studied and researched.

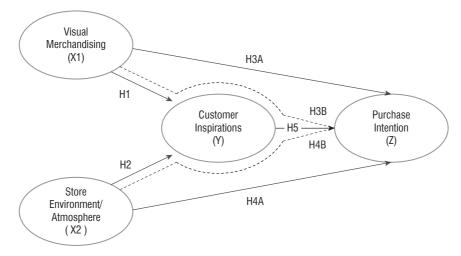


Figure 1. Research theoretical framework

Source: own elaboration based on Ali Soomro et al., 2017.

The following hypotheses of this study were developed on the basis of the theoretical framework of the study as described in Figure 1:

H1: Visual merchandising (VM) positively affects customer inspiration (CI).

H2: Store environment (SE) positively affects customer inspiration (CI).

H3A: Visual merchandising (VM) positively affects purchase intention (PI).

H3B: Visual merchandising (VM) indirectly affects purchase intention through customer inspiration (CI) mediation.

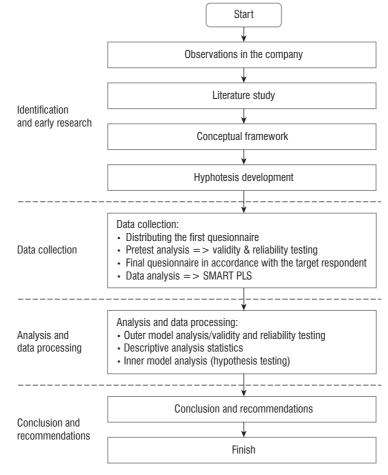
H4A: Store environment (SE) positively affects purchase intention (PI).

H4B: Store environment (SE) indirectly affects purchase intention through customer inspiration (CI) mediation.

H5: Customer inspiration (CI) positively affects purchase intention (PI).

Research method

Figure 2. Algorithm of the stages of the research



Source: own elaboration.

Research design

The type of research used to show the relationship between visual merchandising, store environment, customer inspiration, and purchase intentions is positivism research with a quantitative approach that generates knowledge through testing (confirmation) of hypotheses from previous research.

The object in this study is the XYZ retail store, while the subjects are visual merchandising, store environment, and purchase intentions. The population in this study were consumers who both had not and had already shopped at XYZ retail stores: the sample of 140 respondents studied by the researchers. Nonprobability sampling is applied in sampling with a judgment sampling approach.

Questionnaires with a 4-point Likert Modification Scale were used, for the pre-test with 30 respondents using the SPSS software. The main test with 140 respondents used the Variance Based Structural Equation Modeling technique through the Smart PLS software.

Data analysis

This study managed to collect 152 respondents, but only 140 respondents met the requirements developed by the researchers. The demographic data in Table 1 shows that 117 respondents were aged 25 years to 56 years, with 91% having a Bachelor's degree and average monthly expenses of 10 million – 20 million. 64% respondents already know and follow XYZ retailer's social media.

	Option	Frequency	Percentage
Age	25–40	59	42
	41–56	58	42
	56–65	23	16
Degree	SMA	1	1
	D3	4	3
	S1	128	91
	S2	7	5
Expenses per month	<10	24	17
	10–20	69	49
	20–30	46	33
	30–50	1	1
Know & follow social media of the XYZ retailer	Yes	89	64
	No	51	36

Table 1. Demographics of the respondents

Source: own elaboration.

Findings

XYZ's priority is to improve store appearance factors in visual merchandising and store environment to be able to form customer inspiration, which in turn will increase sales and business performance.

