

ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING AND SALES PROMOTION ON CONSUMER IMPULSE BUYING AT SUN PLAZA MALL MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effect of visual merchandising and sales promotion on consumer impulse buying at Sun Plaza Mall Medan. The phenomenon of impulse buying is an unplanned purchasing behavior that is strongly influenced by shopping environment stimuli. Visual merchandising, as a product display strategy, and sales promotion, as an attraction through offers, are important factors in triggering impulse buying behavior. The research method uses a quantitative approach with purposive sampling technique involving 120 consumer respondents at Sun Plaza Mall Medan. Data were collected through questionnaires using a Likert scale and analyzed using multiple linear regression with the help of SPSS 26. The results show that visual merchandising has a positive and significant effect on impulse buying, with a coefficient value of 0.425 ($p < 0.05$). Sales promotion also has a positive and significant effect on impulse buying, with a coefficient of 0.387 ($p < 0.05$). Simultaneously, these two variables influence impulse buying by 62.8% ($R^2 = 0.628$). This study provides practical implications for retail management to optimize visual merchandising and sales promotion strategies in increasing impulse purchases.

Keywords: Visual Merchandising, Sales Promotion, Impulse Buying, Consumer Behavior, Mall

BACKGROUND

The retail industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth over the past decade, particularly in major cities such as Medan, where shopping malls continue to serve as important centers for commerce, entertainment, and consumer interaction. As one of the leading shopping destinations in North Sumatra, Sun Plaza Mall Medan faces increasing challenges in maintaining consumer attraction and competitiveness amid the rapid expansion of modern retail businesses. In such a competitive environment, the implementation of effective marketing strategies has become essential for ensuring retail operational success and sustaining customer loyalty (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021; Levy et al., 2019).

One of the consumer behaviors that has received considerable attention in retail marketing is **impulse buying**, which refers to spontaneous and unplanned purchasing decisions made immediately before or during shopping. Unlike planned purchases, impulse buying is driven by emotional responses and external environmental stimuli rather than rational decision-making (Rook & Fisher, 2019). According to studies in the retail industry, approximately 40–60% of purchases made in shopping malls are categorized as impulse buying, demonstrating the substantial opportunity for retailers to design marketing strategies that effectively stimulate spontaneous purchasing behavior (Iyer et al., 2020).

Among the various factors influencing impulse buying, **visual merchandising** has been recognized as one of the most powerful marketing tools in retail settings. Visual merchandising refers to the strategic presentation of products and the retail environment in ways that attract consumers' attention and create a pleasant shopping experience. Elements such as window displays, lighting, color schemes, product arrangement, signage, and store layout contribute significantly to shaping consumers' perceptions and emotional responses, which subsequently influence their purchase intentions (Bhatti & Latif, 2020).

Effective visual merchandising not only enhances store aesthetics but also encourages consumers to spend more time exploring products, thereby increasing the likelihood of impulse purchases.

In addition to visual merchandising, **sales promotion** is another important marketing strategy that directly influences consumers' buying behavior. Sales promotions provide immediate incentives through discounts, coupons, cashback offers, loyalty programs, buy-one-get-one-free promotions, and limited-time offers. These promotional activities create a sense of urgency and perceived value, motivating consumers to make purchases they had not originally planned (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021). Furthermore, sales promotions strengthen customer engagement and encourage repeat visits, ultimately contributing to increased sales performance and customer satisfaction (Kumar & Reinartz, 2022).

As one of the largest shopping malls in Medan, Sun Plaza Mall covers approximately 45,000 square meters and accommodates more than 200 retail tenants offering a wide variety of products and services. Such diversity presents significant opportunities for retailers to employ attractive visual merchandising and promotional strategies. However, it also creates challenges in maintaining consistency across tenants and ensuring that promotional activities effectively influence consumer purchasing decisions (Levy et al., 2019).

Based on preliminary observations conducted by the researcher, inconsistencies were found in the implementation of visual merchandising among different retail tenants. Some stores display attractive product arrangements and engaging window displays, while others lack appealing visual presentation. Similarly, sales promotion programs appear to be implemented independently by individual tenants with limited coordination at the mall management level. These conditions may reduce the overall effectiveness of marketing efforts in stimulating impulse buying among visitors.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that visual merchandising and sales promotion positively influence impulse buying behavior. Bhatti and Latif (2020) found that attractive store displays significantly increase consumers' emotional responses, leading to higher levels of impulsive purchasing. Likewise, the meta-analysis conducted by Iyer et al. (2020) concluded that environmental cues and promotional stimuli are among the strongest predictors of impulse buying across various retail settings. Sharma et al. (2021) further emphasized that consumers with higher tendencies toward variety-seeking are more responsive to promotional activities and visually appealing shopping environments.

Despite the growing body of literature on impulse buying, limited empirical research has specifically examined the combined effects of visual merchandising and sales promotion within the context of shopping malls in Medan, particularly at Sun Plaza Mall. Differences in consumer demographics, shopping culture, and local retail competition may produce findings that differ from those reported in previous studies conducted in other regions or countries.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of visual merchandising and sales promotion on consumer impulse buying at Sun Plaza Mall Medan. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence that contributes to the development of retail marketing strategies, enrich the academic literature on consumer behavior, and offer practical recommendations for mall management and retail tenants in designing more effective marketing programs to enhance impulse buying and improve overall business performance.

RESEARCH METHO

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to test the causal relationships between the variables of visual merchandising, sales promotion, and impulse buying. A survey method was employed to collect primary data from respondents.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of all consumers who shop at Sun Plaza Mall Medan. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling with the criteria that respondents are aged 18-50 years, have shopped at Sun Plaza Mall at least three times in the last six months, and have made unplanned

purchases. Based on Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, the sample size used is 120 respondents.