Variables	Indicator	AVE >0.50	Outer Loading >0.60	Model Evaluation	Composite Reliability > 0.70	Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70	Result
Visual Merchandising	VM1 VM2 VM3 VM4 VM6 VM7	0.586	0.775 0.801 0.805 0.788 0.685 0.731	Valid Valid Valid Valid Valid Valid	0.894	0.858	Reliable
Store Environment	SE1 SE2 SE3 SE4 SE6 SE7	0.546	0.694 0.774 0.736 0.671 0.813 0.737	Valid Valid Valid Valid Valid Valid	0.878	0.832	Reliable
Customer Inspirations	Cl1 Cl2 Cl3 Cl4 Cl5 C21 C22 C23 C25	0.551	0.763 0.718 0.726 0.768 0.749 0.749 0.749 0.704 0.704 0.762 0.739	Valid Valid Valid Valid Valid Valid Valid Valid Valid	0.917	0.898	Reliable
Purchase Intentions	PI1 PI2 PI3 PI4	0.652	0.794 0.849 0.826 0.757	Valid Valid Valid Valid	0.882	0.822	Reliable

Table 2. Validity and reliability

Source: own elaboration.

Table 2 shows that all the indicators are valid and reliable because all the indicators have an AVE value of > 0.5. The outer loading value of all the indicators has a value of > 0.6 with *purchase intentions* having the highest score. In the table it can be seen that all the indicators have a Composite Reliability score of > 0.7 and a Cronbach's Alpha value of > 0.7. It can be concluded that all the variables used in the study are valid and reliable.

Descriptive analysis

Variable	Amount of indicator	Frequency	Mean
Visual Merchandising (VM)	6	140	2.91
Store Environment (SE)	6	140	2.94
Customer Inspiration (CI)	9	140	2.92
Purchase Intentions (PI)	4	140	2.61

Table 3. Descriptive statistics variables of VM, SE, CI, PI

Source: own elaboration.

Table 3 shows the results of data processing: the mean value is included in the good category interval. The measurement results show that the respondents agree with the appearance of visual merchandising and the store environment at the XYZ stores, which can provide interest to customers so that the inspiration generated can be followed by consumption.

Hypothess verification

The next figure shows the T-value of each indicator indicating the value of R².

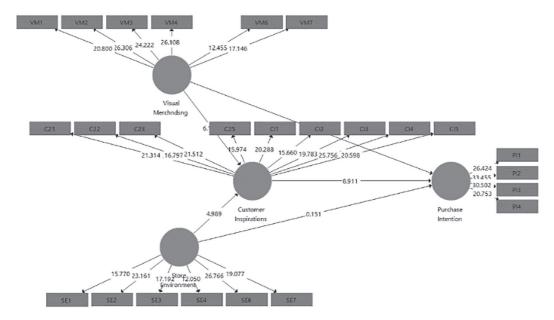


Figure 3. T-Value of each indicator

Source: own elaboration.

The results of hypothesis testing show that the value of R² in the *customer inspiration* variable is 0.743, which means that there are 0.743 variants described in the construct representing customer inspiration. The result evaluation was that 74% of customer inspiration in the XYZ stores were influenced by the variables of *visual merchandising, store environment,* and *purchase intentions*. Meanwhile, the result of R² in the *purchase intentions* variable of 0.578 means that it contributes 57% to explaining the *purchase intentions* variable in the XYZ stores.

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	T Statistics (0/STDEV) (>1.96)	p-Values (<0.05)	Result	
VM => CI	6.166	0.00	Approved	
SE = > CI	4.989	0.00	Approved	
VM => PI	0.233	0.816	Rejected	
SE = > PI	0.151	0.880	Rejected	
CI => PI	8.911	0.00	Approved	

Table 4.	Path coefficients	(T-values & p-values)
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Source: own elaboration.

On the basis of the results of the Path Coefficient test in Table 4 above, it can be concluded that the *visual merchandising* variable has a direct effect on the *customer inspiration* variable (T-values of 6.166 > 1.96 and p-values of 0.00 < 0.005). The *store environment* variable has a direct effect on the *customer inspiration* variable (T-values of 4.989 > 1.96 and p-values of 0.00 < 0.005). The *visual merchandising* variable has no direct effect on the *purchase intentions* variable (T-values of 0.233 < 1.96 and p-values of 0.816 > 0.005). The *store environment* variable has no direct effect on the *purchase intentions* variable (T-values of 0.151 < 1.96 and p-values of 0.880 > 0.005). The *customer inspiration* variable has a direct effect on the *purchase intentions* variable (T-values of 8.911 > 1.96 and p-values of 0.00 < 0.005).

Table 5. Indirect effect coefficients measurement

	T Statistics (0/STDEV) (>1.96)	p-Values (<0.05)	Result
VM => CI => PI	5.02	0.00	Approved
SE => CI => PI	4.27	0.00	Approved

Source: own elaboration.

On the basis of the results of the Path Coefficient test in Table 5 above, it can be concluded that the *visual merchandising* variable has a positive and significant effect on the *purchase intentions* variable through the *customer inspiration* variable with T-values of 5.02 > 1.96 and p-values of 0.00 < 0.05. The *store environment* variable has a positive and significant effect on the *purchase intentions* variable through the *customer inspiration* variable has a positive and significant effect on the *purchase intentions* variable through the *customer inspiration* variable with T-values of 4.27 > 1.96 and p-values of 0.00 < 0.05.

H1: Visual merchandising (VM) positively affects customer inspiration (CI).

The first hypothesis was accepted due to the presence of a significant influence between the variables of *visual merchandising* and *customer inspiration* (T-value of 6.166 > 1.96 and p-values of 0.00 < 0.05). Visual merchandising with product interactions and information can inspire customers by broadening their horizons regarding a product [Cao et al., 2021].

H2: Store environment (SE) positively affects customer inspiration (CI).

The second hypothesis was accepted due to the significant influence between the variables of *store environment* and *customer inspiration* (T-value of 4.989 > 1.96 and p-values of 0.00 < 0.05). Customer inspiration increases with the atmosphere of the store conditions which are built through the visualisation images used, the presentation of music, and the use of aromas so that they can show identity and make customers comfortable while shopping. The use of images, concrete words, animations, and videos can stimulate customers' imagination and attract customers' attention [Sheng et al., 2020]. External sources of customer inspiration from other individuals [Bottger et al., 2017]. Store atmosphere affects emotions (pleasure and passion). The positive qualities of inspiration can make the experience valuable for consumers by itself [Helmefalk, Hultén, 2017].

H3A: Visual merchandising (VM) positively affects purchase intention (PI).

Hypothesis 3A was rejected because visual merchandising did not have a positive and significant effect on the variable of *purchase intentions* (T-value of 0.233 < 1.96 and p-values of 0.816 > 0.05), which means the presentation of window displays, colorus, lighting, layout of the store does not have a significant impact in increasing purchase intentions. The results of this study, in contrast to the research that has been carried out by Widyastuti [2018], show that there is a positive and significant influence on the *visual merchandising* variable on the attractiveness and improvement of consumer behaviour due to the existence of an experience perceived by the consumer as a whole. Store layout is a facilitator in the purchasing decision-making process. Setting up space in stores can increase visual appeal, which can ultimately increase sales [Marinelli et al., 2020]. The results of this study may also differ due to differences in the retail industry in certain countries and the large number of respondents that affect the overall statistical results [Mehta, Chugan, 2016].

H3B: Visual merchandising (VM) indirectly affects purchase intention through customer inspiration (CI) mediation.

Hypothesis 3B is accepted because visual merchandising has a positive and significant effect on the *purchase intentions* variable through the *customer inspiration* mediation variable (T-values of 5.02 > 1.96 and p-values of 0.00 < 0.05). The *customer inspirations* variable has a positive and significant influence on the *purchase intention* variable. The *visual merchandising*

variable has a negative and insignificant influence on the *purchase intention* variable. The *visual merchandising* variable against the *purchase intention* variable which is influenced by the mediation of the *customer inspiration* variable has a positive and significant influence. From these three results, it can be concluded that the type of mediation that occurs is perfect mediation.

H4A: Store environment (SE) positively affects purchase intention (PI).

Hypothesis 4A was rejected because store environment had no positive and significant effect on the *purchase intentions* variable (T-value of 0.151 < 1.96 and p-values of 0.880 > 0.05). The results of this study, in contrast to the research that was conducted by Cordova et al. [2020], show that store environment has a positive influence on consumers' purchasing decisions. Söderlund and Hansson [2020] through rhetorical visual journals show the positive influence of *visual information* variables that can be used as a generator of one's feelings and motivators due to the experience felt by the consumer as a whole [Widyastuti, 2018]. The results of this study may also differ due to differences in the retail industry in certain countries and the large number of respondents that affect the overall statistical results.