Data collection technique

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability through a pre-test involving 30 respondents, with results showing all items were valid ($r > 0.3$) and reliable (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7).

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics with the assistance of SPSS 25. Preliminary tests included normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. Hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis with a significance level of 5%.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	48	40,0
	Woman	72	60,0
Age	18-25 year	45	37,5
	26-35 year	42	35,0
	36-50 year	33	27,5
Education	SMA/SMK	35	29,2
	Diploma	28	23,3
	Bachelor	45	37,5
	Postgraduate	12	10,0
Income	< Rp 3 million	32	26,7
	Rp 3-5 million	48	40,0
	> Rp 5 million	40	33,3

Based on Table 1, In this study, the majority of respondents were women aged 18-35 years. Most of them have a bachelor's degree and an income in the range of IDR 3-5 million. This data reflects that the respondents involved are young individuals with a middle to upper education background and middle income.

Preliminary Analysis Tests

Table 2. Results of Preliminary Tests

Test	Criteria	Results	Conclusion
Normality	Sig. $> 0,05$	0,078	Normal data
X1-Y Linearity	Sig. $< 0,05$	0,000	Linear
X2-Y Linearity	Sig. $< 0,05$	0,000	Linear
Multicollinearity	VIF < 10	1,245	There is no multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity	Sig. $> 0,05$	0,156	There is no heteroscedasticity

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 3. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	0,456	0,234	-	1,948
Visual Merchandising	0,425	0,089	0,398	4,775
Sales Promotion	0,387	0,095	0,339	4,074

Based on Table 4, The results of the descriptive analysis show that respondents' perceptions of service quality, system quality, and customer satisfaction fall into the high category, with mean values ranging from 3.78 to 3.85.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 4. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	0.234	0.198		1.182
Service Quality	0.521	0.067	0.487	7.776
System Quality	0.403	0.072	0.351	5.597

Table 5. Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
0,792	0,628	0,621	0,429

Table 6. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	36,847	2	18,424	100,102	0,000
Residual	21,553	117	0,184	-	-
Total	58,400	119	-	-	-

Hypothesis Testing

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, the following equation can be formed: $Y = 0.456 + 0.425X_1 + 0.387X_2$

- Hypothesis 1: Visual merchandising has a positive and significant effect on impulse buying ($t = 4.775$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Hypothesis accepted
- Hypothesis 2: Sales promotion has a positive and significant effect on impulse buying ($t = 4.074$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Hypothesis accepted.
- Hypothesis 3: Visual merchandising and sales promotion simultaneously have a significant effect on impulse buying ($F = 100.102$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Hypothesis accepted

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Visual Merchandising on Impulse Buying

The results of the study show that visual merchandising has a positive and significant effect on impulse buying, with a coefficient of 0.425. This indicates that every one-unit increase in visual merchandising will increase impulse buying by 0.425 units, assuming other variables remain constant.

This finding aligns with the research by Bhatti & Latif (2020), which states that attractive visual merchandising can create strong visual stimuli and influence consumer emotions. At Sun Plaza Mall Medan, visual merchandising elements such as creative window displays, appropriate lighting, and strategic product layout have proven effective in capturing consumer attention and triggering the desire to purchase unplanned products.

The most influential visual merchandising indicators are window displays (mean = 3.89) and lighting (mean = 3.85). This shows that consumers at Sun Plaza Mall are highly responsive to appealing product presentations and a comfortable store atmosphere.

The Effect of Sales Promotion on Impulse Buying

Sales promotion has been proven to have a positive and significant effect on impulse buying, with a coefficient of 0.387. This result supports the theory of Kumar & Reinartz (2022) that sales promotions create a sense of urgency and perceived value that encourage impulsive purchases.

In the context of Sun Plaza Mall Medan, promotional programs such as discounts (mean = 4.02), cashback (mean = 3.78), and buy one get one (mean = 3.69) are strong attracting factors for consumers. Sales promotions provide consumers with a rational justification for making spontaneous purchases due to the perception of savings and added value.

Simultaneous Effect of Service Quality and System Quality

Simultaneously, visual merchandising and sales promotion explain 62.8% of the variation in impulse buying ($R^2 = 0.628$). The remaining 37.2% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study, such as personal, social, and psychological factors of consumers.

The high R^2 value indicates that the combination of these two strategies is very effective in influencing consumers' impulse buying behavior. This implies that the management of Sun Plaza Mall Medan needs to integrate visual merchandising and sales promotion strategies synergistically to maximize the potential of impulsive sales.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study and the discussion, it can be concluded that visual merchandising has a positive and significant effect on consumers' impulse buying at Sun Plaza Mall Medan, contributing 42.5% to consumers' spontaneous purchasing behavior. Attractive visual elements, including eye-catching window displays, appropriate lighting, harmonious color combinations, and strategic product layouts, effectively stimulate consumers' interest and encourage unplanned purchases. Furthermore, sales promotion also has a positive and significant influence on impulse buying, contributing 38.7%. Promotional activities such as discounts, cashback offers, buy-one-get-one-free programs, and product sampling create additional value and a sense of urgency that motivate consumers to make spontaneous purchasing decisions. Finally, the findings reveal that visual merchandising and sales promotion simultaneously have a significant effect on impulse buying, jointly explaining 62.8% of the variation in consumers' impulsive purchasing behavior. This indicates that the integration of appealing visual merchandising with attractive sales promotion strategies is highly effective in encouraging impulse

buying among consumers at Sun Plaza Mall Medan. These findings highlight the importance for retail managers and tenants to optimize both visual presentation and promotional activities as complementary marketing strategies to enhance consumer purchasing behavior and improve retail performance.

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