H4B: Store environment (SE) indirectly affects purchase intention through customer inspiration (CI) mediation.

Hypothesis 4B is accepted because the store environment has a positive and significant effect on the *purchase intentions* variable through the *customer inspiration* mediation variable (T-values of 4.27 > 1.96 and p-values of 0.00 < 0.05). The type of mediation is perfect mediation.

H5: Customer inspiration (CI) positively affects purchase intention (PI).

The fifth hypothesis was accepted due to the significant influence between the *customer inspiration and purchase intention* variables (T-values of 8.911 > 1.96 and p-values of 0.00 < 0.05). This is supported by previous research that the state of customer motivation and customer rational inspiration can result in emotional consequences, attitudes, and behaviours [Sheng et al., 2020]. Customer inspiration can increase customer purchases. Customer inspiration ('inspired to') is a customer's drive for consumption because it actualises new ideas [Bottger et al., 2017]. The idea of shopping that is consumption is reflected in the openness to inspiration that has the aim of seeing new products, innovations, trends, and fashions.

Discussion

The first hypothesis that "visual merchandising has a positive effect on customer inspiration" is accepted. Visual merchandising with product interactions and information can inspire customers by broadening their horizons regarding a product [Cao et al., 2021]. Based on the logic of the researchers, the presence of window displays and various information displayed, colorus and lighting, department categories, and layouts in stores can increase customers' inspiration at XYZ retail stores.

The second hypothesis that "store environment has a positive effect on customer inspiration" is accepted. External sources of customer inspiration include environmental conditions, music, and literature, customers can draw inspiration from other individuals [Bottger et al., 2017]. Based on the logic of the researchers, customer inspiration increased with the atmosphere of the store conditions, which were built through the visualisation images used, the presentation of music, and the use of aromas so that they could show identity and make customers comfortable while shopping.

The third A hypothesis (3A) that "visual merchandising has a positive effect on purchase intention" is rejected, in contrast to other studies [Ali Soomro et al., 2017; Marinelli et al., 2020; Mehta, Chugan, 2016; Widyastuti, 2018]. Based on the logic of the researchers, there were differences in the retail industry in a particular country and a large number of respondents in the study that affected the overall results. The third B hypothesis (3B) that "visual merchandising has an indirect effect on purchase intention, mediated by customer inspiration" is accepted and the type of mediation is perfect mediation. One example is the research of Ali Soomro et al. [2017], which mentions the existence of an unplanned purchase dimension (impulse buying) in the visual merchandising variable. In this study, visual merchandising variables are related with various dimensions such as window display, store layout, colour and lighting, digital signage, and strongest category department. Visual merchandising was able to attract customer attention, this was tested in previous studies with unplanned purchase dimensions, while this study tested visual merchandising with the development of various dimensions such as digital signage and strongest category department. Based on the logic of the researchers, the development of related dimensions can attract customer attention with the expected result of purchase intention, which affects the increase in sales in stores.

The fourth A hypothesis (4A) that "store environment has a positive effect on purchase intention" is rejected, in contrast to previous research [Cordova et al., 2020; Mehta, Chugan, 2014; Söderlund, Hansson, 2020; Widyastuti, 2018]. Based on the logic of the researchers, there are differences in the retail industry in certain countries and a large number of respondents in the study that affect the overall results. The fourth B hypothesis (4B) that "store environment has an indirect effect on purchase intention, mediated by customer inspiration" is accepted and the type of mediation is perfect mediation. One example is the research of Cordova et al. [2020], which revealed the existence of *a purchase intention* variable that was tested with social, personal, or psychological dimensions, which influence customers in making purchases. The EFB (Environmental Factor of Business) variables are the ones of the dimensions of lighting, décor, aroma, and music that affect customer buying intentions by being motivated by personal factors (economic age, lifestyle, personality), psychological (motivation, perception, beliefs, and attitudes) and cultural (culture and social class). However, as for *purchase intentions* social factors (such as family, social role, and status) do not affect the Environmental Factor of Business. Meanwhile, in this study when it comes to the *store environment* variables with the

development of the image visualisation and cleanliness dimensions, they were tested with the relationship to the *purchase intentions* variable in general (not testing the existence of social, personal, psychological, or cultural factors). However, in this study there is a development of the Theory of Planned Behaviour through the development of the *customer inspiration* variable ('inspired by'). Based on the logic of the researchers, the development of related dimensions can attract customer attention with the expected result of purchase intention, which affects the increase in sales in stores.

The fifth hypothesis that "customer inspiration has a positive effect on purchase intentions" is accepted. These results are confirmed by the research of Sheng et al. [2020] on the state of customer motivation; customer inspiration can result in emotional, attitude, and behavioural consequences. Based on the logic of the researchers, store conditions such as the presentation of music, aromas, and image visualisation displays can increase customers' psychological sense, which leads to increasing customer inspiration, besides that, as many as 64% of customers already know and follow XYZ social media retail stores. The researchers guess that social media is also able to inspire its customers.

Summary

The conclusion of the study showed that visual merchandising and store environment at XYZ retail stores are included in the category of both 2.91 and 2.94 value intervals, which means that as many as 84% of the respondents aged 25–56 have visited them within a period of 1 month to 3 months, feeling that visual merchandising and store environment in the stores can inspire them and represent the psychological sense of the customer through the visualisation of the products displayed and the overall display of store conditions.

As many as 64% of the respondents know and follow XYZ retailer's social media, which can be used as an additional medium to further improve customer inspiration. Social media is a tool that provides entertainment and inspiration [Murwani et al., 2021], with the existence of media customers can get whatever they need. The results of the data processing concluded that purchase intention did not have a direct and significant effect on visual merchandising and store environment, but was mediated by customer inspiration. To create and increase purchase intention in the store, what is required is the concept of visual merchandising and store environment to be able to create customer inspiration that causes purchase intention.

The next research is developing the Theory of Planned Behaviour in the context of the influence of variables related to the store interior, the development of the *customer inspiration* variable ('inspired by'), of which one example can be the development of interesting content or viral marketing in XYZ's social media so that 36% of respondents who do not know and have never seen the company's social media can learn and form customer inspiration, which be developed not only through offline stores but also online. It can help increase customers' purchase intentions. Social media platforms can communicate a brand, which can affect

consumers' purchases directly or indirectly [Kurnia et al., 2022]. With the use of social media, companies can interact with customers, be more interactive, and can also know how to learn about their customer behaviour [Lohanda, Berto, 2021], such as through the use of uniquely created viral marketing content, and credible and informative sources, which can make someone inspired, impressed, and willing to convey the message to their relatives [Bertha et al., 2022]. Instagram Ads is one of the media that can be used to provide information to customers indirectly so that customers indirectly know and will even try to use the products offered [Budi Susanto, Pratiwi, 2019]. It can also increase the number of respondents to obtain maximum results, then give an opportunity to research from different retail industries to provide a different view. Development and exploration of experience technology indicators in other retail industries can be useful as they can be confirmed as valid research indicators and further research can add indicators that contain technological elements which can be adjusted to the development of visual merchandising and store environment in retail stores.

For companies, the improvement of customer inspiration is carried out by developing visualisation and information of the store environment at the store and conceptualised on a schedule, where the information can be shared in the form of product content, social media, or experience of the use of technology in the store. Product-content interactions (information) bring cognitive and learning benefits to customers, such as the knowledge of product usage, brand information, technology, and those related to the information market [Cao et al., 2021].

For the development of visual merchandising what can be used is QR in visual merchandising and store environment with virtual development that can be connected to the customer's smartphone. The use of 360-degree virtual 3D videos with 3D exterior visualisation and modeling shapes customer perceptions that influence purchase intentions [Han et al., 2022].

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